

KEEP YOUR CLIENTS MOTIVATED USING NLP

For most of our clients, getting started on a fitness-training programme is a challenge; but once they begin, the real challenge is keeping it going.

What stops people from getting things done is, quite simply, their thought process! When your clients think about getting fit, what goes through their mind? Does it feel like a chore or is it something they enjoy and feel motivated to do? Motivation is having the desire and willingness to do something and it can work in two ways. You are either moving away from a situation you don't want to be in, or moving towards one that you do. For example, some people give up poor eating habits due to the risk of obesity and other health complications, while others may be motivated by having a six-pack they can show off on the beach! Essentially, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is the study of excellence in how we think, how we behave and how we communicate. It provides a series of techniques, skills and methodologies that can be used to create strategies to enable us to fulfill our potential in all areas of our lives. Let's look at some practical techniques and exercises you can use with your clients.

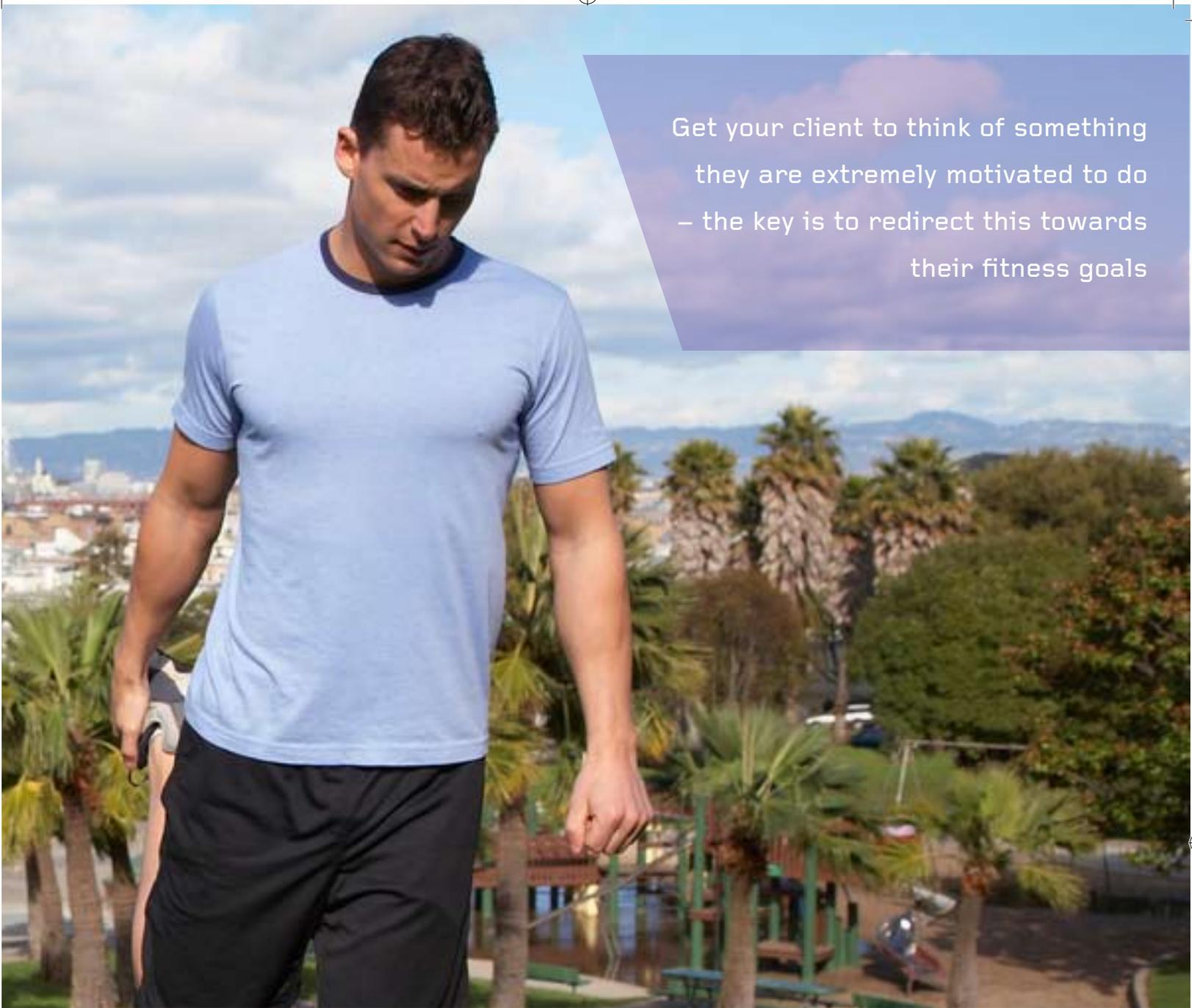
Motivation

Most people would agree the hardest muscle to get into shape

is the one "between the ears". So, think of something you are extremely motivated to do and you will find that you just start doing it. This proves that you do have motivation – the key is to redirect it towards your fitness goals. One way of doing this is by associating training with pleasure rather than with pain – you could ask your clients: "If you don't train, what are the negative consequences and if you do train what are the positive consequences?" Get your clients to write a list of the positive and negative consequences of training and not training. By doing this exercise you will underpin reasons for them to carry on. Also, get them to add to the list and revisit their list whenever they feel like skipping a session.

Reframing

Reframing in NLP is the process of shifting the nature of the situation. It is the process of changing a negative context into a positive one by changing the frame of reference used to interpret the experience. If all meaning is context-dependent, changing the context will change the meaning. What are your clients' perceptions



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of training? Do they see training as a boring chore they have to do, or do they see training as an exciting opportunity to get themselves into the best shape ever.

Communication

A key element keeping a client motivated is communication. It is important to note that communication is not only verbal. As early as the late 1960s, research in communication had indicated that non-verbal behaviour (ie, body language) plays an important role in communication.^{1,2,3} Researchers have determined that just 7% of what we communicate is the result of the words that we use or the content of our communication; 38% of our communication to others is a result of our verbal behaviour, which includes tone of voice, timbre, tempo and volume; and 55% of our communication to others is a result of our non-verbal communication, our body posture, breathing, skin colour and our movement. So, it's not just a matter of what we say, it's how we say it. For example, when your client performs well during a task they have just completed, the tonality of how we give praise is important; if we say "well done" continuously in a monotone voice throughout the session, it will hardly inspire any of our clients. Also our body language is important. Much of what we communication is through body language. When your client walks through the door, first

impressions are key – how are you greeting your client? That first impression sets up the rest of the session.

Summary

In summary, NLP is the study of excellence. I am sure the readers who have not studied NLP are reading this article and are already using some of the techniques and strategies covered in the article without being aware. The key to going the extra mile is consistency – becoming aware of what we do well and implementing resources which work to get the best out of our clients as often as possible. ^{fn}

References

1. *J Counselling Psych*, 1967; 31:248-52.
2. *European J Social Psych*, 1970; 1:385-402.
3. RL Birdwhistle (1970), *Kinesics and Context*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.



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