

Meta-Model of Milton-Model

The Milton Model

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The Meta Model assists a client to be more specific or precise about his problem and as a result he begins to discover possible resources or solutions to his problem. Gregory Batson was enthusiastic about this approach and he was also aware of the work of Milton Erickson who was also getting great results with his clients, but in a different way -- being vague rather than specific, the exact opposite of the Meta Model. Batson encouraged John Grinder and Richard Bandler to meet Erickson and discover why he was so successful. Their description of Erickson's methods became known as the Milton Model - an approach opposite to the Meta Model, yet an equally useful tool for personal change and human communication.

"The Milton Model is a way of using language to induce and maintain trance in order to contact hidden resources of our personality. It follows the way the mind works naturally. Trance is a state where you are highly motivated to learn from your unconscious mind in an inner directed way. It is not a passive state, nor are you under another's influence. There is co-operation between client and therapist, the client's responses letting the therapist know what to do next."(pp. 113-114)

Introducing NLP: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People, Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour; Thorsons, Hammersmith, London, 1995.

Milton Erickson

Milton Erickson was generally regarded as the foremost hypnotherapist of his time. He worked with trance and cleverly structured sentences full of vague meanings to help his clients discover how to address their problems and the resources that they already had available to them. Erickson's success was based on his ability to read non-verbal behaviour (sensory acuity), his ability to establish rapport with his clients, his skill with language patterns and his beliefs about his clients -- some of his beliefs appear in the list of NLP Presuppositions. For example:

- Every behaviour has a positive intention.
- This is the best choice available to a person given the circumstances as they see it.
- Respect for the other person's model of the world.
- Resistance in a client is due to a lack of rapport. That is there are no resistant clients, only inflexible therapists.

Erickson would also pace a client's experience and then begin to lead them into trance (or downtime). In NLP terms, uptime is when your senses are focused on the outside world, while downtime is related to your inner thoughts. The Meta Model is associated with uptime (i.e. who, what, how specifically), while the Milton Model is associated with downtime. As we go through our daily activities, we are continually cycling through uptime and downtime and are often somewhere in between.

Pacing and Leading

To pace a client, begin by matching and mirroring her physiology, choice of words, tone of voice, etc., then make reference to what she would most likely be seeing, hearing, feeling or thinking (e.g. "As you notice the lights slowly dimming ..." or "As you hear my voice ..." or "As you feel the chair on your back ...", or "As you wonder ...") while speaking slowly in a soft tonally and pacing your speech to her breathing. To lead her into downtime, you would begin to focus her attention inward by saying something such as "You may notice how easy it is to close your eyes whenever you wish to feel more relaxed ..."

The topic of trance and hypnosis is vast. The rest of this article will focus on the Milton Model, which is a set of language patterns used to:

- Pace and lead.
- Distract the conscious mind.
- Speak directly to the unconscious and access its hidden resources.

For more information on hypnosis, the Milton Model and other hypnotic techniques, please see Hypnosis: A Comprehensive Guide by Tad James.

Milton Model: Hypnotic Language Patterns

The Milton Model hypnotic language patterns encourage the listener to move away from detail and content and move to higher levels of thinking and deeper states of mind. Some patterns are used to establish a trance state (or downtime or relaxation in the body). Other patterns are used to loosen the listener's model of the world from which he is expressing his current behaviours and to consider a more expansive interpretation of what is possible.

You will notice that many of these language patterns are identical to those of the Meta Model. The difference being that for the Meta Model, the client is being vague and we ask specific questions to assist him in getting clarity on his issue/problem. For the Milton Model, we use some of the same language patterns, but this time we wish to be vague so that the client can easily go into trance and/or from the vague suggestions choose a suggested course of action that will address his problem/issue.

1. **Mind Read:** Claiming to know another's thoughts or feelings without specifying the how you came to that knowledge.

"I know that you believe ..." or "I know you're thinking ..."

2. **Lost Performative:** Expressing value judgments without identifying the one doing the judging.

"Breathing is good."

3. **Cause & Effect:** Implies one thing leads to or causes another; that there is sequence of cause/effect and a flow in time. Includes phrases such as: "If ..., then ...; As you ..., then you ...; Because ... then ..."

"If you can hear my voice, then you can learn many things."

4. **Complex Equivalence:** Attributes meaning to something that may or may not have a 'cause' capability.

"Being here means that you will change easily."

