

# Parents' Handbook



# **Parents' Handbook**

## **NLP & Common Sense Guide for Family Well-Being**

**Roger Ellerton, PhD, CMC**

Parents' Handbook:  
NLP & Common Sense Guide for Family Well-Being

by Roger R. W. Ellerton, PhD, CMC

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## Preface

I am not a child psychologist, social worker, teacher, doctor, guidance counselor, early childhood educator, daycare worker or family therapist. I do not have any of these credentials. If I did, I would undoubtedly think like them and give you similar advice and ideas. Their advice and ideas are useful and available in many books and magazines.

Then what are my credentials? I am the father of four wonderful children, who, as they grew up, challenged me to their full capacity in many different ways. At times I surpassed my expectations as a parent and other times I struggled. Through it all I did the best that I knew, to the best of my ability. Simply put, when you become a parent you are not handed a manual that will answer all your questions or cover all situations. For many, the “manual” you bring to parenting is the one you learned from observing your parents. If you perceived what your parents did as good, you did that. If you were hurt or felt disadvantaged in some way by your parents’ actions, you swore to do something different. Exactly what, you didn’t know. Then, when pressured by circumstances, not feeling good about yourself or being resentful of your partner, you dragged baggage from your past and manifested those parental behaviors you swore not to repeat.

As well as having learned much about being a parent, for almost twenty years I have been a student and trainer of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). NLP is about how you communicate with yourself, and based on the results of this, how you engage in conversation with others. NLP is also about modeling people who are excellent at what they do and making these skills and abilities available to other people. I wish I had known about NLP when I first became a parent. In fact, I wish I’d had the opportunity to learn and practice NLP concepts when I first went to school. I’m sure that my experiences growing up would have been that much richer.

Given what I know today and will share with you in this book, I know that as a parent I could have done much better or achieved the same results with a great deal less stress and anguish for everyone involved.

As an NLP trainer, my students have often said to me, “NLP is a great resource for parents.” “I wish I had known these ideas when I first became a parent.” “This information will be useful for my children.” Yes indeed, NLP is a great resource for both parents and children. And although some NLP books have been written that

discuss parenting and how children learn, I am not aware of any as comprehensive as this book.

My intention in writing this book is to provide you and your family members with thoughts, insights and tools that will prove to be useful and will ultimately bring about a desired change in your lives. You will learn:

- How to have meaningful, supportive conversations with your partner and children.
- How to address beliefs or habits that get in the way of being an effective parent.
- How to help your children address beliefs or habits that limit them.
- How to support your children to learn effectively.
- The skills and abilities for the six different parenting roles.

Although not written specifically for adolescents, the material is presented at a level older teens can understand and use. With the aid of their parents, younger teens will also find many concepts in this book useful. They will learn how to:

- Be more resourceful with family members, teachers and friends.
- Improve their schoolwork and relationships.
- Contribute to their well-being and that of their family.

NLP is not a linear subject. It does not lend itself to fit easily into specific chapters. Some of the material might certainly be presented in an earlier chapter and vice-versa. You may find that once you have read the entire book, the material at the beginning of the book becomes richer and more accessible. For those of you using the book as a reference, an index has been provided to meet your needs.

Mastering the concepts and techniques in this book will give you a wide array of usable skills to assist your children in preparing themselves for a productive and enjoyable future. I trust this book will be a valuable resource and I look forward to receiving any observations you may wish to share with me.

*Roger Ellerton*  
Ottawa, Canada

# 1. Introduction

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Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories.

—*John Wilmot*

Parenting is not an idea, a concept or a belief. It's a process and therefore is neither static nor fixed in time that results in something special being created. Your activities and responsibilities as a parent evolve with your children, taking into account their needs – physical, social, emotional and intellectual – and your ability to be aware of and to meet these needs. As an effective parent, you help your children overcome perceived limitations to do their best and to be a valued member of the family. All the while, you bump up against your own limitations – many of your own making.

*Parents' Handbook: NLP & Common Sense Guide for Family Well-Being* provides you with tools, techniques and approaches to improve the way you communicate, to be available emotionally and physically and to successfully fulfill the different roles expected of you as a parent. This book draws on an area of personal development called neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Those who have experienced or know NLP describe it in different ways. For me there are three critical, related aspects:

- Communicating effectively – with yourself and then with someone else. Do your body language, tone of voice, choice of words and energy you exude support you in achieving what you desire?
- Being resourceful in the moment. When you engage in these conversations, do you feel good about yourself, those you are with and the circumstances? Are you resourceful – confident, calm, humorous – both inside and out? Are you able to create an environment where those you are speaking with – your partner,<sup>1</sup> your children and their teachers – feel resourceful as well? Or does past baggage get in your way?

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<sup>1</sup> Partner will refer to anyone who interacts with your children in a parenting role, for example, a spouse, biological parent not living under the same roof, adoptive parent, etc.

- Stepping outside the box. We all limit ourselves in some way. The key is to become aware of these self-imposed limitations and then to make a choice as to whether they will continue to limit us.

You are probably already using NLP concepts to some degree. NLP has its roots in real life behavior rather than in theory and research. NLP is about how people are successful at whatever they do; how they choose to enhance their lives so they can achieve their desires. NLP provides ways of helping anyone become more competent at what they do, more in control of their thoughts, feelings and actions, more positive in their life and better able to achieve results.

