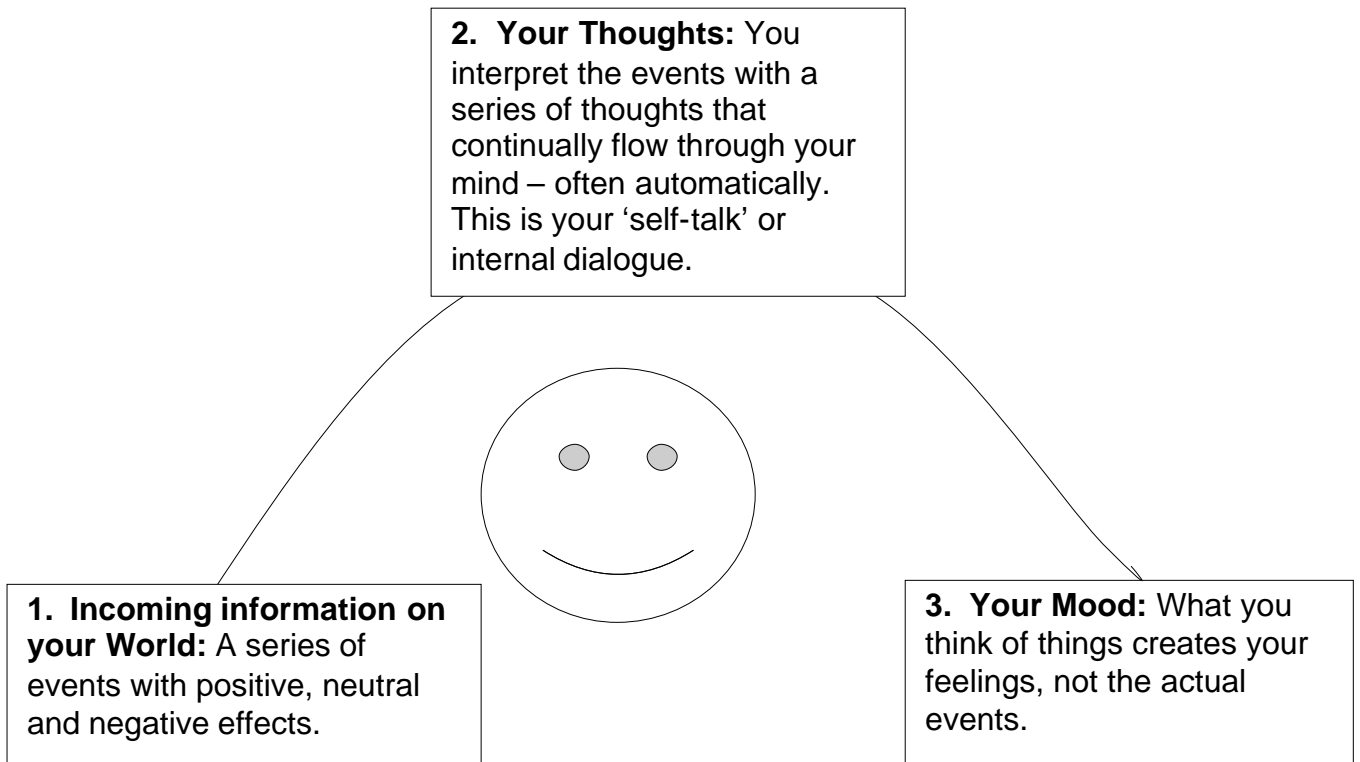


Thoughts and Feelings

This diagram is from the book “The New Mood Therapy”

You obtain information from the outside world that comes via your senses and filters, (your internal dialogue) and it affects your physiological responses. This, naturally enough, affects how you feel and may impact on your behaviours and actions you take or don't feel like taking.



The next page shows a diagram that illustrates even further, how our thoughts may ultimately affect how we feel.

