

*Cognitive  
Behavior  
Technique #30*

*Anchoring*

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# Technique #30

# Anchoring

## INTRODUCTION

Anchors developed as a product of Pavlov's concept of stimulus response. Anchors define the triggers for states and behavior. You can learn how to establish triggers for selected responses that are desired both in yourself and others. In clinical practice, both the theoretical underpinnings and practice directions need to be considered and utilized to their fullest. The connection of cognitive approaches to learning experiences allows anchoring to be used in multiple situations. The use of an anchor can be 'instantaneous'. However reinforcement through repetition is usually necessary. Intensity may allow an effective anchor to be placed once. This fact should raise clinical questions about what is being anchored in highly emotion charged situations.

The notion of 'anchoring' emerged in NeuroLinguistic Programming [NLP] when Bandler and Grinder were first modeling the hypnotic techniques of Milton Erickson. Erickson often used or suggested particular cues as post-hypnotic triggers to help a person change his or her internal state or re-access a hypnotic trance. Grinder and Bandler generalized the use of these cues and triggers to include other types of internal processes, without the need of initially establishing a hypnotic state. By 1976 the first NLP anchoring techniques were developed.

*In Ellen Langer's study of two groups of elderly men (aged 75-80 years), at Harvard University, for 5 days, two comparable groups of men lived in a closely supervised retreat centre out in the country. One group was engaged in a series of tasks encouraging them to think about the past (to write an autobiography, to discuss the past etc.). The other group was engaged in a series of tasks that actually anchored them back into a past time (1959). They wrote an autobiography only up to 1959, describing that time as 'now', watched 1959 movies, had 1959 music playing on the 'radios', and lived with only the artifacts available in 1959. Before and after the 5 days, both groups were studied on a number of criteria associated with aging. While the first group stayed constant or actually deteriorated on these criteria, the second group dramatically improved on physical health measures such as joint flexibility, vision, and muscle breadth, as*

*well as on IQ tests. They were anchored back to being 50 years old, by the sights and sounds of 1959.*

Langer, E.J. *Mindfulness*, Addison Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1989

## THEORY

### **Terminology**

In NLP, five major 'modalities' or sensory means of perceiving the world are recognized: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory. These correspond to the five senses - sight, hearing, touch, scent and taste. In addition to these major modalities, there are various submodalities, the ones of primary interest here being the *internal memory responses* of Internal Visualization and Internal Auditory. The latter can be further split down into direct 'sound' and 'noise' and as internal verbalization or dialogue - commonly called 'thinking' in words. Both the Internal Visualization and Internal Auditory submodalities are internal and are activities of the imagination that can be evoked by the use of words either internally or externally generated. Normal everyday 'thinking' commonly comprises chained images in Internal Visualization and Internal Auditory modes.

Since the body is one unit, and effectively has memory in ALL modes (since the underlying system is interconnected to itself as the nervous system), total memory - as well as being associated chronologically and linearly by related topics in any particular mode - is associative in all modes. This provides the basis for anchoring.

### **Memory and Direct Anchoring**

Memory, as amply demonstrated by Pavlov and others, is associative. This is the principle underlying the technique of direct anchoring, wherein a 'state' (usually of mind) is elicited in the subject and an 'anchor' applied by the operative in some other modality to the given state - e.g., commonly a touch on the shoulder, some specific movement, e.g., waving an arm, moving an object, an auditory experience, and so on.

The full nature of the mechanism of anchoring has not yet been fully explored. Memory, whether it be auditory, verbal auditory, visual, or kinesthetic appears to work in pattern and sequence. The mind does not

consistently recognize all patterns. It tends to recognize those that are seen to be of some value and those which are either particularly unique in some way or repeated. Rhythm, itself a temporal pattern underlying a lot of other patterns and sequence/order, is important in this process as is sequence and pattern - rhythmic or not - in all modalities (to explain, a kinesthetic 'pattern' could be 'rough/smooth/warm/rough/smooth').

So, to say to someone (for instance) 'Remember a time you were wonderfully happy' and simultaneously gripping their shoulder as they access the state may be all well and good, but it is a weak anchor and, without reinforcement, it will soon fade away. Although it might be true that Pavlov's dogs were trained to go for lunch when the bell rang, it didn't happen overnight - it took lots of repetition (changing and reinforcing change of mind-state). Repetition can be viewed as a way of 'programming in' a neuronc pattern and preconditioning before salivation occurred without food being present. As for means of reinforcement, well repetition is the obvious one.

