

Metaprograms: An Overview

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What are Metaprograms?

Metaprograms are unconscious sorting filters which determine our ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling. These filters determine what we are able to perceive at any given time and how we interact with ourselves, others, and the world around us. They help construct and ratify our model of the world. Although Metaprograms are universally shared, the way we apply them varies from person-to-person and context-to-context.

Metaprograms: Filters for Your Thoughts

Our thought processing is the result of a series of successive, interacting filters, both “on the way in and on the way out.” Emotions, among other aspects of self, are a consequence of such filtering. To describe the structural foundations of emotions, a powerful instrument like the metaprograms model is therefore invaluable, as it enables you to discern and discriminate the filters which are operating in your mind at any given time, and to change them if you need to do so.

The metaprograms model was developed in the early 1980s.¹ It was inspired by the archetypes of Carl Jung and the most widely employed personality factor questionnaire of the day, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), itself derived from Carl Jung’s model by his own daughter.² Together with a number of similar models metaprograms have since evolved into an important instrument in the field of cognitive psychology. You may have heard of them as “cognitive styles” or “patterns of influence.” A cognitive style describes a common way to filter and structure information and experience. This includes skills and competencies as well as the values which underlie them. Like the model of the neurological levels this model helps you to identify a structure in the content of communication.

Once you have studied the metaprograms and have begun using them, you’ll become aware that the way people use metaprograms can differ completely from one to another, and that a conversation at any level—professional or personal—can end in a complete disaster because of these individual differences. For example: some people are interested in the *big picture* and do not pay much attention to *details*, while for others an explanation cannot have enough details. If someone is summing up the details of an issue and you’re not interested in them, you are each on a different wavelength. With a big picture orientation, you’ll probably feel bored by their enumeration and nitpicking approach. They, on the other hand, may feel confused by your vague and “fuzzy” language.

¹ Although authorship cannot be firmly established and many people claim the honor of doing so, they were probably developed by Leslie Cameron-Bandler.

² Isobel Briggs-Myers.

Metaprograms can be recognized in expressions, behavior, and answers to questions. Indeed, by asking a number of simple questions, we can gain profound insight into the structure of someone's meta-programs. The patterns help us understand how they motivate themselves and how they tackle problems and opportunities.

By studying and analyzing metaprograms we can achieve the following:

1. Increase our self-knowledge by discovering how our emotions are linked to specific patterns and how both are linked to our behavior.
2. Enhance our own flexibility and emotional competence, as well as better align our behavior with accompanying values, by developing the meta-programs complementary to those we habitually run.
3. Screen others for suitability to tasks or roles using metaprograms analysis.
4. Build rapport and increase our effectiveness with other people by identifying their meta-programs and using them to achieve outcomes which will satisfy all parties.

As you proceed with the study and understanding of meta-programs, you will see this knowledge as a valuable resource in communicating and interacting with others.

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