INTERNAL PROCESSING

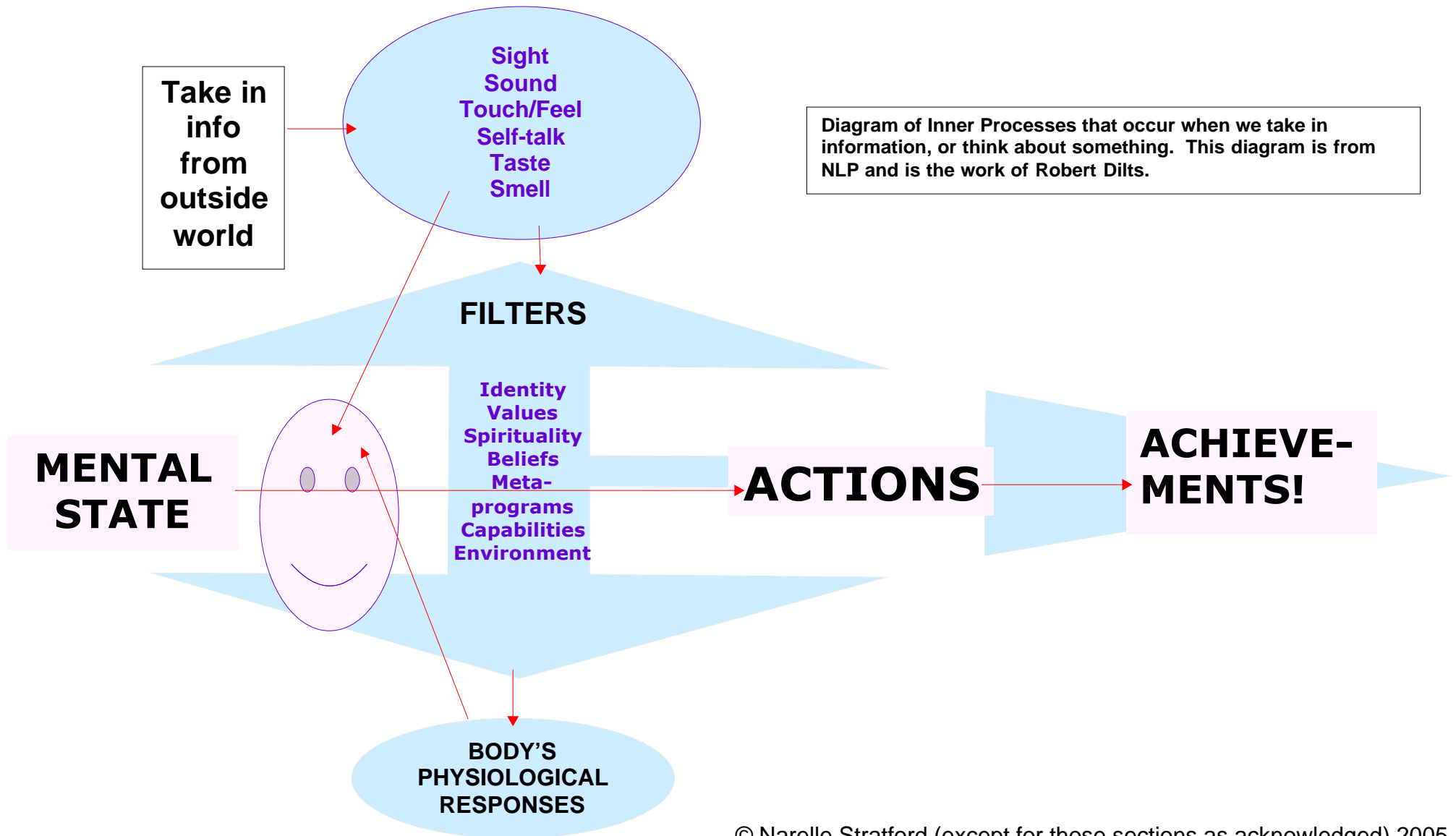


Diagram of Inner Processes that occur when we take in information, or think about something. This diagram is from NLP and is the work of Robert Dilts.

Internal representations affect your Physiology. When information has come via the inner processing of the representational systems, and the information has been filtered, it will affect your physiological state and trigger a response such as, for example: blushing, stammering, losing colour, breathing alterations, eye movement changes and body language. Simultaneously, you may feel emotions such as anger, anxiety, joy, happiness, fear, depression, or peace, for example.

In the diagram above, the **face** represents your **Mental State**, and links to **Actions**, then **Achievements**.

Take particular note that **Internal Representations** and **Filters** affect **Mental State**, and that **Mental State** affects your emotions, which affects **Actions**, your **Behaviours**, which will of course affect **Achievements**, also known as goals, outcomes and results.