5. **Presupposition**: The linguistic equivalent of assumptions.

“Will you be changing your attitude now or later today?” It is assumed the person will change their attitude, the only unknown is when.

6. **Universal Quantifier**: Universal generalizations without referential index.

“Everyone; No one; All; Every”

7. **Modal Operator**: Words that refer to possibility or necessity or that reflect internal states of intensity tied to our rules in life.

“You should care for others.” or “You must resolve this issue.”

8. **Nominalization**: Words which are formed as nouns and which are shorthand for processes.

“People can come to new understandings.” Here 'understandings' is used as a noun and is shorthand to describe the on-going experience of 'understanding' or 'making sense of something'.

9. **Unspecified Verb**: Implies action without describing how the action has/will take place.

“He caused the problem.”

10. **Tag Question**: A question added at the end of a statement/question, designed to soften resistance. It is used to ratify to the listener that he has or will actually manifest the action. It has the structure of a question and often the tonality of a statement.

“Your perception of life is changing, isn't it.”

11. **Lack of Referential Index**: An expression without specific reference to any portion of the speakers/listeners experience.

“People can change.”

12. **Comparative Deletion** (Unspecified Comparison): A comparison is made without specific reference to what or to whom it is being compared.

“You will enjoy it more.” or “That one is better.”

13. **Pace Current Experience:** Using sensory-grounded, behaviorally specific information to describe current experience.

“You are reading this article.”

14. **Double Bind:** Invites choice within a larger context of 'no choice'.

“Do you want to begin now or later?” or “Do you want to go into trance before or after you sit down?”

15. **Embedded Commands:** This is a command that forms part of a larger sentence that is marked by using italics or a subtle change in voice tonality or body language and is picked up by the reader's or listener's unconscious.

“I will not suggest to you that *change is easy.*” or “Do you think *this article should be sent to your friends?*” or “You can learn this material *easily.*”

16. **Conversational Postulate:** Are questions that operate at multiple levels. Although they require only a simple yes or no answer, they invite you to engage in an activity in some way. Often they contain an embedded command.

“Can you open the door?” or “Can you choose to change?”

17. **Extended Quote:** Is a rambling context for the delivery of information that may be in the format of a command.

“Many years ago, I remember meeting a wise old man who taught me many useful things. I cherished all of his advice. I remember one particular day when he said to me “Change is easy and can be fun.”

18. **Selectional Restriction Violation:** Attributing intelligence or animation to inanimate objects.

“Your chair can support you as you make these changes.” or “Your diary tells interesting tales.”

19. **Ambiguity:** Lack of specificity

a. Phonological: “your” and “you're” - same sound, different meaning.

b. Syntactic: More than one possible meaning. “shooting stars” or “leadership shows” - the syntax is uncertain within the context, i.e. adjectives, verbs or nouns?

c. Scope: “Speaking to you as a changed person ...” (Who is the changed person?) or “The old men and women ...” - the context does not reveal the scope to which a verb or modifier applies.

d. Punctuation: is unexpected and does not 'follow the rules', i.e. improper pauses, rambling sentences, incomplete sentences - all of which ultimately force the listener to 'mind read'.

“Hand me your watch how quickly you go into a trance.”

20. **Utilization:** Takes advantage of everything in the listeners experience (both internal and external environments) to support the intention of the speaker.

Client says: “I don't understand.” Response: “That's right...you don't understand, yet, because you've not taken that one deep breath that will allow the information to fall easily and comfortably into place.”

Or perhaps while working with a client, one of your colleagues mistakenly opens a door. Instead of getting frustrated and annoyed with your colleague, you could say to your client, “You may have heard a door opening and let this be an opportunity to invite new ideas and thoughts into your life.”

And NLP is Much more than that!

This article is based on Roger's book *Live Your Dreams Let Reality Catch Up: NLP and Common Sense for Coaches, Managers and You*, which you can buy from Amazon.com.

The Yin of Language Patterns

The Milton-Model was named for Milton Erickson by the NLP founders, who were introduced to Milton Erickson by Gregory Bateson. The *Milton Model* is a broad variety of persuasive and hypnotic language patterns that move one from the specific toward the general in search of solutions that have been overlooked under one's present model or map of the world.

Milton Erickson was a world-famous hypnotherapist, whose use of *metaphor*, oblique references, vague and permissive language was able to effectively bypass the critical faculties of his clients, and work directly on the subconscious mind. By using vague and permissive language in his suggestions, the client would feel as though they themselves could come up with solutions to their presenting problems, which was indeed the case.

