NLP: How One Sentence Moves a Problem Into the Past

NLP Mastery House

What this is for

Verb forms place an experience on your timeline: the same problem feels different said in the present than in the completed past.

This handout gives you the verb-form shift for moving a problem into the past, and six presupposition patterns for building on what you say.

Before you start

No materials needed. Just one problem, in your own words.

- One sentence describing a problem in the present tense, such as "I have a problem with this"
- 10 minutes, and something to write with

The exercise

Say each version aloud and notice what changes inside.

1. Present — say your problem sentence: "I have a problem with this." Notice where the problem sits when you say it.
2. Continuous past — shift it, with a tag question: "So, you have been having a problem with this, haven't you?"
3. Completed past — shift it again, with a tag question, and lower your voice at the end so it sounds like a statement: "There is a problem that you have had with this, wasn't there?"
4. Presuppositions — take an outcome you want and build it up one pattern at a time: a factive verb ("Are you aware that…"), an adverb or adjective ("…easily…"), a time clause ("Before you…"), an ordinal ("The first…"), a commentary word ("Fortunately…"), and a change-of-time word ("continue to…").

Your notes

Jot whatever surfaces — full sentences not required.

What you noticed

How did the problem feel in the present tense, compared with the completed past?

Your one next action

Small enough that it actually happens. Before we next meet.