It seems obvious to state the obvious, but a positive state of mind will produce positive behaviour that will produce positive results!

(The above information is based on the work of Neuro Linguistic Programming and particularly, Robert Dilts.)

INTERNAL PROCESSING: occurs as a result of gathering information via the senses and the way we each represent that information mentally via what we see, hear, touch/feel, smell and taste.

FILTERS: We habitually use filters to screen information as we receive it via the senses. Filters do exactly that: they screen the information as it is getting through to our mind!

These 7 important filters kick into place automatically, without our being consciously aware of it happening.

When a filter kicks in, it will affect the outcome of a conversation, or a meeting with another person. For example, if you have high levels of integrity, and someone is telling you lies but you can't be absolutely sure of it, your **value** filter will come into play and act as a screen on the information you are receiving.

1. **Identity** – our basic sense of self or who you think you are
2. **Values** – what is important to you. Often underlies ethics and integrity
3. **Spirituality** – your deepest level of being where you might look for answers to the questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? Answers to these questions may also shape your values and your identity.
4. **Beliefs** – our ideas that we think are true. We believe in certain things in life and use these beliefs in either permissive or limiting ways. Beliefs relate to what are known in NLP terms as 'presuppositions'.

That is we presuppose (assume, take for granted, take as fact) certain things, which aren't necessarily healthy, although it can be very useful to acquire healthy beliefs or presuppositions, such as those from NLP.

5. **Metaprogrammes** – these are the overriding programmes that kick in automatically and which we habitually use. These are programmes we adopt

(usually unconsciously) which influence the way we are motivated or not motivated. For example:

- **Convincer patterns** – relates to how someone can convince us. Do we need to hear something several times? Do you need to see the evidence? Do you make an instant decision? Do you need to touch something to be convinced? (Think about clothes shopping...);
- Do you need a gut feeling?
- **General v specific** – are you happy to know about generalities? Do you prefer specific details?
- **Match/mismatch** – Ever had the experience of communicating with someone, only to have him or her do or say the opposite? For example, *'I think we should eat Indian tonight'* and the response might be *'no, let's eat at home.'* Or, *'I want to do this...'* and his/her response is *'No, I want to do that ...'* It's almost as though no matter what you say, they think the opposite. The way to work with someone like this (who can make your life miserable if you let them) is to phrase everything this way: *'You might, or, you might not, want to'* And finish the sentence with what you desire! Because you have started with something such as *'you might'* their usual pattern is to go the opposite way! When you immediately follow up with *'you might not'* they become confused and actually have to hear you out before making an automatically contradictory response.
- **Options/procedures** – some people like lots of options, some people like lots of step by step procedures!;
- **Proactive/reactive** – some people take action in advance of a situation, others will never do that and will only react to the situation as it occurs.; **Towards/away** – This pattern is very, very important, and learning to use it will increase your selling skills. It relates to how you motivate yourself and how others can be motivated. Some people are motivated **away from** what they don't like, or didn't enjoy or actually loathed.
 - For example: I hate living where I am because it is so cramped. (The underlying meaning relates to my wanting to get **away from** my current living space.)
 - Alternatively: I long to live in a beautiful apartment that overlooks the water. (The underlying meaning says that I am motivated **towards** that new apartment which means that changes have to be made in order for that to occur.)
- Change is always scary for the subconscious mind, so when we are motivated towards something positive, our subconscious has already convinced itself to do the change work that is necessary. It has let go of the past shackles and restrictions and is ready to do what is necessary to achieve the results you want.
- Examine your thinking and check whether you are motivated **towards** or **away** from what you want. If you are mostly motivated by an **away from** attitude or thought, then it could be time to start training yourself to be a **towards** thinker.

6. **Capabilities** – groups of behaviours, general skills and strategies you use. Your perception of your level of capability will impact upon your physiology and state of mind.
7. **Environment** – that you react to, people/nature/circumstances. Favourable environments support us, while environments that we consider unfavourable, we will perceive to be unsupportive. Consider being out with friends and family in a relaxed and enjoyable setting, versus explaining to the bank manager why you can't make this month's payment.

Okay, that completes the filters that are ever-present without our knowing or even being aware of them for the most part. You can become more aware of them through taking note of your responses to someone's behaviour and communication, and asking yourself why you responded or perhaps even presupposed something to be a certain way.

