

Anchoring Technique

What is an Anchor?

“An anchor refers to an internal or external representation that triggers another representation” (Bodenhamer & Hall, 2002). In other words it is the process by which you can do, say, or think something and it causes you to experience a memory, feeling, or behavior. In neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) “anchoring refers to the natural process by which any element of an experience (any sensory modality component) can re-create (evoke) the entire experience” (Bodenhamer & Hall). Psychologists understand this to be Pavlov’s stimulus-response reaction.

Examples of Anchoring

Finding a special piece of clothing such as a wedding dress, graduation gown, or sports uniform can instantly transport you back to that moment when you wore it years before.

Walking into a loved ones house after you have been away many years brings back memories and feelings that you had experienced when you visited as a child.

Baseball players will address home plate the same way each time they are up to bat. This will “prepare them” to hit that home run.

The smell of pumpkin pie makes the mouth water and elicits memories of Thanksgivings gone by.

A food that made you ill after eating it may be avoided, even for years.

Steps to Anchoring

1. Establish rapport and explain the process.
2. Decide on the way you will set the anchor (finger pinch, touching the back of the hand, making a fist, saying a word, using a fragrance, holding an object, looking at a picture, etc.).
3. Elicit the desired state (confidence, relaxation, focus, forgiveness, joy, in the zone, etc.) by imagining going back to time when you felt that way. Really involve all your senses as if you were there now.
4. Set the anchor at the moment of highest intensity of the desired state.
5. Now, break or interrupt the desired state by releasing your anchor and saying or doing something unrelated such as rubbing your hands together, taking a deep breath, asking about the weather.
6. Trigger the anchor by firing it off again. Notice the subtle state change.
7. If there is no change, repeat the process really focusing on the desired state as you reset it.

Bodenhamer, B.G. & Hall, L.M., 2002. *The user’s manual for the brain: The complete manual for neuro-linguistic programming practitioner certification*. Carmarthen, Wales: The Cromwell Press.