### **Technique of Simple Anchoring**

In a typical case the clinician, by the skillful use of words, will endeavor to evoke an *internal visualization* and/or an *internal auditory* state [say state X] in the subject. As the state peaks in the subject, and the clinician will be seeking non-verbal as well as verbal cues to detect this - the clinician will apply an 'anchor' in some other mode to that being accessed by the subject, typically a touch or grip on some body part for a kinesthetic mode [say touch Cx], and 'anchor' the internal state. This may be reinforced several times for effect and several anchors applied during the course of one session. When the subject returns to 'normality' (i.e. is no longer internally accessing state X), the clinician can re-evoked state X by applying the kinesthetic touch Cx - which by association of that particular touch will cross-link into the *internal visualization* and/or an *internal auditory* modes and the internal state experienced in state X.

In theory, any modalitie(s) may be used to anchor any state. Changes in voice tone/pace can be, and are, commonly used. There are a lot of variations on the basic theme available, but this summarizes the basic principles.

## **Anchoring in Everyday Life**

The previous paragraph described the deliberate use of anchoring in a structured therapeutic situation. In addition to structured anchoring, random anchoring is going on all about us every day of our lives and plays a major part in our general conditioning whether we are aware of it or not. Some simple examples are:

- tying a knot in a handkerchief or similar action to serve as a reminder
- making/reading entries in a diary
- anticipating behavior from someone's (previously 'learned') tone of voice
- anticipating the next event in a previously remembered sequence
- associating a 'theme' tune with a particular TV show
- religious ritual

## **Reciprocal Anchoring**

Memory is associational in all modalities. In other words, to use a simple example of a kinesthetic anchor again, if someone hears the word 'cat' and simultaneously has their shoulder gripped, then next time - but in entirely different circumstances - that same shoulder is gripped in the same manner they will have a tendency to remember the spoken word 'cat' and whatever internal image they evoked that was associated with that word at the time the anchor was applied. But if memory is associational in all modalities, one might ask, what else was going on at the time 'cat' was originally anchored by the shoulder grip? Well, perhaps there was that nasty smell hanging around from the pig farm down the road, the subject was smoking a pipe and had the taste of tobacco in /his/her mouth. The room was really hot (ninety degrees) and s/he was looking at a Picasso hung on the wall. So, s/he has the following associations with that experience: 'cat'/shoulder + pig farm + odor/pipe + tobacco taste + being uncomfortably warm + Picasso painting + other aspects of surroundings.

And that's not all. When the word 'cat' was uttered, let's suppose the subject instantaneously had a visual image of his/her cat, Hector, sitting on her lap and purring. So, next time she strokes her cat, because the internal states are interlinked - no matter how weakly - she will have some recollection of the odor of the pig farm. Likewise, next time she

feels uncomfortably warm, s/he will think of Picasso, being gripped by the shoulder, her cat and the taste of tobacco. ANYTHING present when an anchor is deliberately applied, and ANYTHING the subject might remember at the time all become reciprocally anchored together. The events also become anchored to previous experiences. Obviously, the clinician needs to find ways around this and to find ways of improving the relative strength of deliberate anchors. Usually this is done with careful environmental control.

### **Reverse Anchoring and Conditioning**

As outlined in the simple example above, a shoulder grip can evoke the thought of a cat and any number of other things. Conversely, the thought of 'cat' will evoke the memory of the shoulder grip. That is a fairly obvious statement of reciprocity, and might appear banal until one explores what lies beyond it and what meaning it has in terms of everyday life.

Day to day, human beings tend to behave habitually - live in the same environments, visit the same places, watch the same TV shows, drive the same car for years, interact with the same people. That is in the outside, observable world. Inwardly, we have similar habits - learned habits of language, emotion and thoughts. And here's the key: in terms of reciprocal or 'reverse' anchoring OUR THOUGHTS CONDITION OUR ENVIRONMENT, and OUR ENVIRONMENT CONDITIONS OUR THOUGHTS. This is not a theory, this is actually observable if the reader is sufficiently alert. Since each of us spends a good part of every day in the non-alert state (internal visualization and internal auditory - internal state of 'thinking') and those thoughts are incidentally anchored by association to concurrent ongoing external events, random associations are being constructed by our nervous systems during such periods. Once these anchors are set, they can work in reverse such that events and spatial locations/objects can fire off certain thoughts. This effect will be particularly pronounced if the thoughts are repetitive in nature and carried out in the same physical location in that a feedback process will occur looping thought with spatial anchor.

