

# Neurological Levels of Change\*

Larry Dillenbeck – OHA Fall Meeting September 2017

The concept of different 'levels' of change provides us with a powerful method for sorting and aligning various aspects of ourselves to realize our goals and visions. Each level of change engages progressively deeper and broader elements of our neurology. These levels of change are as follows:

- **Environment** – **Where** and **when** things happen. Contextual variables and cues.
- **Behavior** – **What** we do in those times and places. Observable behavior.
- **Capabilities** – **How** we do what we do. Skills, abilities and mental strategies.
- **Beliefs and Values** – **Why** we do what we do. Beliefs about possibility, self-efficacy, meaning and value.
- **Identity** – Our beliefs about **who** we are and the various roles we play in the world.
- **Mission** – **Who** else? Our sense of mission, purpose or reason for being. Our connection to progressively larger systems of which we are a part. This is sometimes referred to as the Spiritual or Transcendent level of change as well.

For example, as one moves from the simple perception of the environment with the senses, to the activation of behavior within that environment, more involvement of a person's mind and body are mobilized. Capabilities call into play our skills, abilities, longer term plans and maps, and engage even deeper levels of the nervous system. Beliefs and values mobilize neurology involving structures as deep as the autonomic nervous system. Identity involves the total commitment of our nervous systems. 'Spiritual' experiences involve the resonance between our own mind and nervous system with the larger systems of which we are a part – family, community, nature and the universe as a whole.

The Neurological Level Alignment process offers a way to systematically access and connect the experiences and neural processes associated with each of these different levels. By combining mental and physical processes with the different levels of change, a person can bring all these levels into alignment in the service of his or her vision and mission.

Gregory Bateson initially formulated the concept of logical levels of learning and change based on the work of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead in mathematics. Robert Dilts, who is one of the early developers of Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), developed the Neurological Level Alignment Process as a way to operationally apply the concept of logical levels to enhance leadership performance.

The process uses what is called "spatial anchoring" to access and integrate these different levels of experience. Many people have found this to be a very powerful experience to put themselves into an effective 'aligned' state where all parts of them align and support the changes they want to make. The process may be done by oneself or together with another person acting as a consultant or 'guide.' The process is very flexible and can be done with or without trance with many variations and can even be done conversationally.

I have found this process extremely valuable and effective for my own outcomes and for working with clients to help make changes more stable and long lasting. It can be used effectively on its own as a change-work process or to use after other change-work to make the changes "stick." It's a great process to have in your hypnotherapy collection.

\*Adapted from the book "Sleight of Mouth" by Robert Dilts

# Process - Neurological Level Alignment