Volumes have been written on the topic of Milton Erickson's language, and it is very profitable to learn. We are indebted to Tad James for the following summary of Milton patterns:

1. *Mind Read*: Asserting that one knows the thoughts or feelings of another without specifying the process by which you came to know their thoughts.

Example: "I know that you want to know..." - *Meta Model* Antidote: "How do you know that?"

2. Lost Performative: *Value* judgments (which may include an unspecified comparison) where the performer of the value judgment is left out.

Example: "And it's a good thing to wonder..." - Meta Model Antidote: "Who says it's a good thing?"

3. Cause and Effect: Where it is implied that one thing causes another.

Examples: If... then... As you... then you... "Because..." - Meta Model Antidote: "Are you sure about the cause of that?"

4. *Complex Equivalence*: Where two things are equated – as in their meanings being equivalent.

Example: "That means..." - Meta Model Antidote: "How specifically does this mean that...?"

5. Presupposition: The linguistic equivalent of assumptions.

Example: *"You are learning many things..."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"How did you know that?"*

6. Universal Quantifier: A set of words which has:

Examples: *"And everything, always..."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"Really? Everything? Everyone?, Always?"*

7. **Modal Operator**: Words, which implies possibility or necessity, which often form our rules in life.

Example: *"That you can, should, must learn..."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"Why do you need to do that now?"*

8. **Nominalization**: Process words (including verbs), which have been frozen *in time* by making them into nouns.

Example: *"...new insights, and new understandings."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"How is it specifically that you come to see or understand?"*

9. Unspecified Verb: Where an adjective or adverb modifier does not specify the verb.

Example: *"And you can, happily."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"And I can **what**, happily?"*

10. Tag Question: A question added after a statement, designed to displace resistance with tacit agreement.

Example: *"Is is not?"* - Meta Model Antidote: *"No, it is not."*

11. Lack of Referential Index: A phrase, which does not pick out a specific portion of the listener's experience.

Example: *"One can, you know..."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"One can **what**?"*

12. Comparative **Deletion** (Unspecified Comparison): Where the comparison is made and it is not specified as to what or whom it was made.

Example: *"And it's more or less the right thing."* - Meta Model Antidote: *"More or less than what?"*

13. *Pacing* Current Experience: Where client's verifiable, external experience is described in a way, which is undeniable.

Example: "You are sitting here, listening to me, looking at me, (etc.)..."

14. Double Bind: Where the client is given two choices (both of which are preferable or desired) separated by an "or".

Example: "*I don't know whether you'll come to realize it earlier or later...*" - Meta Model Antidote: "*Who says I'll come to know it ever?*"

15. Conversational Postulate: The communication has the form of a question – a question to which the response is either a 'yes' or a 'no'. If I want you to do something, what else must be present so that you will do it, and out of your awareness? It allows you to choose to respond or not and avoids authoritarianism.

Example: "Do you feel this is something you understand?"

16. Extended Quotes: Quotes which are extended beyond what is normally used to displace resistance.

Example: "Last week I was with a friend, who told me about something he overheard his co-worker say..."

17. Selectional Restriction Violation: A sentence that is not well formed in that only humans and animals can have feelings.

Examples: "A chair can feel sat on, like a doormat can feel stepped on..."

18a. *Phonological Ambiguity*: Where two words with different meanings sound the same. IE: "Hear", "Here"

18b. *Syntactic Ambiguity*: Where the function (syntactic) of a word cannot be immediately determined from the immediate *context*.

Examples: "They are visiting relatives" "Selling salesmen can be tricky!" "I am really over managing managers."

18c. Scope Ambiguity: Where it cannot be determined by linguistic context how much is applied to that sentence by some other portion of the sentence.

Examples: "*Speaking to you as a child...*" "The old men & women..." "The disturbing noises & thoughts..." "The weight of your hands & feet..."

18d. Punctuation Ambiguity: Either the punctuation is eliminated as in a run on sentence or pauses occur in the wrong place.

Example: "I want you to notice your hand me the glass."