### **PRACTICE**

#### ***Personal Preference***

To start with, the clinician seeks to identify a situation in which the client

has what s/he considers an undesired response. "What is a situation in which you respond in a negative way that you would like to change?" the clinician then identifies the desired response by asking "How would you LIKE to respond in that situation?" Then the clinician helps the client identify one or more personal resources (generally emotional states) which would be sufficient to enable him/her to respond in the desired way.

### **Anchoring Process**

1. Remember a time when you felt really good – happy, confident, successful, pleased with yourself – (identify the peak moment in that situation).
2. As you recall that time, and the good feelings that went with it, mentally step back inside that memory as though you were there, right now. Be fully associated into that memory – seeing what you saw, feeling what you felt, any smells or tastes. Experience the good feelings – and as you experience them, join your thumb and little finger together and inhale deeply through your nose – as if you are inhaling all those good feelings. Immediately, release the finger, the breath and the memory.
3. Now, select another time when you felt really good about yourself and again identify the peak moment in that situation.
4. Repeat step #2
5. Remember a 3rd time and repeat the process as above.

Anchor on shoulder or knee or back of hand, etc. and tell client to also use an anchor of their own so that it can be taken away with them. Joining thumb and little finger can be substituted for their anchor of choice.

### **DISCUSSION<sup>1</sup>**

'Anchoring' refers to the process of associating an internal response with

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<sup>1</sup> With minor modifications, from an article of the month entitled 'Anchoring' by Robert Dilts.

some external or internal trigger so that the response may be quickly, and sometimes covertly, reaccessed. Anchoring is a process that on the surface is similar to the 'conditioning' technique used by Pavlov to create a link between the hearing of a bell and salivation in dogs. By associating the sound of a bell with the act of giving food to his dogs, Pavlov found he could eventually just ring the bell and the dogs would start salivating, even though no food was given. In the behaviorist's stimulus-response conditioning formula, however, the stimulus is always an environmental cue and the response is always a specific behavioral action. The association is considered reflexive and not a matter of choice.

In NeuroLinguistic Programming [NLP] this type of associative conditioning has been expanded to include links between aspects of experience other than purely environment cues and behavioral responses. A remembered picture may become an anchor for a particular internal feeling, for instance. A touch on the leg may become an anchor for a visual fantasy or even a belief. A voice tone may become an anchor for a state of excitement or confidence. A person may consciously choose to establish and retrigger these associations for him/herself. Rather than being a mindless knee-jerk reflex, an anchor becomes a tool for self empowerment. Anchoring can be a very useful tool for helping to establish and reactivate the mental processes associated with creativity, learning, concentration and other important resources.

It is significant that the metaphor of an 'anchor' is used in NLP terminology. The anchor of a ship or boat is attached by the members of the ship's crew to some stable point in order to hold the ship in a certain area and keep it from floating away. The implication of this is that the cue that serves as a psychological 'anchor' is not so much a mechanical stimulus which 'causes' a response as it is a reference point that helps to stabilize a particular state. To extend the analogy fully, a ship could be considered the focus of our consciousness on the ocean of experience. Anchors serve as reference points that help us to find a particular location on this experiential sea and to hold our attention there and keep it from drifting.

The process of establishing an anchor basically involves associating two experiences together in time. In behavioral conditioning models, associations become more strongly established through repetition. Repetition may also be used to strengthen anchors as well. For example, you could ask someone to vividly re-experience a time s/he was very

creative and pat his/her shoulder while s/he is thinking of the experience. If you repeat this once or twice the pat on shoulder will begin to become linked to the creative state. Eventually a pat on the shoulder will automatically remind the person of the creative state.

### ***'Anchoring' and Learning***

A good way to begin to understand the uses of anchoring is to consider how an anchor can be applied in the context of teaching and learning. The process of anchoring, for instance, is an effective means to solidify and transfer learning experiences. In its simplest form, 'anchoring' involves establishing an association between an external cue or stimulus and an internal experience or state, as in the example of Pavlov ringing the bell for his dogs. A lot of learning relates to conditioning, and conditioning relates to the kind of stimuli that become attached to reactions. An anchor is a stimulus that becomes associated with a learning experience. If you can anchor something in a classroom environment, you can then bring the anchor to the work environment as, minimally, an associative reminder of what was learned.

