

Paul McKenna on NLP

and Thought Field Therapy by Eve Menezes Cunningham

Everyone seems to have heard of Paul McKenna. Best known for his supercharged stage and TV performances as well as books like *Instant Confidence* (2006, Transworld, £9.99), he gives the impression of having been born confident

But Paul says, “I wasn’t confident in some areas and I think NLP helped me. I used to work as a radio DJ. I wasn’t a natural stage performer but I used NLP to model people who were good on stage and good on television and learned to be better at it. As a result of that, my confidence developed. But I was already confident enough to become a radio DJ. It’s also helped me to develop my confidence in business and lots of other areas so for me, yes, it’s definitely changed my life for the better. I’ve used what I’m teaching and selling on myself so I feel good about it.”

Paul first became interested in NLP when he went to interview a hypnotist. He says, “I’d had a particularly bad day. I’d broken up with my girlfriend, had a row with my boss, the people who lived in the apartment downstairs had been making a racket and I was very stressed out. The hypnotist said, ‘You look rather stressed, why don’t I do some of this on you? Would you let me hypnotise you?’ Well, I was sceptical to say the least but said, ‘Go ahead! Let the healing begin!’

“And I was amazed at how relaxed I felt, almost euphoric. Afterwards, I felt so good I asked, ‘Have you got any books about this?’ He lent me a book by Richard Bandler and I was really amazed at how clever and creative Richard’s writing was. I began practising on my friends and it worked pretty consistently. I was more surprised than they were. ‘Oh! It really does work!’”

When Paul demonstrated hypnosis at a party, he realised that while people were falling about laughing, they were also learning that it worked. He still uses NLP on a day-to-day basis and says, “If I need

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to relax I use trance.” And when he had writer’s block, Paul blended a few NLP techniques to break through it: “I travelled down the timeline, 6 months or a year in the future, dropped into the timeline, held the book in my hands and the editor I work with said, ‘Tell me what’s in Chapter 1.’ So I’d tell him and he’d make notes and then say, ‘Right, Chapter 2?’

“If you look at it, all the great creative people throughout history used that reverie or state of relaxation to get their creative ideas. Einstein, Mozart and Walt Disney all refer to a type of self-hypnosis or guided imagery. In corporations they do Strategic Planning and corporate executives go off into ‘the imagined future’ to see what sorts of products and services they’re offering, NLP provides a very organised framework for doing that.”

While he used to use NLP techniques to increase his confidence and optimism “in the early days” Paul is more experimental now. He spends a lot of time flying to the US so has been using NLP to make the flights seem faster. And it even enhances his music collection. Talking to a friend at a party, he was reminded of the joy of hearing a favourite piece of music for the first time. He laughs, “A couple of days later, I was on holiday. Feeling nice and relaxed, I age regressed myself and went back to 1980 to the first time I heard Sister Sledge’s ‘He’s the greatest dancer’ and listened to it on the ipod.

“And it was phenomenal! Suddenly, I could hear the sounds in the way it sounded when I heard it for the very first time. I thought ‘Oh, my God, this is the most amazing disco record I’ve ever heard.





So glamorous and punky and all those things. And although it was already a good record, suddenly, I'd recaptured the novelty of the first time I'd heard it. It sounded very fresh to me again so that's a good example of a bizarre, obscure sort of use. Those are the kinds of things I use NLP for now." He also finds perceptual positioning helpful for understanding other perspectives, whether it's someone he's disagreed with or a potential client before a pitch.

Over the past five years, Paul has been bringing Thought Field Therapy (TFT) to a larger audience. And it all started with a psychic reading. Although he was sceptical at first, he listened to the psychic's insistence that "This is for you and it's important. You are going to work with this man and it's very important." Saying he didn't see how "this thing where you tap your head" could work, he nonetheless promised to read Dr Roger Callahan's book.

Dr Callahan is a clinical psychologist. He developed TFT to help rid people of all sorts of negative emotions around psychological issues (from phobias and addictions to trauma) in a non-invasive way. TFT has been evolving for 23 years and was adopted by the Kosovan Chief of Medical Staff to help survivors of war traumas.

Paul was surprised to find himself so taken with the meridian therapy. He took the book with him to New York and had just got to the section on cravings when his manager mentioned her chocolate compulsion. Paul experimented with her and brought her craving level down from 10 to 5 and then to zero.

Hooked, he turned to a woman who looked so nervous about the flight her knuckles

had turned white. Paul said, "Excuse me, madam, are you a nervous flyer? I've got a revolutionary technique you might want to try. It looks a little unusual but..." The woman was happy to try and after curing her phobia, Paul turned to the man beside her.

In New York, he mentioned TFT to a doctor friend who did a little research and then tried it with some of his patients. A few days later, Paul received an email saying his friend had cured a few phobias and some insomnia.

He mentioned it to Richard Bandler and

" I began practising on my friends "

he said he knew Roger Callahan so Paul asked for an introduction. He invited Dr Callahan to do a seminar with his training organisation and was very impressed. Paul says, "One guy had had neck pain for ten years since an accident and five minutes later he couldn't feel any pain. There was another guy who'd been depressed for years and five minutes later he couldn't get the depressed feeling back. A lady smoked too many cigarettes and a few minutes later she couldn't bear the thought of a cigarette. It's an amazing miracle changing people and I thought 'the prophecy came true'.

"Since then, I feel a moral obligation to tell people, just as I do with NLP, how amazing TFT is. It's so simple, it's completely safe and it's truly effective in curing such a range of things."

At the moment, Paul's focus is on his NLP Training Company, writing a new book and

doing some TV work. He runs the company with Michael Neill, Richard Bandler and John Bower and says, "It's sort of like being in a band. Although we have our very individual styles, it's great to be part of a team."

Paul says he's happy to use whatever works. If a clients talks about prayer or Aikido, he'll use this in the NLP so they're more comfortable with it. He's a big fan of learning from the source. He'd noticed that when he was writing about NLP he was quoting Bandler a lot so thought "I must like him.' If you want to learn music, go to Mozart, if you want to learn TFT go to Callahan. When you watch the creator or master at work, you get a much purer interpretation."

Paul has been using NLP since 1985 and, while he's far from happy about "piracy" and people not giving credit where credit's due, he is thrilled to see how popular it's become.

Paul's enthusiasm about TFT and NLP is infectious. Many people come across tools that can make a difference in their lives and that of their clients. But Paul seems unusually willing to put himself out there and try new things. This is probably a big part of the reason he's so successful. He seems to love learning new ways to help people and has fun with it.

Even though I already use NLP myself as well as with my clients every day, meeting Paul has inspired me to experiment more. ●

For information about Paul's NLP training and to order his books, please visit www.PaulMcKenna.com or phone 0845 230 2062.

For more information about TFT, Paul recommends Dr Roger Callahan and Kevin Laye. Visit www.tftrx.com/callahan.html or www.kevinlaye.co.uk