19. Utilization: Remember to utilize all that happens or is said.

Example: Client says: "I am not sold." Response: "That's right you are not sold, yet, because you haven't *tasked the one question that will have you totally and completely sold.*"

Putting it all together:

"I know that you are wondering... and it's a good thing to wonder... because... that means... you are learning many things... and all the things, all the things... that you can learn... provide you with new insights, and new understandings. And you can, can you not? One can, you know. And it's more or less the right thing. You are sitting here, listening to me, looking at me, and that means that your *unconscious* mind is also here, and can hear what I say. And since that's the case, you are probably learning about this and already know more at an unconscious level than you think you do, and it's not right for me to tell him, learn this or learn that, let him learn in any way he wants, in any order. Do you feel this... is something you understand? Because, last week I was with Milton who told me about his training in 1979 in Miami when he talked to someone who said, "A chair can have feelings..."

The Milton Model

I wonder, can you easily read and understand the paragraph below? In order to answer the question honestly, I wonder, how will you do that?

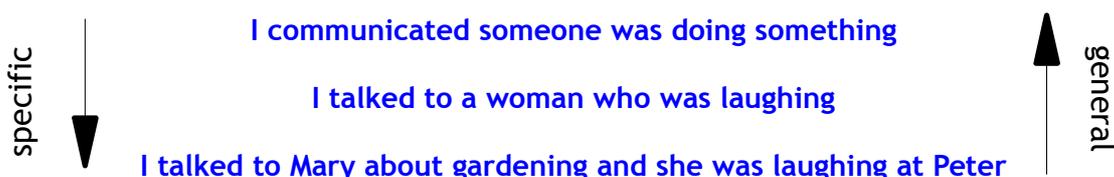
“ I just know you will curious about the many applications of the Milton Model and Its good to be curious and its important too because curiosity leads to experience and experience makes for a greater more generalised body of knowledge in many very specific aspects and so an equivalently adaptable set of resources and of course before you go off and explore this more thoroughly for yourself and make a proper evaluation of what has been proposed you might like to consider that it is you that always in all circumstances interprets and classifies all of the information you consider you couldn't not do things that you must do and also you must not necessarily do things you could do so thinking about that the situation the learning and classification the experience and certain evaluations you may like to learn to understand to express what is important both to you and for you can you not the same way people integrate what is immediately relevant in the same way your learnings can be more than you consciously realise you are aware and you can know your own thought processes including a more fundamental awareness with your own deeper practical understandings and you could choose to learn this much more easily than you thought would have been possible or you could simply realise you already know all the structure and words and know you already know it on many levels that choice is up to you you know some people say that learning is very seldom learning something entirely new when it is entirely new its even easier and learning is often a matter of creating new connections and new categories and honestly knowing there is often more than one explanation of a series of results that you will now and in the future have as information and resources that you can use them in all ways you see for to use them as you will ”

The Milton Model was 'modelled' and subsequently coded by Bandler and Grinder from the American Psychiatrist and Hypnotherapist Milton H Erickson. The 'Milton Model' is not what Erickson used to use, do or apply, it's an interpretation. The Milton Model is the codification of the language patterns Grinder and Bandler acquired from modelling or studying Erickson.

The language Erickson used with clients was just a small proportion of his overall attitude and approach to therapy. This 'Milton Model' is another linguistic model. As such it is something all natural speakers and speakers of english can already do. You know this already at an unconscious level. Now it is simply a matter of drawing and focusing your attention ...

Some say the Milton Model is the inverse of the Meta-Model. Some are absolutely correct, some are absolutely incorrect and there is plenty of room for crossover. The Meta Model is about detecting linguistic statements that 'impoverish' people and then offering or applying a specific verbal response in order to *attempt* to assist the the client in expanding their own thinking and ultimately attain some therapeutic goal. Also the Meta-Model is about being specific, very specific and so transferring high quality information. ***The Meta-Model can, very simplistically be reduced to two statements***

- What ***specifically***
- How ***specifically***



The Milton Model is concerned with using language in a 'artfully vague' way with the **express purpose** of creating the context where a client can spontaneously begin the process of therapeutic change for themselves. The idea of 'artfully vague' is a rather poor way of conveying 'the intention to create the context for beneficial change'. There is a very definite purpose behind the glib statement of 'artfully vague' and that is the overriding intentionality. The Milton Model can, very simplistically be reduced to two statements

- What - *unspecified*
- How - *unspecified*

The **purpose** of being intentionally vague is to allow your client maximum range of their own creativity to fill in, delete (or add to), distort and generalise for themselves.