As an example of this, a research study with students in classrooms had students learn some kind of task in a certain classroom. Researchers then split the class in half and put one of the groups in a different room. Then they tested them. The ones who were in the same room where they had learned the material did better on the exams than the students who had been moved to a different room. Presumably this was because there were environmental cues that were associated with the material they had been learning.

We have probably all been in the situation of experiencing something that we wanted to remember, but when we go into a new environment where all the stimuli are so different, it's easier to forget. By developing the ability to use certain kinds of anchors, teachers and learners can facilitate the generalization of learning. There will certainly be a greater possibility that learning will be transferred if one can also transfer certain stimuli.

There's another aspect to anchoring related to the fact Pavlov's dog had to be in a certain state for the bell to mean anything. The dogs had to be hungry; then Pavlov could anchor the stimulus to the response. Similarly, there is an issue related to what state learners are in, in order to effectively establish an anchor. For instance, an overhead transparency

may be of a map, but it's also a stimulus. That is, it gives information, but it can also be a trigger for a reference experience. An effective teacher needs to know when to send a message or not to send a message. If people have a sudden insight - an 'Aha!' - and you turn on an overhead, it is going to be received in a different way and associated in a different way than if people are struggling with a concept.

Timing can be very important. It is important for a teacher to time the presentation of material in relation to the state of his/her learners. If the teacher has a cognitive package to present, such as a key word or a visual map, s/he must wait for the moment that the 'iron gets hot'. When the teacher senses that there's a kind of a readiness, or a surge, or an openness in the individual or group, at that moment s/he would introduce the concepts or show the key words. Because the point of anchoring is that a teacher is not just giving information, s/he is also providing stimuli that get connected to the reference experiences of the learners. This is why stimuli that are symbolic are often more effective anchors.

The kinds of questions that a teacher needs to answer are, "When do I introduce this idea?" and "How strongly do I want people to experience it, or respond to it?" For example, if the teacher is facilitating a discussion, an issue might arise that is deeply related to beliefs and values that is strongly felt, especially by some people. In that moment, if the presenter puts information out, it becomes connected with that degree of interest or involvement.

The point is that anchoring is not simply a mechanical matter of presenting cognitive maps and giving examples. There's also the issue of the state of commitment or interest of the learners, as well. Sometimes a teacher will want to let a discussion go on, not just because people are making logical connections, but because the energy level of the group is intensifying, and you want to capture that moment. In other times, if the state of the group is low, the teacher might not want to anchor that state to certain topics or reference experiences.

People may use anchors to reaccess resourceful states in themselves as well as in others. It is possible for a teacher, for instance, to use a self-anchor to get into the state s/he desires to be in as a leader of a group. A self-anchor could be an internal image of something that, when thought about, automatically brings on that state. Somebody one is close to, for instance. One could also make a self anchor through an example; i.e.,

talking about one's children, or some experience that has a lot of very deep associations.

In summary, anchors employ the process of association to:

- focus awareness
- reaccess cognitive knowledge and internal states
- connect experiences together in order to:
- enrich meaning
- consolidate knowledge
- transfer learnings and experiences to other contexts

Cues that are anchors can help to transfer learnings to other contexts. The 'cue' used as an anchor may be either verbal, non-verbal or symbolic (a person may even become an anchor). Common objects and cues from a person's home or working environment may make effective anchors.

### ***Establishing an Anchor***

One of the skills of effective teaching or learning is being able to 'imprint' something by catching those moments when information will be associated with positive or powerful internal states. Pavlov found there were two ways of creating associations. One was through ***repetition***, the continual association between a stimulus and a response. The other had to do with connecting an intense internal state to a particular stimulus. People, for example, remember the details of ***highly emotional experiences*** with no repetition at all. The association is made immediately.

These are two important aspects related to establishing an anchor. One is the continued reinforcement of the anchor. Pavlov found that if he started ringing the bell and not giving the food, eventually the response to the bell would diminish and fail. For an anchor to last for a long time, it has to be in some way reinforced. This is an important issue with respect to continued self-learning.

The other aspect has to do with the richness and intensity of the experience one is attempting to anchor.

