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that appeared in volume 2 of*

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The New Domain of Meta-States in the History of NLP

If a meta-state refers to a state about a state and thereby utilizes the human power of abstracting (Korzybski, 1933) that we refer to as “self-reflexive consciousness” (consciousness reflecting back onto itself and developing additional and transcendental consciousness about itself), then meta-states refer to all of those states above and beyond the primary states.¹

In the first introduction to this new domain in NLP (*Anchor Point*, forthcoming, 1995), I described primary states as those that we experience as direct, intense, and immediate. You can easily anchor primary states. With various sensory-based stimuli such as visual images, auditory sounds, and kinesthetic sensations, you can attach a cue to that state and quickly re-access it. Bandler and Grinder brought this to public attention most dramatically in *Frogs Into Princes* (1979).

Because primary states operate as modality- and submodality-driven states, we can access, anchor, and shift primary states very easily. They function from a more primitive neurological mode—a lower level of abstraction, one *before* words. They operate as a first level of abstraction and have reference to some immediate object. In the state of happiness, for instance, one experiences thoughts (internal representations) and feelings (physiology/neurology) *about* something immediately specific in one’s environment. This means primary states have primary reference to the world beyond our skin.

Common primary states include states of fear and anger, states of happiness and sadness. Confidence about math, computers, bas-

ketball, photography, etc. also indicates a primary state. So with congruence about a specific topic: "I want to eat now." "I believe in treating people with respect and equality." Relaxation and stress indicate primary states.