Unhelpful Cognitive Patterns

Remember how the Metaprogrammes kick in? We can also have a group of thinking patterns that psychologists call "cognitive distortions" that kick in. These distortions are called this, because they give the person distorted or negative thinking patterns that become ingrained and automatic and lead to terrible emotional states (depression, fear, anxiety, anger, self-loathing, sadness, guilt, hurt and rejection and so on).

There are 10 main Cognitive Distortions (all of these are taken from the book "Feeling good, the new mood therapy" by Dr David D Burns. You can also get a Feeling Good handbook which is an excellent self-help tool.

1. **All or nothing thinking** – you tend to evaluate your personal qualities in extreme, black or white categories. For example, your boss said "your report needs a bit of a tidy up just in the section on background" so you conclude "I'm a total failure". You fear any mistake or imperfection because you'll see yourself as a loser and completely inadequate.

This is an unrealistic way of thinking about things, or looking at or feeling about things because life is rarely so black and white. No one is ever totally stupid or phenomenally intelligent all the time. Nothing is ever completely clean. The sun is shining somewhere!

2. **Overgeneralisation** – When you see bird crap on your car or window, do you automatically think "birds always crap on my windows"? Could this be an overgeneralization? If the birds really did crap 'always' on your windows, your car and windows would be covered in a mound of droppings because every bird from everywhere would be there, 24 hours a day!

You think that because one thing happened to you, it will continue to happen over and over again.

3. **Mental Filter** – You pick out a negative detail from a situation and dwell on it exclusively and then perceive that the whole situation is negative. For example, I might do a presentation and get some of the slides out of order with the talk.

I could then dwell exclusively on this minor detail and convince myself that I gave the worst presentation of all, despite feedback from the audience that they loved the presentation. It's as though I am wearing stormy glasses instead of rose coloured lenses. My filters are negative and gloomy.

4. **Disqualifying the positive** – this happens when you take the above example and then, when the audience says something positive, you disqualify it, like so: Member of audience: "I loved your presentation and I got a lot out of it." You say, "Oh, it wasn't very good really. I got off track in several places."

This won't create a positive and inviting persona for you, that draws people to you. In fact, it makes you negative, unappealing and unattractive. Many people disqualify the positive or neutral events in their life without a conscious thought. Have you ever discounted a compliment? "You're looking great today!" and you respond, "oh, this old thing, and I felt awful when I got out of bed. How can you say that?"

It's quite a conversation stopper, isn't it?

5. **Jumping to Conclusions** – this can occur in two ways. One is by Mind Reading and the other is by Fortune Telling. Let's look at Mind Reading first. You assume that you know what someone else is thinking. If the man in the front row of your presentation nods off, it might be because he had a wild night out on the town and didn't get any sleep. You don't know that of course, and assume that he and the audience, finds your presentation boring.

Someone is engrossed in their own thoughts and doesn't say hello to you, so you assume that they don't like you. Someone doesn't speak to you for a while, so you interpret this as "you're mad at me, aren't you?" and trigger withdrawal or a counterattack. This behaviour sabotages you and could set you up for a negative interaction when none existed in the first place.

Fortune Teller error – this happens when you anticipate that things will turn out badly and you are sure that your prediction is an established fact.

For example, you call your friend (and leave a message with her flatmate) to ask if they want to go to the movies with you, but three weeks later, she hasn't called you back. By this time, the movie has finished showing and you're convinced that your friend doesn't like you (mind reading) and you conclude that no-one will ever go to the movies with you again (fortune telling prediction). You feel down and depressed, and stew over it regularly. A month later you bump into your friend and it turns out she never got the message in the first place.

6. **Magnification and minimization** – the binocular trick of blowing things up out of all proportion (something trivial becomes a major event) and shrinking them

(something wonderful has all the good sucked out of it and its shrunk down to nothing). For example, you go for a job interview and you forget to take a reference letter with you.

Instead of saying, they loved me and they are sure to hire me, you think, “I’m so dumb, I forgot that letter, and they’ll never hire me now. How could I be so stupid? I’m an idiot. I’ll never get work because they will tell everyone how bad I was.” You’re seeing your faults through the lens that magnifies every tiny thing so it becomes a catastrophe. (Magnification is also known as catastrophizing.)