As an example, let's say a couple is preparing for childbirth. The husband is usually in the role of the coach to the expectant mother. One of the

challenges of being a coach during birth is that the experience is so intense that it's hard to transfer everything you know because the real situation is so different than the one in which you practice. You practice breathing and the various other techniques at home in a comfortable state, but when the reality happens it's a completely different situation that makes it difficult to remember all the techniques that you have practiced.

One helpful strategy is to make an anchor. When the expectant mother is in the state that she wants to be able to maintain throughout the birth process, she can make an internal anchor, such as a symbol. She could be asked, "What would symbolize this state?" Let's say she imagines a nautilus shell - a snail shell that has a big opening on the bottom. The couple could then actually buy one of these shells. Then during all their practice sessions, the expectant mother could focus her eyes on the shell. The shell may then be brought into the hospital during the actual child birth process, and be an ongoing trigger to help generalize the desired state to the actual birthing process.

As another example, let's say a team leader is trying to get a group into a positive state for brainstorming, and has done a very nice job of creating a motivated state. The question is, how can the leader anchor that state so that s/he can get back that same degree of motivation more quickly in the future? One way is through particular behaviors, such as a special eye contact, or facial expressions, that could be used again later to trigger that state. Another way is to use something external as a means to draw the focus of the group - like pointing to a flip chart or referring to a transparency.

### ***Anchoring-Elaboration Cycle***

An anchor is often best established by first associating the cue with the experience, then going through a cycle in which the experience is continually elaborated and the anchor repeated. The 'elaboration - anchoring' cycle is a useful way to reinforce learnings and associations.

After the initial association is made, the clinician or teacher will want to 'elaborate' the number of connections by stimulating and anchoring associations such as, "How does this apply to your work?" "How does this relate to your family?" "How does this relate to a friend, or an ongoing situation?" This is not simply a repetitive reinforcement, it's an

enrichment and an elaboration of the space of the experience that one is trying to anchor to something.

The more that can be elaborated or elicited with respect to a particular concept or reference experience, the stronger that anchor will tend to be. For example, music often affects people because of what was happening to them when they first heard a particular song. Something important or something significant in their life was going on and the song happened to be on the radio. This is the essence of 'nostalgia'.

One can anchor by returning to specific examples, stories, or jokes. Think about being with a group of friends. When you repeat a story about some experience, you recreate the same feeling that you had when you were together before.

The word 'anchoring' is itself an anchor. During this discussion, for example, we have been connecting a number of different reference experiences to the term 'anchor'. 'Anchoring' is the term we keep coming back to elaborating the richness of its meaning.

### ***Natural Anchors***

Natural anchors relate to the fact that not all stimuli are equally effective as anchors. We form associations with respect to some cues more readily than others. Clearly, the ability to make associations with respect to environmental cues in order to choose appropriate responses is vital to the survival of all higher animals. As a result, various species of animals develop more sensitivity to certain types of stimuli than others. Rats, for instance, who are given two water dishes containing safe or tainted drinking water, learn very quickly to distinguish the safe from the tainted water if the tainted water is a different color than the safe water. It takes them much longer to learn to distinguish the two if they are simply put in two containers of different shapes. Color is a more 'natural' associative anchor for rats than shape. Similarly, Pavlov found that his dogs could be conditioned to salivate much more quickly and easily with sound as a stimulus than if visual cues, such as colors and shapes, were used as a conditioning stimuli.

Natural anchors are probably related to basic neurological capabilities. Words, for instance, are able to form powerful anchors for humans, but not for other species. Other mammals (provided they can hear) respond

to tone of voice more than the specific words being used. This is presumably because they lack the neural apparatus to be able to recognize verbal distinctions to the same degree of detail that humans do. Even in humans, some sense organs and parts of the body have more discriminative capacity than others. A person's forearm, for example, has fewer tactile nerve endings than the palm of the hand. Thus, a person is able to make finer discriminations with the fingers and hands than with his or her arms.

The awareness of 'natural anchors' is important in selecting types of stimuli to be used for anchoring. Different types of media can be used to help make certain types of associations more easily. With people, individuals may have certain natural tendencies toward certain types of anchors because of their natural or learned representational abilities. A visually oriented person will be more sensitive to visual cues; kinesthetically oriented people may make associations more easily with tactile cues; individuals who are auditorally oriented will be responsive to subtle sounds, and so on. Smells often form powerful anchors for people. This is partially because the sense of smell is wired directly to the association areas of the brain. It is important for the clinical use of anchors, for the clinician to 'calibrate' the primary representational system used by the client in order to focus the anchor in that direction.

