

What Is Anchoring?

As you'll recall, anchoring is how we get into the right state for what we want to do. You connect a symbol with the desired state, or resource state. It's called a resource state, because you are more resourceful when you are in that state. Of course, we mean resourceful for certain things.

If you have intense confidence and a desire for opportunity as a resource state, it would be very good for a job interview, and maybe not so good for being a grief counselor. You'd want to be in a somewhat different state for that. And you would benefit from yet another state to fully enjoy a Greek wedding.

Once you have your symbol, you fire the anchor in order to trigger the associated resource state. This will be very clear once we have covered some examples. Perhaps the most commonly used anchor for personal use is the hand position, but you can get very creative with all aspects of anchoring.

How Does Anchoring Work?

Anchoring is related to something called behaviorism. Behaviorism tells us how to do behavior modification. This is a collection of methods used to train animals to do tricks; animals like dolphins in a water park that do back flips, and dogs in movies that put their paws up over their eyes. The amazing thing about behavior modification is that it does not require a conscious mind in order to work.

After all, it works on all sorts of animals. This means that it uses very powerful and primitive aspects of your nervous system in order to work.

Yes, it works very well on human beings as well, because we have the same brain components as animals do, though we have more. That's why we were training them instead of the other way around.

When an anchor is fired each time you are in a certain state, your body associates that state with the anchor. At first, the anchor is a neutral stimulus. It doesn't do anything much. But once that anchor is associated with the state, you can trigger that state by firing the anchor. The trick, as you will see, is to get that anchor associated with the right state.

In behavior modification, this is called associative conditioning. Conditioning means that you create a response that happens every time there is a certain stimulus. Associative conditioning means that the response comes to be associated with another stimulus, in this case, an anchor that you can use to your own benefit.

Behavior modification is at the heart of problems like procrastination. That's why we combine communication with understanding of the nervous system. With that, we can create solutions that run themselves. If you had to think about every strategy that you use for excellence, you'd run out of brain power very fast. That's why people don't usually get very amazing changes out of a self-help book or TV show.

What people don't realize is that anchors are constantly influencing our behavior. Being in your workplace becomes an anchor for workplace behavior. Being downtown may

trigger your desire to visit a favorite watering hole or ice cream parlor. Parents help their children get to bed and fall asleep by having certain things, like music, happen at certain times of the evening. It's called the evening ritual.

That's a good choice of words, since rituals are anchors that help to trigger states. The soldier who pulls out the locket from his girlfriend back home and looks at her picture is firing an anchor. It gives him some feelings of security and warmth. The non-technical word here is solace. It gives solace.

So an object can be an anchor. There is the action or ritual of manipulating it, there is the visual impression, the kinesthetic aspect of how it feels, and perhaps the sound.

So Anchors Can Be in any Sense Mode?

Yes, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic anchors are all used in NLP. Kinesthetic anchors involving a physical position or point of touch are very common, because you don't have to have anything with you in order to use it. Mental visual symbols or mental pictures are also convenient, as are inner verbal statements. Anchors can be external or internal.

External visual anchors can include a ring or bracelet. However, they may be diluted by the fact that you may look at them a lot without being in the desired state. So when it comes to visual symbols, we recommend using an internal one.

If you need to feel grounded, you might visualize a circle that appears to have been created by a Zen calligrapher.

The nature of the symbol makes it easy to establish and recall, and it is not one that you would think of at random; it has a special purpose.

A person such as a great historical or religious figure might serve the purpose. You would put them in a special frame or something so that the image is specialized just for this purpose. You might come up with special objects or places that have sentimental or symbolic value.

When using sound as an anchor, again, we recommend internal use. You can imagine any sound that you would not normally hear. If you go digital, a special phrase can do the trick. Prior to doing something that arouses anxiety, you might say, "Piece of Cake!" meaning, it's as easy as eating a piece of cake.

Kinesthetic anchors can be especially powerful. When you are going into a situation where you need to feel supported, you might imagine a hand on your shoulder, a hand that belongs to a historical or religious figure who is known for compassionate leadership.

You can lace your fingers opposite to the way you would normally do it, so that it feels different.

You can make a pattern such as a circle with your fingers.

You can touch a specific point that is not too awkward-looking to reach.

You can even create combinations, such as having a phrase and a hand position at the same time.



Get hundreds of free NLP resources at:

www.nlpkb.com