Of course, your strengths are reduced and minimized so that you look small and inferior to yourself.

- 7. Emotional Reasoning** – You use how you feel as evidence for the truth. “I feel awful, hence I am an awful person. I feel like a total failure, so I am a total failure.” This kind of reasoning is misleading because distorted thoughts have no validity. Another example, “I feel guilty all the time. I must have done something really bad.” Or, “I’m mad at you, so you must have been acting badly toward me and trying to take advantage of me.”

By the way, procrastination is the usual side effect of emotional reasoning! You avoid completing timesheets because you tell yourself “I feel so stressed when I think about doing timesheets, doing them will be impossible.” Months later when you finally do them, you find it was quite gratifying and nowhere near as difficult as you thought.

- 8. Should** – should statements are used to try to motivate yourself “I should do this” or “I must do that”. Albert Ellis (another psychologist) calls this ‘musturbation’. Should and shouldn’t statements make you feel pressured and resentful.

Should statements create a lot of stress and tension, especially when you aren’t perfect in your own life, and fall short of your own standards. You will feel self-loathing, shame, and guilt. If other’s don’t live up to your standards either, you feel self-righteous anger and bitterness.

You’ll either have to change your expectations of others and yourself, or you’ll always feel let down by human shortcomings.

- 9. Labelling and mislabelling** – personal labelling means creating a completely negative self-image based on your errors. It is an extreme form of overgeneralisation. Check yourself for these thoughts or sayings, “I’m a ...” because when you say “I’m a..” it often precedes a sentence with a self-defeating label. Perhaps you play golf and miss the shot. Instead of saying “I messed that shot up (laughing), what will I do differently next time?” you say, “I’m a born loser.”

Or, perhaps you made a mistake at work, you think “I’m a lousy manager” instead of saying, “I know where I made that mistake, one that anyone could have made.” And moving on.

Labelling yourself is self-defeating and irrational. Your *self* cannot be equated with any one thing you do. When you label other people, you will invariably generate hostility. When you keep labelling someone they will respond to that label (even if they are unaware of it) because they are responding to your hostility or criticism.

Mislabelling occurs when we mislabel ourself because of something we do. For example, you're on a diet and start eating a tub of ice cream. Part way through you realise what you are doing, and think "How disgusting and revolting to do this. I am such a pig." And then finish the whole tub because you are so upset.

10. **Personalisation** – if you personalise things to you, you may experience guilt. You might assume responsibility for something when there is no basis for doing so. You arbitrarily conclude that you were responsible even when there is no basis for doing so. For example, you see a colleague's report, and notice an error and think, "I must be a lousy manager. This shows how I have failed."

By shouldering the responsibility for everyone and everything, you get to feel guilty for the lot. Doing this means that you confuse influence with control over others. You cannot control anyone else; you can only hope to influence them.

What to do about these thinking patterns?

You first need to recognise your Cognitive Distortions so that you can learn how to unlearn these thinking patterns. Keep a diary and notice whenever you have thought or said, any of the 10 cognitive distortions and record the feeling as well.

Consider alternative thoughts that are rational and logical and when you do, then also notice any changes to your feelings.

ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS

Here are some ways to challenge those old thinking patterns so that you come up with new and positive habits.

- Ask yourself “what’s the evidence for this?” and make sure it doesn’t contain any “all or nothing” thinking. Your evidence will, for the most part, discount your negative thoughts and then you can find a better way of thinking and feeling.

For example, “there’s something wrong with me, nothing ever goes right”. This is a Cognitive Distortion (which one?) and can be handled like this:

What’s the evidence:

- a. Nothing goes right (cognitive distortion so cannot be used)
 - b. This happened today and it always happens (Always? That’s a Cognitive Distortion;) or is it just on the odd occasion?
 - c. What’s your evidence for things going right? Once you get the evidence, use it to refute your negative thinking.
 - d. **Note how much better you feel.**
- **What’s really a catastrophe?**
 - a. Real catastrophes rate at 100 points out of 100:
cyclone / hurricane / earthquake / massive flooding / drought
 - b. Is what happened to me really a catastrophe, or just not great, but manageable?
 - c. Rate the event on a scale of 0 to 100, then compare it against a real catastrophe rated at 100. Now what would you rate it?
 - d. **Note how much better you feel.**

ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOURS

Wear a rubber band on your wrist, and every time you have a thought that has a negative affect on you, give your wrist a light flick with the rubber band. Attempt to count how many times an hour you flick your wrist, so that at the end of the day, you have some idea of the total number of times you flicked your wrist.

