

Unit 5

Use of Anchors

Creating a Desired State

Basic Anchoring Techniques

One of the basic tenets of NLP is that in order to manage your life, you must be able to understand and manage your thought processes, thereby managing the outcome of any situation. Anchoring takes this one step further by helping you summon up a state of mind at will.

To start, think of the five sensory systems of NLP: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (feelings), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). Now, think of how a single image, smell, or taste might bring up a related memory or feeling.

This is similar to how anchors work: by associating a sensory stimulus to a state of mind or feeling, you can generate that state whenever you want. It works just a ship's anchor does, to hold us in one state for as long as we need it.

The process for creating an anchor might seem complicated and difficult at first. But it's like any other activity that we learn: practice the steps one by one, slowly, and eventually they will become automatic. You will likely have to go through the process several times for each anchor.

Steps for Creating a Basic Anchor

1. First, find a **quiet area** where you can sit comfortably and be free from distractions.
2. Next, **decide on the stimulus** for your anchor. We usually recommend a simple physical movement, like pinching two specific fingers together or touching the back of your ear.
3. Now, **decide what feeling or state** you want to anchor. Think of a time when this feeling or state was very strong. Use as many of your senses as possible.
4. Once you are fully immersed, **perform the stimulus** only as long as the sensation is very strong.
5. Once you no longer feel the stimulus strongly, shake yourself to get out of the anchored state. (This is called **breaking state**.)
6. **Repeat** steps three through five several times.
7. Now, **think of something else** and then **perform the physical stimulus**. If you recall the state and the experience, you've been successful. If your recall isn't as strong as you would like, repeat steps three through five a few more times.
8. Next, **think of a real life scenario** where you might want to use this anchor. Imagine yourself in the scenario and **use the anchor**. Can you see yourself being successful? If not, repeat steps three through five a few more times.

Collapsing Anchors

Once you have mastered the basic anchor technique, there are a few other ways that you can use anchors. One technique is collapsing anchors to merge two states of mind. For example, you might want to take a confused state and turn it into a more orderly mindset, but still keep the curiosity that you feel when in that initial state.

How to Merge Two States

1. First, find a **quiet area** where you can sit comfortably and be free from distractions.
2. Next, **choose your stimulus**. We recommend using the knuckles on a specific hand although you can use different points on your arm or leg.
3. Decide on the **state that you want to change**. Re-experience this state. Anchor it by touching the first knuckle on the chosen hand.
4. Now **break state** by shaking yourself or thinking of something different (like your grocery list).
5. Decide on the **state that you want to have**. Re-experience this state. Anchor it by touching the second knuckle on the chosen hand.
6. **Test the anchors** by repeating steps three through five, being sure to break state between the end and beginning of each test.
7. Now **touch both knuckles at the same time**. You should feel confused and then more integrated as the two states meet. If the process doesn't work, try touching your second knuckle a second or two before touching the first one. Or, you may have to repeat steps three through five again.
8. Next, **think of a real life scenario** where you might want to use this technique. Imagine yourself in the scenario and **collapse your anchors**. Can you see yourself being successful? If not, repeat steps three through five a few more times.

Chaining Anchors

Another anchoring technique allows you to move between two states that are very far apart – say, panic and solitude.

How to Chain Anchors

1. First, find a **quiet area** where you can sit comfortably and be free from distractions.
2. Next, **decide on the stimulus** for your anchor. We recommend a series of points on your arm or leg.
3. Now, **decide what feeling or state** you want to anchor (for example, panic). Think of a time when this feeling or state was very strong. Use as many of your senses as possible.
4. Once you are fully immersed, **perform the stimulus** only as long as the sensation is very strong.
5. **Break state.**
6. Identify the **next state** (for example, mild anxiety). Immerse yourself in it and anchor it using the next spot on your chosen limb.
7. **Break state.**
8. **Repeat steps three through seven** until you have reached the desired state.
9. **Test** all anchors. Remember to break state between each one.

- 10. Perform the **first** anchor action. Once you are fully immersed, perform the **second** one. Once you are fully immersed in that state, let go of the first anchor and perform the third. **Continue** until you reach your destination.
- 11. **Let go of your stimulus** and experience the desired state.
- 12. **Repeat** steps 11 and 12 until you have this technique mastered.
- 13. **Break state.**
- 14. **Perform the first anchor action.** If you recall the state and the experience, you've been successful. If your recall isn't as strong as you would like, repeat steps 11 and 12 a few more times.
- 15. Next, **think of a real life scenario** where you might want to use this anchor. Imagine yourself in the scenario and **use the anchor**. Can you see yourself being successful? If not, repeat steps 11 and 12 a few more times.

Test Your Knowledge

Small Group Work

Think of some scenarios where you might want to collapse anchors.

Think of some scenarios where you might want to chain anchors.

Identify the desired state for some common scenarios (such as giving a presentation).

Chunking Information

The 7±2 Rule and the Ladder of Abstraction

One of the key problems in communication is that everyone has a different interpretation of reality. As well, we often expect people to know exactly what we mean – even when we ourselves don't know!

NLP offers some tools to help us understand exactly what information we're communicating so that we can send the right content to others. The most basic principle is the 7±2 rule which comes from a study done by psychologist George Miller. Miller found that we can hold five to nine chunks of information (in other words, **seven plus or minus two**) in our short term memory. Now, what constitutes a chunk or piece of information? Well, there is no real answer. It depends on the information and how familiar you are with the topic. What is important to remember is that the more you can relate pieces of information to each other, the more people will remember.

It's also important to know what type of chunk you should present. Imagine one chunk as a ladder, with very general (or abstract) information at the top and very specific information at the bottom:



This is also known as the **ladder of abstraction**. Depending on the situation, you might want to **chunk down** information (get more specific) or **chunk up** information (create a broader overview).

Pairs Exercise

