

WHAT'S NEW

The NLP way

Want a chance to listen to people's problems, restructure their lives and may be discover your own? Neuro-Linguistic Programming offers you endless opportunities

■ JANANI SURI

A day in the life of Chennai-based Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) coach, Alex Jacob, who runs the Center For Creative Learning, Chennai, may begin with a call from one of his clients. He sits down with them, understands their requirements and problems, their strengths and their weaknesses. Through paid sessions, he ensures that he guides them to reach solutions – ones that they may never have dreamt of – with simple restructuring of their current ways of thinking.

What, exactly, is the methodology that he uses to accomplish this? Discovered in the 1970s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, NLP is a branch of psychology which explores the connection between neurological processes, language, and behavioural patterns and exploring and reworking them to achieve results.

"NLP is a different way of looking at things. We look at a person's mind with a normal logical process, at the patterns that develop, and play with them. We focus on a person's beliefs. The tools give them a quick remedy. Sometimes, within a day, we can accomplish change," says Ashok Subramaniam, an NLP trainer of over 20 years, and founder of Shinota Academy.

In India, the NLP scene has been steadily growing since the 1990s, but reached its zenith at the turn of the millennium. From something that most people didn't



A session: Looking at things differently.

understand, it has become a serious avenue for those who are curious about human life, are resourceful, sensitive and enjoy solving problems.

"NLP is all about the mind, heart and language," says Manasa Mahalakshmi, 25, an aspiring trainer.

Options

So, if a person is looking at this field as a prospective career choice, what would be the options available to them?

"I work with a mix of corporate and private clients," says Ashok. A person in this field can work with

almost every enterprise. You can run your own training institute, work independently, or work for another institute. Center For Creative Learning features trainers not just from India, but from the United Kingdom as well.

But what is that "something" that people have to see in you, in order for you to be successful as a trainer?

"I would advise the person to have a basic degree in psychology, at the very least. It would be useful to be trained in the four courses of NLP (NLP Foundation, Practitioner, Master Practitioner, and Train The Trainer). But mostly, he/she needs to be passionate about

the field, rich in life experience, and always ready to observe and listen," explains Alex.

To begin your career as a trainer, begin by developing your ability to take critical feedback and working on your own vulnerabilities. "Self-awareness is the core of this business," says Ashok. Begin watching people and learning how to read them and reach out to them. You could also work on developing your problem-solving skills, but most trainers assure us that it comes with experience. "Most of all, emotional sensitivity is a key skill. People who have had this trait since birth will become good trainers. We listen to people's stories, and find remedies for them. We have to keep changing and evolving with the times – acquire new skills, as will be necessary."

The road ahead

The field continues to grow in popularity, and aspiring trainers walk in every year; the road ahead will not always be a smooth one.

"Many trainers are not serious about being coached," says Ashok. "But even with the serious ones, sometimes I have the realisation that with every new batch of trainers I work with, I'm creating my own competition. There's always a possibility of being too close to the situation as well, so we have to learn to be emotionally detached. We go through what they go through."

Trainers have to have a long-term vision in mind and plan their

In India, the NLP scene has been steadily growing since the 1990s, but reached its zenith at the turn of the millennium.

financials well before they enter the field. "Establishing yourself takes a long, long time," says Alex. A recent trend amongst trainers is to conduct programmes in the midst of nature, in order to maintain their health. "A few years into training, I realised I was getting sick all the time – eating hotel food and travelling took a toll on me. Now, I conduct programmes in hill stations, such as Lonavla or Coorg, and take my clients with me," says Ashok.

An established trainer has the opportunity to earn in lakhs, once they acquire a good customer base, and make a name for themselves. "Client testimonials are key for a good trainer," says Alex.

Ashok recollects how rewarding his career has been. "I have helped people addicted to phones, people disappointed with their lives, people looking for another path. They have become my associates and friends, and they tell me that I've changed their lives. It's a lovely feeling, to be honest."

As Alex prepares to set up for Masterclass, his one-of-a-kind workshop, and as Ashok continues on his journey through NLP, it's become clear – for those with keen observational skills, and a powerful sense of curiosity, happiness lies at the end of this path.