
NLP: Words: Response-able

(May 06)

Response-able... A friend and I were talking one day, about his dislike for the word “Responsible”... Think about it... response-able, able to respond...

As humans, we are response-able... we are able to respond... When things happen in the world, we react, respond and relate... How many times have you heard someone say: I couldn't help it...or “he upset me” or “she made me mad”... Or in traffic... waiting at a light, behind someone in the left turn lane, you see they have a chance to turn, they don't and you get mad... “How could they not go!”? Would one be pleased with that reaction? Or would choosing a different, less upsetting or even a more compassionate response feel better? What about patience? Peace of mind?

Which would you choose?

The words we use each day, we really don't think about them, do we? When someone says they'll keep an eye on your coat, they will really not put one of their eyes on your coat! Or the person that wants to start “watching what they eat”... now, have they, up till now, been eating with their eyes closed? To get more specific, for the person watching what they eat, what does that really mean? When we tell our children, “be good in school”, are we presupposing that it is ok to be “not good” elsewhere? Are we not also assuming that they have some idea about what “being good” really means!

I recall in my management days, I was giving training a new manager who was giving direction to one of the cleaning staff directions, letting him know to clean the bathroom. A day or two later, the new manager came to me flabbergasted: he let loose “I told that cleaning staff to clean the bathroom, he didn't wash the mirror, the toilet or behind the toilet!” Confused and curious, we went to talk with “Matt” the cleaning person. The conversation went something like this between Matt and I:

“Hi Matt, did you clean the bathroom this morning?”

“Yes sir, just did it an hour or two ago”... (He said proudly!)

“Will you show me what you did Matt?”

“Sure Mr. Accetta...”

We walked to the bathroom, and Matt proceeded to show both of us and explain: “You see every day I sweep and mop the floor, and wipe down the sink, see.” As he showed us what he thought was a clean bathroom.

You see, in NLP we understand that words have multiple meanings that the deep structure is subjective, and if we truly want to communicate our meaning, then it is important to be clear and speak in experiential terms.

So what does that have to do with being response-able? Well, they are all words, and in NLP, language, words are our middle name. Also, too often in our relationships we look to the other person, the 'listener' to understand. We place the 'response-ability' of understanding our 'meaning' when really, it is our response-ability to insure our message is clear. In fact, a major pre-supposition in NLP and in other fields of communication excellence is:

9. The meaning of any communication is the response that it elicits.

It is the response-ability of the communicator to insure the message is received by the intended person or audience. Meaning is subjective, it is up to the communicator to create the experience and meaning that is intended.

(see <http://www.midwestnlp.com/presuppositions.php> for more presuppositions)

For many of you, you depend on your ability to communicate clearly, well, yes, there are some that believe it 'good enough' is 'good enough' Is that like saying let's be satisfied with mediocre and 'average'?

NLP offers models of behavioral excellence, some of the first having to do with excellence in language and influence...as well as excellence in rapport and trust in relationships. Stay tuned for further articles on language, perhaps ambiguities? Perhaps I will not be as 'a parent' ☺