### ***Covert Anchors***

Sometimes the most powerful anchors for people are those in which the stimulus is outside of awareness. These are called 'covert' anchors. The power of covert anchors comes from the fact that they bypass conscious filtering and interference. This can be useful if a person (or group) is struggling to make a change because his/her conscious mind keeps getting in the way. It also makes covert anchors a powerful form of influence.

Covert anchors are often established with respect to stimuli that are from an individual's least conscious representational system. A highly visual person, for instance, may be unaware of subtle shifts in tone of voice. Voice, then, may become a rich source of unconscious cues for that person.

## ***Anchors as Meta Messages***

Anchoring is often considered to be a purely mechanical process, but it is important to keep in mind that we are not merely robots. A touch on the shoulder or arm may certainly be a stimulus from which to form an anchor, but it can be interpreted at the same time as a 'meta message' about context and relationship. Many cues are not simply triggers for responses but are symbolic messages as well. Placing one's hand on the upper center of another person's chest (over the heart) is a stimulus, and is also a very symbolic gesture.

These types of symbolic and relational messages can be either a help or hindrance to anchoring, depending on whether or not they are aligned with the type of response one is attempting to anchor.

As a rule of thumb, for example, if you are using kinesthetic anchors, it is better to establish anchors for negative states toward the periphery of the body (i.e., knees, forearms). Anchors for positive states can take on more intensity if they are established on areas of the body closer to a person's center or core.

## ***Well-Formedness Conditions for Anchoring***

The 'Well-Formedness Conditions' for anchoring summarize the key elements necessary for establishing an effective anchor. They essentially relate to important characteristics of both the stimulus and response one is attempting to pair up, to the relationship between stimulus and response, and to the context surrounding the stimulus and response.

### **1. Intensity and 'Purity' of the Response**

Intensity has to do with how fully a particular state or response has been accessed. Even from Aristotle's time it was observed that the more vivid and intense a particular response was, the more easily it was remembered, and the more quickly it became associated with other stimuli. It was easier for Pavlov to 'condition' hungry dogs to salivate, for example, than satiated dogs. If a person has accessed only a small amount of the state or experience you are anchoring, then the anchor can only be associated with that particular amount. Incidentally, 'intensity' does not simply have to do with a person's degree of emotional arousal. A person may be in a very strong disassociated state, in which s/he feels

no emotional reaction at all.

'Purity' of response has to do with whether or not the response or experience you are attempting to anchor has been 'contaminated' by other irrelevant or conflicting thoughts, feelings or reactions. It is possible that a person may very intensely experience the state to be anchored, but also mix it with other states and experiences. Another way to state this condition is that you will get back exactly what you anchor. As they say in the parlance of computer programming, 'Garbage in, garbage out'. If reaching out to anchor someone with a touch makes him or her suspicious, then that suspicion becomes part of the state that is anchored. If you ask a person to think of something positive, but that person is recalling a disassociated memory of the event, and judging whether or not s/he has chosen the right event, then you will be anchoring disassociation and judgment.

## **2. Uniqueness of the Stimulus used as the 'Anchor'**

The condition of 'uniqueness of stimulus' relates to the fact that we are always making associations between cues in the world around us and our internal states and reactions. Some stimuli are so common that they make ineffective anchors, largely because they have already been associated with so many other contexts and responses. Shaking hands or touching a person's shoulder are much less unique stimuli than a touch on the middle digit of the little finger. Unique stimuli make better and longer lasting anchors.

It is important to note that 'uniqueness' is not the same as 'intensity'. A more intense stimulus is not necessarily a more effective anchor. A more intense stimulus may be unique, but very subtle, even unconscious stimuli (such as the subtle smells and sensations that trigger allergic reactions), may be unique and thus very strong anchors.

## **3. Timing of the Pairing of Stimulus and Response**

The relationship in time between stimulus and response is one of the key conditions of effective association. According to the basic 'laws' of association, when two experiences occur close enough together a sufficient number of times, the two experiences become associated with one another. Studies involving classical conditioning have shown that this association proceeds only forward in time; that is, the stimulus (the bell)

must precede the response (salivating when eating food).

