

The MBNLP Academy

A One Year's Development Programme

with Michael Breen

People have asked me, over the years, for the opportunity to “study personally”, “shadow”, “apprentice”, “be mentored by”, “hang out and learn” and a few additional verbs that I never liked the sound of...

To honour the intentions and desires of these good folk, I created a programme called “The Academy”. And before we go into the who's, what's and how's of our Academy, let me tell you a little about the person and place I am taking my cue from.

Plato's Academy

In 388 B.C., Plato, the philosopher sage and leading student of Socrates dedicated a temple to the Muses in a grove of olive trees, along the Sacred Way to the northwest of Athens. The place was dedicated to Academus, a hero from earlier times who had helped Athens avoid a war with Sparta by sharing secret information that he held – information that, according to legend, he had to go to the underworld to attain.

Plato established what has been called a school but it was not a school as we understand the term. Plato's Academy was a place of learning through dialogue and experiment as well as lectures – even their meals were dedicated to learning. The way of relating between Academicians would be described in contemporary terms as “learning conversations”.

And Plato would only accept for entrance those who were “intoxicated to learn what was in their souls.” Plato accepted these students from all countries and all other schools and educational or training backgrounds. They were divided into three groups: The *mathetes* or learners, the *synthes* or those of like habits, and the *hetairos* or learning companions. Each was dealt with according to his abilities and needs. The fellowship, though, was the same.

The MBNLP Academy

So we now come to our Academy. A small number of people (as few as one but it can be as many as ten people starting and finishing at different times) work with me individually, and personally for a year. You may accompany me on any MBNLP public training programmes we might offer during the year, as you choose. We may even meet from time to time as a group. And from time to time, I am in various parts of Europe for business and, when appropriate (and the destination is interesting enough), I sometimes invite academy members to join me for a couple of days to hang out, mooch around, do cultural stuff and chat.

But most importantly, you will work in progressing your own agenda, your work or personal goals, your learning goals, your life goals. I will be available to you to answer your questions, facilitate, advise, consult, cajole, console, kick-start, poke fun at, provoke, evoke and do whatever else I deem necessary to support you, as you pursue whatever it is that is important to you.

I cannot do your work for you. I cannot make your business work (if you don't). I am not a conjurer who pulls rabbits out of hats but what I have been offering for over 20 years is a structure made up of public learning experiences to transfer a method, combined with personal support (some have called it coaching; others mentoring; one person called it "negotiated resourcing conversations" – you may call it what you wish). What it's about is you making progress in directions that you feel are beneficial.

I do expect you to make significant progress in mastering the tools and skills of NLP, with the focus and slant I have taken them. I will explain, point out, suggest, wax rhapsodically, entrance, task and demand certain things. Everyone in the Academy develops their skills with the toolset known as NLP. It's one of those things that just has to happen.

Your goals and objectives drive the programme and you are in the driver's seat as to how much or how little you call on or use my input, which events or trainings you attend, and how you make use of my input

I have had people in the Academy who wanted weekly telephone check-ins (and that is fine). I have had people want a monthly meeting (and that is fine too). I have had people who only wanted occasional email exchanges (fine, fine, fine). The point is that we have the public events as a structure which I strongly recommend you make good use of, as they will improve your work and life skills, but the choice of some or all of the events is yours. We then have how we work together in support of your goals and, again, the choice is yours. The communication lines are always open between us but you must take the initiative.

Scope and means

In terms of the range of issues and projects the MBNLP Academy programme has addressed – that range is quite broad. From its earliest pilot, through the work with all of the participants over the years, we have covered: “Big Picture” Life / Organization / Career issues; medium framed “I want to learn how to X” type scenarios; to smaller-scale, tactical problem solving and issue resolution; to numerous ad hoc explorations in the realms of the curious and unusual.

For example, when asked, “How do you produce an audio tape?”; my answer was, “Meet me at the studio, bring a pen, a litre of Evian, a Venti Cappuccino with an extra shot (for me... to adequately invoke the muse) and get ready to work.” When you ask a question, you may be invited to learn by helping out, or perhaps be given some reading to do or, as in the case of the person who asked “How does Richard Bandler use language so brain-twistingly?”, the answer was “Transcribe this tape, mark up all of the strategies and language patterns as far as you are able and then bring it to me when you are done. Then we will talk about it.” It took a month for that person to come back to me but, by then, they had a vastly improved grasp of language patterns and strategies. I don’t fool around and if you want something I will tell you or show you how, and then it is up to you.

Your Academy year starts with a discussion – either by telephone or face to face – to discuss what you would like to work on. Before the meeting, we will send you a document with questions and I need you to prepare a response to those questions for me to read before we meet.

For that conversation, I would like you to be prepared to discuss what you want to work on during your time in the Academy.

We will discuss how we might work together, agree on how we are going to “play” (do you want me to push you, or would you prefer that I gently shake a pom-pom from the sidelines, or something else?). We will discuss your development needs and how you might make progress with them. I used to require that people in the Academy keep some sort of regular, basic journal or record of learnings, experiences and insights during the year – it is one of the tried, tested and proven strategies for success in a variety of fields and endeavors – but... I now simply recommend it strongly. The choice is yours.

You will be spending time with me, both task-focused and “chill time”, and you will have access to my private telephone numbers and the email address that I actually respond to. My desire is to see you make significant progress in your endeavors during your year in the Academy. It can be a very positive, life-enhancing and fun journey.

With kindest regards and best wishes,

Michael Breen

The domains of action for your MBNLP Academy include:

- Any MBNLP trainings for one year¹
- Project communications with Michael
- Michael's private telephone numbers & email
- Occasional "field trips" and ad hoc invitations to join Michael for informal fun, adventure or hard work.
- Your Academy year starts with your first conversation with Michael and carries on for a period of one calendar year. You are invited to attend any MBNLP course offered within that year. MBNLP reserves the right to cancel or postpone any of its specific courses during that time, for any reason. In the case of postponement, deferred attendance is usually arranged. In the case of cancellation, Michael is usually amenable to a private consideration of the topic with Academy members.

¹ When attending meetings with Michael, or MBNLP events; you will pay for your travel, accommodation and all your incidental expenses. When you are invited to join or accompany Michael or a group he convenes privately; it is up to you whether you attend some, all, or none of the meetings or events.