



EYE

MOVEMENTS

Indicators of Thought Processes



BY CHRISTOPH SCHERTLER

Cultivate Life!



Cultivate Life! magazine
is published every week.
Subscribe Free
and never miss an issue

Editors: Greg Willson and Peter Shepherd

The following selection is from
No Limits & Cultivate Life! magazine

PLEASE NOTE:

The opinions expressed in any articles in this publication are those of the individual authors and may not necessarily be shared by the publishers of *No Limits* or *Cultivate Life! magazine*.

Any financial or health advice given in *Cultivate Life!* may not be right for your particular case and you should seek your own profession opinion before acting on said advice.

Copyright © — The publisher, authors and contributors reserve full copyright of their work as featured in *No Limits* and *Cultivate Life!*

No part of this publication may be copied or otherwise reproduced in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Trans4mind

Eye Movements

Indicators of Thought Processes

By Christoph Schertler

NLP has revolutionized the way we look at how human beings make sense of the world. One of the discoveries it is most known for is eye movements as indicators of cognitive processes. In other words, we move our eyes in accordance with our thoughts, and more specifically, our eye movements are related to the representational systems (visual, audio, kinesthetic) in which our thoughts present themselves to our conscious self.

o o O o o

The next time you have a conversation with someone, pay attention to their eye movements. You will find that people's eyes are moving all over the place: up, down, left, and right, as they speak to you. Have you ever wondered why that is? I bet you haven't. I know I never thought about eye movements, until I sat in an NLP seminar.

The first person to suspect a connection between eye movements and thought processes was the American psychologist William James (Principles of Psychology, 1890), who noted that his eyes go upward and sideways when he visualizes something.

In the 1970s, psychologists like Kinsbourne, Kocel, Galin and Ornstein discovered a connection between eye movements and the two hemispheres of the brain. This motivated the founders of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder (and their students) to take a closer look at eye movements.

In 1977 Robert Dilts, an early NLP student and developer, and today one of the fields foremost contributors worldwide, conducted extensive research in this area by measuring the eye movements triggered by a specific set of questions. The subjects of the study were asked questions that were designed to cover all types of cognitive processes: Visual, auditory, kinesthetic and emotional. Furthermore, questions were categorized into memory (non-dominant hemisphere) and construction (dominant hemisphere).

Visual Imagination

Eyes Up and Right



Visual Memory

Eyes Up and Left



Auditory Imagination

Eyes Lateral Right



Auditory Memory

Eyes Lateral Left



Feelings

Eyes Down Right



Inner Dialogue

Eyes Down Left



The experiment resulted in the discovery of the following eye movement patterns:

Eyes looking up and right: Constructed images and visual fantasies.

Eyes looking up and left: Visual memories.

Eyes looking to the lateral right: Constructed sounds and words

Eyes looking to the lateral left: Remembered sounds and words

Eyes looking down and right: Feelings, both tactile (touch, temperature, etc.) and emotional (happy, sad, etc.)

Eyes looking down and left: Self-talk, inner dialogue.

Eyes defocused, looking straight ahead: Quick access of sensory data, usually visual.

Eye Movements (or Eye Accessing Cues) Applied

You might be wondering, what good does it do me to know that my eyes move when I access memories and feelings or construct pictures and sounds inside my head? NLP has found many ways to use eye movements and we will be looking at some of them over the next few issues.

As a start, consider these ideas:

The next time you try to learn how to spell a word, look to your upper left and make an image of the word. This will make it easier

for you to 'see' the word the next time you needed the correct spelling. This won't work as well, if you make the image of the word while looking down. The place for visual memory is up and left.

If you are plagued by a bad mood, look upward. Why? Because that breaks you out of your gloomy emotions, which are connected to looking down. This by itself might not be enough to deal with severe emotional issues, but it can sure snap you out of average moodiness.

The next time you have a dentist work on your teeth, look up and visualize something. Better than looking down, where your kinesthetic sensory input is emphasized. By looking down you intensify your awareness of the drill grinding at your teeth, because that is the eye movement connected to kinesthetic sensations.

When you listen to music you like, you will automatically find yourself looking sideways, because that is the way you can listen best.

When you ask someone a question and they spend a long time looking down before they answer you, chances are they had reservations about giving you an answer. They first had to 'discuss' the answer with themselves before giving it to you.

It is important to notice that in some cases all accessing cues are opposite, i.e. up and left becomes visual constructed (instead of visual memory), lateral left becomes auditory constructed (instead of auditory remembered), etc. This usually happens in case of left-handed people, but not all of them.

Watching other people's eye accessing cues does not tell you what they are thinking. It does, however, tell you in which representational system they are thinking: audio, visual, or

kinesthetic, if they are remembering or constructing something, and if they engage in inner dialogue, or self-talk.

All Human eye movements are related in one way or another to our mental processes. When we focus our eyes on the external world, we gather information about our surroundings, focus on objects or people of interest, or engage in eye contact with others. We can easily observe this kind of eye movement in others and often even interpret its meaning.

