

Excuses, Limiting Beliefs & Ecology

Hear an excuse as a belief speaking, and find what it protects

The chain

1 Sentence

The exact words, and their form

2 Rule

The belief that makes it true for them

3 Job

What keeping the rule gives them

4 Cost

What changing it would affect

Four forms of excuse, and the question for each

Form	Sounds like	Ask
Modal operator	"I can't put my prices up."	What would happen if you did?
Cause-effect	"...because my clients can't afford it."	How does that cause that?
Complex equivalence	"Charging more means being greedy."	How does that mean that?
Universal	"Nobody pays that." "I never have time."	Has there ever been a time when...?

These questions recover detail. They do not tell you what the belief is doing. For that, ask the rule and the job.

- **Rule:** What would have to be true for that to be the case? Write it as "I believe..." in their words.
- **Job:** What does keeping that rule give you? What does it protect?

Four ecology questions

1. If the rule loosened, what would you lose?
2. Who else would it affect, and how?
3. Where else in your life does this rule help you?
4. Could the job still be done another way?

Then decide: **keep, change or leave alone**. If the job cannot be met another way, leave it alone for now. That is the finding, not a failure.

Is the belief worth changing? Four tests

It is about you. It limits you in something you want. You want to change it. You hold it at 7 or more out of 10. If you want to keep it, leave it.

Try it now. Write your most-used excuse word for word. Name its form. Ask the rule, then the job. Run the four questions and make your decision.

Coaching, not therapy. If this gets heavy, stop, choose something lighter, or talk to a qualified professional.

Darren Shaw, NLP Trainer

Bandler, R. and Grinder, J. (1975) *The Structure of Magic I*. Science and Behavior Books. Snyder, C.R. and Higgins, R.L. (1988) *Psychological Bulletin*, 104(1), pp. 23-35.

YOUR NEXT STEP

NLP: Word Patterns That Hold a Room for an Hour

Tuesday 20 October 2026, 7:00 to 10:00 PM EDT, live on Google Meet, 20 seats. A practice class: you practise each skill twice with a partner and get feedback. Tickets from \$47.

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