

## Life's Paradox

uncommon reflections of life matters

# The Magic of Rapport

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Imagine you have a consistent set of procedures at your fingertips to win any argument, and still be liked. Negotiate any deal, get what you want, and still have a good relationship with the other party. Persuade and influence with integrity. Communicate with ease, eloquence and elegance.

In the first article of this series, *The Magic in NLP*, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) was introduced as a soft skills tool to help run, manage or lead you and your business to where you want to go. NLP can be summed up as a behavioural science of excellence modelling top performers of any field as a transferable skill. NLP originated in the USA in the mid-1970's when John Grinder and Richard Bandler modelled outstanding communicators. These methodologies can be applied to business and our daily lives.

One of the NLP applications is simply building rapport.

## Rapport

Rapport is the most important component of NLP. You can be technically competent at NLP. However, if you are unable to build and maintain relationship with the people you are relating to, it will be difficult to build trust and respect. NLP without rapport is like a

sailing boat without wind. You may have the vessel, but it is unlikely to get where you are planning to go.

A big part of what business professionals do is building relationships with their customers. No matter how superior our product or technical expertise is, we are ultimately people dealing with other people. Unless we are in rapport with our customers, they are unlikely to take our advice. Isn't it your experience that we don't like taking guidance unless it is from a friend, a trusted colleague or a professional we respect and like?

Building rapport between people in any relationship can be defined as trust, being on the same wavelength or respect. If it is not happening 'naturally' then it may be necessary to systematically build rapport.

Rapport occurs through building similarities at the *unconscious* level. This means that you are looking for similarities in their needs, behaviours, business or personal qualities that can be drawn upon to show the 'connection' between you. Obvious attempts to build rapport could be seen as mimicking, insincerity or condescending. This in turn can break rapport and create an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion. It is necessary to use the process of rapport building so that the other person is unaware that you are doing anything that could make them aware you are 'trying' hard to get along.

I wonder if you can remember a time when there was a salesperson who tried so hard to be in rapport by agreeing with you so overtly that you became suspicious and irritated.

Rapport is a natural process which occurs without conscious attention between good friends, close allies and comfortable acquaintances. We do not need to use conscious rapport building techniques when all is well and the conversation and interpersonal relating is operating with high quality. Rapport building skills are needed when the relationship is not going well; when you disagree with them; when they are different to you; when there appears to be nothing in common. Rapport building skills are a must when you don't 'like' the person. Ever had customers, colleagues or team members that fit this bill?

Before applying the following extremely effective rapport building tools, it is necessary to check that you have an ***intention to build rapport*** with the other person. If there is no intention to 'get along', rapport building will not work because the intention is counter productive to your actions. People who are like each other, like each other. People who don't like each other, have their attention on the difference between each other. Perhaps that's why there are so many "mother-in-law" stories on this exact point!

The process of rapport building involves ***pacing and leading***.

## Pacing

Pacing is the process of building similarities at an unconscious level. It is the process of establishing the 'bridge' of commonality between two or more people, and must be done outside the conscious awareness of the other person. Pacing needs to be done with an intention of respect and honouring the other person. In order to pace another person, the behaviour of matching and mirroring is used.

To just pace would create rapport between two or more people. However, it does not allow for a relationship to move or develop in any particular direction. E.g. You may have paced your team members well and they feel you understand them. However, you do not utilize this rapport to directionalize and guide them towards the business vision. So they continue to do exactly what they like and you feel awful because you have pleased everybody else but yourself. To develop or take the relationship in a particular direction, leading needs to occur. The test of rapport is when they follow your lead.

## Leading

Leading is changing your behaviour so the other person follows. Rapport needs to be established before leading will be effective. You cannot lead someone over a bridge before first building it.

If the other person does not follow your lead, then it is an indication of insufficient pacing. Any resistance is a sign of insufficient rapport. For instance, if you have not established enough pacing, you will notice the customer raising many objections to your proposed plan for delivery of product or service options.

## Just do it....

NLP is a practical technology. Reading it and keeping it cerebral is not useful. Just jump in and try one bit at a time. What is the worst thing that can happen? You will learn something!

The following is a variety of ways to establish rapport in a meaningful way. The outcome of mastering the art of pacing will be the ability to establish rapport with whomever you choose. E.g. difficult customers with a multitude of unreasonable complaints, high maintenance team members whose invaluable skills outweigh their personalities (or lack of).

It is extremely important to be graceful and respectful in your pacing so that what you are doing does not come into the conscious awareness of the other person.

### Physical Pacing

Whole body matching:	Adjust entire body to match other person
Part body matching:	Pacing only part of body to match a part of theirs
Half body matching:	Match upper or lower portion of other person's body
Gestures:	Own graceful movements to match other person's gestures
Breathing:	Adjust own breathing to be in sync with other person
Head/Shoulders angle:	Match characteristic poses other person offers
Facial expression:	Match other person using face, eg. Wrinkles nose, puckers lips, raise eyebrows
Personal space:	Note distance other person 'comfortable' with

### Vocal pacing

Vocal qualities:	Match tonality, tempo, volume and intensity of voice
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### 'Model of the world' pacing

Common ground:	Finding content in common. Common ground in conversation
Ideas:	Supporting ideas that come up in conversation and allowing them to own them

### Language pacing

Repetitive phrasing:	Match own language the repeated phrases of other person
Representational systems:	Detect & match own language to primary sensory (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) predicates of other person E.g. Highly visual person uses words like "look, see, clear, vision, imagine, bright, shiny" Kinesthetic person prefers "feel, handle, grasp, touch base"

### Advanced pacing

Crossover mirroring:	Using one aspect of your behaviour to match a different aspect of other person's e.g. Adjusting your voice tempo to match rhythm of person's breathing; pacing eye blinks with your finger or head nods, pacing voice tempo with head nods, etc ....
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The more you apply some of these seemingly simple ideas day to day, the more quickly you will notice the transformation in your people management skills and hence, the direction of your ideal way of running a business. Furthermore, these techniques can be used to motivate your kids, help relate better to your significant other, persuade and influence all those meaningful people in both your personal and professional life. Life will never be same again.

And that is the magic of rapport.

## Bibliography

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**About the Author:** **Dr Yvonne Sum** is a pioneer in Parent Leadership coaching. She is on a quest to co-create joyful learning partnerships between parents and children to simultaneously bring out each other's authentic best. She inspires parents to learn from our children mirroring to us what we most need to learn about ourselves and vice-versa. Through her series of **Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC)** programs, Dr Sum is committed to transform leaders of tomorrow today by highlighting family values and celebrating parents as role models and heroes in life who proactively unleash our children's potential through self actualization, intentional living and powerful leadership centred on love and high purpose. She expresses this passion to bring out our authentic best through her roles as an international speaker, writer, transformational corporate facilitator, executive and parent Meta-Coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming trainer, business woman, wife and mother. Please visit [www.dryvonnsum.com](http://www.dryvonnsum.com) for more information.