When we focus our attention inwards on thoughts and accessing memories, different kinds of eye movements take place. As we access visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) information internally, our eyes wander all over the place. However, they do so systematically, and not randomly (see eye movement chart), as each eye movement is related to a sensory class (VAK) of thought process. Eye movements based on internal processes are harder to observe and interpret than the ones based on an external focus.

Now that you have seen the eye movement chart you might think it is easy to see which representational system (VAK) a person is accessing. That is not necessarily true. In fact, there are a number of reasons, why some people's eye movements do not fit the chart at all.

Exercise:

Ask a friend to do an exercise with you, where you ask them questions and monitor their eye movements. Make sure to keep your questions "clean". What do I mean by clean? I mean, make sure that your question uses the right words. For example:

"What colour is your car?" is a clean question that should produce a visual memory response (eyes move to upper left).

"Could you tell me, what colour is your car?" on the other hand, is not a clean question, because it starts with "Could you..". Your friend might have to start an internal dialogue (eyes down and left) to answer the question "Can I?" first.

Questions can be "contaminated" in more ways than I can explain here, but the basic rule is, ask a straight and simple question that is unlikely to trigger any unwanted thought processes that will result in unexpected eye movements.

Even when you ask clean questions, you will find that in many cases people's eyes do not exactly do what you expected. Here are some possible explanations for deviations from the eye movement chart:

Opposite Eye Movement: You asked your friend "What was the colour of your first bicycle?" and expect them to look to the upper left of their visual field (visual memory). However, they look to their upper right (visual imagination).

Possible Explanations: They never had a bike and are imagining one. Or, they are left-handed, in which case there is a chance all their eye movements are horizontally opposite.

Atypical Eye Movement: You ask your friend: "What does this situation look like to you?" and they move their eyes to their lower right (kinesthetic, feelings) instead of upward (visual).

Possible Explanation: This could mean that two representational systems are overlapping in a particular instance and accessing a

visual stimulus actually leads to a feeling. This phenomenon is called synesthesia and has attracted some attention from researchers. Some more extreme examples of synesthesia are people who can "taste sounds" or "see feelings". A type of synesthesia most people are familiar with is "feeling sounds", as in feeling emotions when listening to music.

Consistent Starting Position: No matter what kind of question you ask, your friend's eyes always go to the same position first, before going anywhere else.

Possible Explanation: Your friend has a "Lead System" (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic) that they have to access in order to get to any other thought process. Most people have a lead system, but are unaware of it.

Eyes Remain Motionless: Upon hearing your question, your friend's eyes remain motionless.

Possible Explanations: This could be an indication of immediate access to the needed information. In other words, no search for information is necessary, because the answer is already available. Like someone being called their name does not have to think about the question if that is his or her name. Another possibility is that your friend has been absentminded or deeply engrossed in thoughts and did not pay attention to your question.

Eyes Move Back And Forth Between Two Positions: Let's say you asked "What kind of car would you like to drive?" and your friend starts looking from her upper left to her upper right, back and forth, back and forth.

Possible Explanation: Your friend is comparing two cars, one that she has seen before (visual memory, upper left) and one that she imagines (visual imagination, upper right).

Eyes Completely Avoid Some Position: No matter what question you ask, your friend does not look to one or more positions.

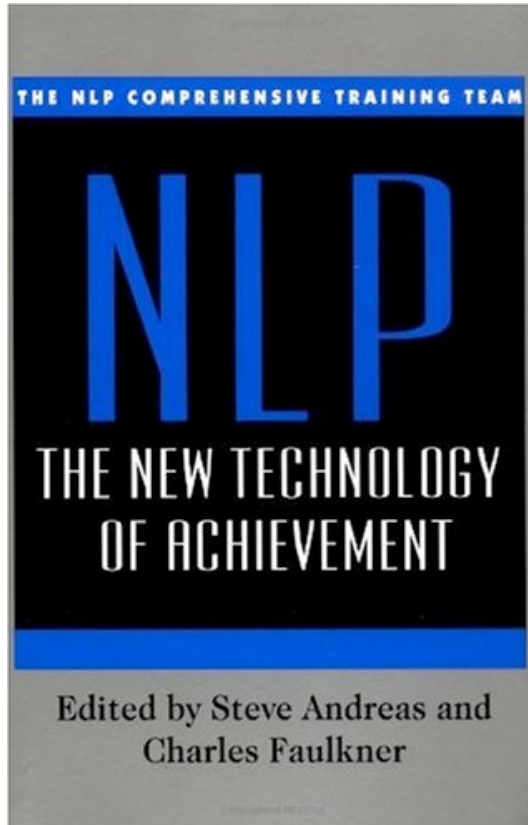
Possible Explanation: Your friend is avoiding that position, either because he has little use for that representational system (e.g. kinesthetic) or because he has memories stored in that position he does not want to access.

References:

Roots of NLP, Dilts, R., 1983.

NLP Vol I., Dilts, R., Grinder, J., Bandler, R. and DeLozier, J., 1980.

Christoph Schertler, NLP Trainer/Coach — Founder PEC, LLC
To find out more visit his website at <http://www.pecoaching.com>



[CLICK FOR INFORMATION OR TO PURCHASE](#)

or copy and paste into your browser:

<http://astore.amazon.com/cultivatelife-20/detail/0688146198>