- Deletion - remove what is, or is not relevant
- Distort - creatively create and shift meanings
- Generalise - to learn and classify

The Patterns

The following *labels* for groups of experiences are not important - UNLESS you plan to teach this to the people who like and or need labels in order to process their learning. For all other people or those with feet in both camps, the labels are useful 'handles' for getting hold of a series of examples of a particular pattern, learning them and then collectively, having grasped one particular pattern have a reference name for the pattern and it's application.

This is like saying the word Dogs or Tables. Immediately you have reference for the generalised characteristics that accompany the labels Dogs and Tables. You may find if you check your internal representations that when you hear / see / comprehend the word Dog - you have a particular dog in mind. Anyway to say it again, that labels are what you make, take or currently understand them to mean.

Here is an interesting question for you: ***Do you want to learn the patterns first or do you want to know just some of the things you can do with the patterns? Hold onto that answer even if you don't know it consciously yet.***

Mind Read

I know you probably won't be interested in what I have to say
I understand you will want to start using this in your own ways very soon
You know, you will want to talk to her later

Lost Performative

It's good to be curious
It's important to try new things
learning new stuff **is great**

Cause effect

Running will **make** you become healthier
I didn't complete the homework **because** Auntie Sue came to stay
IF you ordered it THEN you **have** to eat it!

Complex Equivalence

Practising **means** your performance improves
I have started **so** I will finish
Your looking at me that way **means** you have a question

Presuppositions

A topic all in and of itself. Before you continue to learn more of this though, ask yourself a question. In what ways are you currently aware that your learning is actually altering in beneficial ways your ability to operate with more resources in the world?

Universal Qualifiers

you **always** make me laugh!
you **never** do anything interesting any more!
Everybody is capable of more than they currently know.

Modal Operators (necessity and possibility)

I **can't** finish on time
you **must** finish it soon!
I **could** finish it by tomorrow

Nominilisations

Its an interesting **situation**
your **curiosity** about this **society** is incredible
Her **decision** is still causing her **pain**

Unspecified Verbs

Run to the shops
I saw her **walking** down the street before
pay attention to that person

Tag Questions

You can easily understand **can you not?**
Everybody does something **do they not?**
You will be putting your new skills into practice whether you know it or not **wont you?**

Unspecified Referential Index

She was having a great dance
People are always doing stuff
He said he likes **cats** and **dogs**

Comparative deletions

Its **better** to burn out than to fade away
this subject is **more** interesting
I want the **best** olive oil

Pacing

A topic all in and of itself. As you read this and process information you will soon take another breath and when you do, you may be ready to continue though I don't know if you are ready to learn more now or in a little while?

Double Binds

Will you be more comfortable in this chair or that chair? -> you will be comfortable.
Are you going to tidy your room now or in five minutes? -> you will tidy your room.
I don't know if you want to learn this effortlessly and easily or if you will prefer to simply learn it all without any hassle and no hard work? -> you will learn.

Extended Quotes

I met a person who told me to “enjoy the experience and contemplate your learning later”
people always say “shut up talking about it and get on with it”
Once when I was much smaller a horse said to me “people say the most peculiar things”

Ambiguities

Syntax Ambiguities

they're **relaxing muscles**
they're **specialising people**
we are **understanding people**

Punctuation Ambiguities

I know people who can relax very **easily** take your next breath
I can see on your wrist you are wearing a **watch** closely what I do
As you breath in and **outside** are many things you can experience

Phonetic Ambiguities

in security, insecurity
a part, apart
wait, weight

Scope Ambiguities

Its full of beautiful **people and actors**
i would like you to draw me a picture of yourself **in the nude**
they are dancing **men and women**

Conversational Postulate

I wonder, **could you** listen, and keep your question until later
will you have a deeper understanding later?
Can you help me?

Selectional Restriction Violation

his father is pregnant
even a book has knowledge
a bank account is happy to be full

Utilisation

A topic all in and of itself, yet by just reading this your understanding is changing again.

Embedded Commands \ Questions

as your sitting there, i wonder if **you can relax a little more?**
I am sure **you want to learn** these patterns.
every body including **you want to learn**, we just do it in different ways.

Other Milton Patterns

Unconditional Acceptance
Tasking
Metaphor
Nested / Embedded / Interrupted Metaphor
Time Orientation
Analogue Marking
Outcome Orientation
Utilisation
Pacing
Splitting
Future Pacing
Direct Intervention
...
...
...