The idea is that the body dislikes pain, and every time you have a thought that is not constructive or helpful or positive, the body quickly experiences pain.... (because you have flicked your wrist).

Over time, you will decrease the number of thoughts with a negative affect, because your mind and body work together to reduce the ‘flicks’ of the rubber band.

As the thoughts decrease so will the pain inflicted....

Then you can start to notice how few times the rubber band gets flicked, until there are no more negative thoughts and no more flicking, just mental pats on the back.

Presuppositions

“Presuppositions are simply the attitudes, assumptions, beliefs and philosophies which we CHOOSE to USE simply because of the consistent results they produce when we ACT AS IF they were true.”
They are not what we necessarily hold to be true, only useful!

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Some beliefs that might be considered negative include:

- ◆ I have to work hard to get ahead.
- ◆ I could never do that.
- ◆ That’s too hard for me.
- ◆ All the good ones are gone..
- ◆ The rich are unhappy
- ◆ Being poor is spiritual (Would you consider established Churches poor?)
- ◆ It’s better to be safe than sorry
- ◆ It’s hard to make money
- ◆ There’s never enough money to go around.
- ◆ If you go wet in the rain you’ll catch a cold.
- ◆ My father had arthritis so I’ll probably get it too.
- ◆ Cancer runs in my family.

Positive NLP Presuppositions

1. Process / form / patterns / structure versus Content. Think of content as being all the words that you hear as someone speaks to you, and the process / form / patterns / structure being the intricacies of how the words are put together, the tone of voice, the way the person speaks, the thought processes they use and so on. We can learn enormous amounts about a person through not listening so much to the content, but through observing the process / form / patterns and structure of their verbal and body language, and even their eye movement patterns.
2. The map is not the territory – think of an image of a map of your suburb... Does that map really allow you to experience being in your suburb, walking down your street? No, it is merely representative of it. What is contained in your suburb (territory) is what provides the experience of life.

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3. People are not their behaviour – we are much more than our behaviour!
4. Every behaviour has a positive intent! I like this one too! From a subconscious mind perspective, your subconscious uses logic that defies the conscious mind. A screaming child in the supermarket knows that this produces results, such as lollies, attention or even toys! Now that you are an adult, that doesn't change for some people – temper tanties can produce many a guilt-laden spouse or partner to deliver a gift! I'm not saying that we should condone temper tanties or manipulative behaviour, just that your subconscious mind knows what it wants and considers it positive at the time.
5. It makes sense at that moment – Yep! That one drink too many; that extra item on the credit card...
6. You / I / People make the best choice available to them in that moment.
7. There are no unresourceful people only unresourceful states – think back to a time when you felt lousy on an emotional level... Perhaps panicky, anxious, down... Were you a resourceful person in that state of mind and emotions? Probably not. Think of a time when you have been up, clear minded, focussed, and you will find that you were in a resourceful state. We all have the resources we need, and can access them when we have a resourceful state of mind.
8. People have all the resources they need
9. Always add choice, never take away
10. The meaning of my communication is the response I get – one of my favourites! If someone does not understand me, it is my fault, not theirs.
11. You cannot NOT respond
12. Resistance is a sign of insufficient rapport – If someone is resisting what you are saying to them, then stop trying to pitch your sale, and start talking to the person as a real human being and take an interest in them. It's not about what you can do; it's about what it will do for him or her.
13. There are no resistant people only inflexible communicators
14. You cannot NOT communicate
15. You cannot NOT influence
16. For things to change, first I must change
17. Possible in the world, possible for me – only a question of 'how'
18. Law of requisite variety (means that the person who has the most flexibility and better powers of persuasion will always be in control.)
19. There is no failure only feedback – Did Edison fail when he went through 10,000 attempts to make the light bulb? No, he just got the data from feedback that said 9,999 attempts weren't the way to go about it!
20. Respect the other person's model of the world – Even if it doesn't make sense to you, respect it. You don't have to adopt it.
21. There is no inherent value in only one perspective – To have only one perspective or viewpoint can be very limiting.