There also seems to be an optimal interval at which various types of associations are most easily made. For quick reflexes such as an eyeblink, this interval is about one-half second; longer or shorter intervals are less effective. For slower reactions, such as salivation, the interval is longer, perhaps two seconds or so. In learning verbal associations, timing is much less critical than in classical conditioning. Verbal pairs are learned with almost equal ease whether presented simultaneously or separated by several seconds.

In NLP, the optimal anchoring period is determined in relationship to the peak of the intensity of the response or state one is anchoring. It is generally taught that the stimulus should be initiated when the response to be anchored has reached about two-thirds of its peak. If possible, the anchoring stimulus should be held until just after the state has stabilized or begins to diminish. In this way, the association is created between the stimulus and the crest of the response. To do this, the response must be 'calibrated', so that the behavioral characteristics of the response are known before the anchoring is attempted.

### **It is Best to Provide the Anchoring Stimulus Just Before the Intensity of the Response Reaches Its Peak**

#### **4. Context Surrounding the Anchoring Experience**

Context is an important influence on anchoring that is often ignored. The context or environment surrounding an interaction contains many cues that may effect the anchoring process. Even though they are not the primary focus of attention, environmental cues can become anchors. In what is called 'context association', the general environment may begin to elicit a response that is being conditioned to a specific stimulus. Context association is the basis for 'locational anchors'.

It is interesting to note, in this regard, that Pavlov first accidentally discovered the notion of conditioned reflexes as a result of contextual conditioning. For his research on digestion, Pavlov needed to collect saliva from his laboratory animals. He stimulated saliva flow by placing meat powder in the dog's mouth. He soon noticed the dog would begin salivating at the sight of the experimenter, in the expectation of receiving meat powder.

In some cases, contextual stimuli may combine with the primary anchoring stimulus, making the environment part of the overall anchoring experience. Because of this, many anchors are 'context dependent'. That is, they work more effectively in the context in which they were initially established.

The influence of context relates to the process of 'Learning II'. In addition to being part of the anchoring stimulus, context shapes perceptual filters and attention. Anchoring is a classical 'Learning I' process, but humans and animals are not robots. Whether or not a context is interpreted as being 'safe', 'important', 'unfamiliar', 'a learning context', 'a place to explore', etc., will determine which type of stimuli people pay attention to, and how readily and easily certain types of anchors will be established. From this perspective it is important that the rapport between the individuals involved in the anchoring process and the environment be conducive to the type of anchors one intends to establish.

## EXTRAPOLATION

Clinicians should remember that they can use anchoring in two ways with their clients: first, they can anchor specific states that they believe are important to the child's growth and development and second, they can teach the child how to anchor states for him/herself as a method of future improvement.

First, you have to know which state you want to anchor. It can be any kind of state, like confidence, happiness, etc.. Then, you have to choose an anchor. This can be any touch, word, sound or movement. If you anchor yourself, you normally use a touch as an anchor. It could be something like touching your ear, scratching your nose, giving your wrist a squeeze or touching your thumb and first two fingers together. Now, go into the state you want to anchor. This can be done by:

- recalling a time in your past when you felt the way you want to feel every time you fire off the anchor. Close your eyes and see yourself from a dissociated point of view. Step into the picture and look at this scene as if you were looking through your eyes (associated point of view). See, hear and feel everything as if you were actually there.

- imagining a time where you could have felt this way. Step into this picture, be associated into this scene.
- associating into somebody else of who you know that s/he feels this way. First, see him/her from a dissociated point of view. Then, move into the image of him/her, associate into him/her. You will begin to feel the same things you think s/he feels.
- doing something in which you feel this way. If you know that there is an activity in which you are in the state you want to anchor, why not do this activity to anchor your state. For example, if you want to anchor happiness, do everything that will make you happy. Read some jokes, play games, have fun, etc..

You can make your state stronger by changing the submodalities.

### ***Submodalities:***

Within each representational system, we make fine distinctions. Each sense can have different qualitative characteristics. Each emotion uses different submodalities.

Visual submodalities: shape, color/black-and white, movement, brightness/dimness, distance, location

Auditory submodalities: volume, tempo, pitch, frequency

Kinaesthetic submodalities: temperature, pressure, texture, moisture, pain, pleasure

And now, anchor this state. Simply do the thing you have chosen as your anchor.

You can test your anchor by going into a normal state and then firing off your anchor. If your state doesn't change the way you want it to, go back and make your state stronger and better.