This book does not pretend to know what is best for you, nor will it tell you how you and your children should live your lives. It provides a toolkit for healthy parenting and it is the manual on parenting you didn't get when your children were born. It's about recognizing you have choices – you are constantly choosing. You have the choice of parenting the way you were parented (and no doubt you have some valuable experiences to draw on) and getting similar results, or you can choose to do something different and augment your parenting skills with new and effective tools and concepts.

## **1.1. Who would use this book?**

This book can be used by a variety of audiences:

- Parents who are looking for effective ways to communicate with and support both their children or partner.
- Grandparents and others who from time to time fill the role of parent.
- Teachers who wish to connect with their students in a different way and truly make a difference.
- Teens – with their parents' assistance – who desire effective ways to communicate with family members, friends and teachers, and who are looking for new ways to learn.
- Coaches and those in the helping professions. The concepts and ideas presented in this book are easily transferable to any situation where two or more people interact.
- NLP practitioners who are looking to augment their toolkit.

The ideas in this book are sound. They work if you choose to use and apply them consistently.

## 1.2. Getting the most out of this book

The material has been grouped into eight chapters, each with a particular focus. Due to the non-linear nature of NLP, this is not the only way to group the material. To satisfy a particular need, you may want to make notes and, upon completion of the book, review material from some of the earlier chapters. I strongly recommend marking up the book with your notes in the margins as inspiration strikes you. When you've finished, it will be that much easier to return to passages you found of particular significance.

The NLP self-discovery exercises can be done by you, or you can lead your adolescent children through them. I've found that it's often more fun and the person engaging in the exercise gets better results if someone shares their journey by coaching them through the exercises. A coach helps the participant stay focused and honest. Their participation can range from reading the instructions and offering encouragement to using rapport, questioning, reframing – basic concepts that are presented later in this book.

I have included the words “common sense” in the subtitle, because often after I've explained an NLP concept or technique, people remark, “But isn't that just common sense?” Yes, it is, yet until these ideas are brought to your attention, they are outside of your conscious awareness and not always accessible to you.

The concepts in this book are applicable in all areas of your life, not just in your role as parent. You are limited only by your imagination in your desire to help your children and choose the life you want to live.

To get the most out of this book, I encourage you to:

- Have an outcome in mind for reading this book, other than to simply read it. The Law of Attraction tells us to focus on what we want in life. What do you want for yourself, your children? Take a few moments to write down at least one outcome to focus on as you read this book.
- As you read each section, find at least one idea or technique you can put into action immediately that will make a positive difference in how you parent and the results you achieve.
- Be prepared to refocus your outcome(s). As you read further in this book, your thoughts about parenting and your children may begin to change, resulting in a need to adjust or establish a completely new outcome.
- As you read this book, imagine placing any mental baggage you've been dragging around, perhaps for years, outside with the trash. You know, the stuff that gets in the way of being the parent you really want to be. Concurrently, you may also wish to clean up and remove unnecessary clutter and baggage in your home or in your children's rooms. Often how you outwardly live your life (e.g.,

a messy room) is a metaphor for what is going on inside of you. Cleaning up one can positively impact the other.

- Be curious as you read this book. When you come across a new idea, ask yourself: How can I use this? Can this be modified to make it more useful in my situation?
- Accept that NLP is a very useful model for understanding human dynamics and change, and that a model is a generalization about some aspect of the world. No model is 100 percent correct. The question is not whether the model is correct; rather, the question is: Does the model produce useful results? The answer with regard to NLP is a clear, resounding, “*Yes, it does!*” As you read this book, you can focus – negatively – on finding the few places where the model may not work, or you can accept the general principles and move forward to being the parent your children need.

This book can be equally useful for your older children. They will benefit from understanding how humans communicate, how to put themselves into a resourceful state and how to speak to others, including their parents, with rapport and respect. Even the chapter on the different parental roles can be useful for your children. They can happily reverse roles and “coach” you in terms of learning to communicate the support they need to be healthy and achieve their desires.

### **1.3. Some ideas as you prepare to read the Parents’ Handbook**

- Your thoughts and actions in the present create your future.

Just by reading this introduction your thought processes will have been shifted, even if only slightly, which may result in a different conversation and subsequent actions in the coming days.

And what if you were to access additional resources that allow you to feel good about yourself and your parenting skills, and to change your thoughts about how you parent – thoughts that allow you to see your children or partner in a more positive light and as a result interact with them differently? Would this not create a new and different future for you and them?

If you live your life searching for excellence, you will find excellence. If you live your life searching for problems, you will find problems. While none of us are perfect, we can choose to focus on the positives. Where do you choose to focus your thoughts?

- There is the story of a traveler who knocks on the door of a house and, while talking with the inhabitants, notices that their dog is sitting in the corner of the yard howling in pain.

“What’s the matter with your dog?” the man asks.

“Oh, he’s sitting on a nail,” reply the inhabitants.

“Why doesn’t he just move?” asks the man in disbelief.

“I guess it doesn’t hurt enough,” is the reply.

What small hurts do you have within yourself or your family? They may be hurts you complain (howl) about to others, yet you hesitate to take action that will address the situation.

As you well know, if the dog continues to sit on the nail, over time this minor wound will begin to fester, causing a much greater problem. In the longer term this may result in the loss of a limb or even the loss of life.

In the same way, unaddressed issues (wounds) within you or your family may in the longer term result in loss of intimacy with your family, losing touch with a dear family member or, in the extreme, the breakup (loss) of the family. If you’re open to it, this book will assist you in addressing your wounds and becoming an effective and loving parent.

If it is to be, it is up to me.

—*Anonymous*