### ***Collapsing Anchors:***

When two different anchors are fired off at the same time, they combine their states. If one of the states is the opposite of the other one, they

cancel each other out. If you want to delete an anchor, set up an anchor for the opposite feeling and fire them off simultaneously. If you have an uncomfortable feeling when you do something or are at a specific place, imagine doing this thing or being at this place and set up an anchor. Set up an anchor for the opposite feeling and let them collapse.

### ***Chaining Anchors:***

If you have set up a few anchors, you can fire them off one after the other, changing the state as each emotion is at its peak. You will then move through a sequence of states. A useful chaining anchor can make you (by firing it off a few times) go through the different states automatically, i. e. the first state will induce a process that automatically leads to the last state.

### ***Stacking Anchors:***

When you anchor a few different states with the same anchor, it is called a Stacking Anchor. The different states will be combined. For example, you could set up the same anchor every time you are happy. After a while, the anchor will be very strong.

### ***Sliding Anchor:***

A Sliding Anchor works as an amplitude. You can amplify and decrease your state with it. For example, you use one of your fingers as an anchor, you change your submodalities to make your state more intense and then you slide one of the other fingers along your anchor-finger toward the fingernail. The motion of sliding will then be associated to the amplification and you can use this sliding-motion to change other anchors.

### ***Future Pacing:***

If you want to feel different in a future situation, for example if you want to have more self-confidence whenever you talk to a woman, you can future pace, i.e. link this feeling to the situation. To do this, first set up an anchor for the desired state. See a picture of yourself in this situation and be associated into this picture and fire off your anchor. Now, you will automatically have the anchored feeling when you are in such a situation.

### ***Change Personal History:***

If you have memories that are unpleasant and that still have a negative impact, you can transform them into positive memories. You can do this by recalling the memory and add some resources. To do this, go back to the memory you want to change. If there are more than one memory of this kind, try to detect the first memory and go back to it. Now, dissociate from it. Identify the resources that you would have needed in that situation to change it to a positive memory. Anchor these resources and see the memory as if you already had the resources you needed to make it a positive memory (while still being dissociated from it). Add the resources until the memory is positive. Travel back into the present and change all the memories that happened as a result from the first memory. And then, future pace so that it will never happen again.

### ***Re-Imprinting:***

An *imprint* is an experience from the past in which you formed a belief (Example: Konrad Lorenz' work on ducklings). This imprint can be anything that happened at the wrong time and therefore changed your behavior. Re-Imprinting: Identify the belief or behavior you want to change. Stand on your Timeline at the present-position and move backward toward the past. Try to find the earliest experience associated with the belief. To test this earliest experience, take a step backward to a time before this imprint experience. You should then feel different because the imprint has not yet effected you. Dissociate from the experience. Now, you explore the situation: Notice the effects this imprint had on you. Maybe you can see the thread running through your life, beginning at the time of the imprint and connecting all the painful experiences that are linked with the imprint. Identify any significant others in the imprint (they do not necessarily need to have been physically present at the imprint). Associate into each of the persons involved in the imprint. Try to find positive intentions of their actions. Step off of the timeline, look at the person from a dissociated state of view and do the same thing again. For each of these persons, try to find the resources that s/he would have needed to make it a positive experience. Anchor these resources (you can do this for example by stepping onto the timeline at a time when you had or experienced these resources and set up an anchor), associate into the person and fire off the anchor. Do this until every person involved into the imprint is satisfied. Now, associate into your own position in a time before this imprint had happened. Anchor

the resources you had needed to succeed in the imprint-scene. Take the resources into your younger self and walk all the way up to the present and experience the changes.

***Circle of Excellence:***

Circle of Excellence uses a kinesthetic anchor to activate a Moment of Excellence, i. e. a moment in which you are at the top, in which you feel like superman. Imagine a circle on the floor. In this circle there is a picture of you, being in a specific state. This picture of you behaves the way you want to behave when you are in this state. When you walk into this circle, you will be in the specific state. Another possibility of using the Circle of Excellence is by imagining another person, your idol or a character in a movie, and placing this picture into the circle. You can be like them if you want.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Anchoring is a 'metastructure' of cognitive behavior intervention and as such can be used both directly and indirectly to enable clients to access and maintain internal states. As such, it can be a part of almost any specific technique or procedure where the clinician thinks it might be helpful. It can also be a part of ***culture restructuring*** as it can be combined with 'seeding' to reinforce the cultural change.