

What your inner voice can tell you

If you're tired of under-achieving or sick of your relationship, Susan Lever can help you change your life. Women's Editor **CHRISTEN PEARS** reports

I'M sitting on Susan Lever's sofa, thinking of a moment in my life when I've felt nervous and worried. "You don't have to tell me about it, just try to remember how you felt," says Susan. My body slumps forward as I recall the memory. "Now sit back and think about a time when you were happy and confident, when you were at your best. How did you feel? Think about your surroundings, what you were wearing."

I do, and it brings a little smile to my face. I'm now told to think of a problem, something that's bothering me now and use the feelings I've just discovered to help me deal with it. It's a short, simple exercise, but it clarifies things in my mind and I decide exactly what I'm going to do.

"I haven't told you what to do. I've simply helped you come to a decision yourself," explains Susan.

This is Neuro Linguistic Programming, or NLP, a form of applied psychology that helps individuals take control and change their lives for the better. Developed in the 1970s by two Americans, one a linguist and the other a mathematician and computer expert, it incorporates life coaching but, according to Susan, works on a much deeper level.

"There are lots of books and courses about understanding yourself but NLP offers a practical way to change. It is about creating more chances in your life. If what you are doing works, that's fine but if it's not, it helps you go about changing it."

Susan, who lives in Pinchinthorpe, near Guisborough, is well-known in the region for her voice and sound healing workshops. By releasing a

person's inner voice, she believes she can instil confidence and help relaxation. When she heard about NLP, she decided it would complement her existing work and enable her to help clients on a new level, and she has qualified as a NLP Master Practitioner.

"In my voice workshops, I always come across people who tell me they're tone deaf or they can't sing. It's like a lot of things. People put themselves in a box they think they can't get out of. NLP shows them that they can."

"It gets to the essence of the problem and encourages people to change beliefs about themselves, possibly that they didn't even know they had, in order to improve their lives."

Just running through a couple of quick exercises with Susan shows me how easy it is to help someone think about themselves in a different way.

She uses the analogy of an actor getting into a role. Someone playing a blind man, for example, would observe the blind, immerse themselves in what it's like and really get inside the role. She believes her work can teach ordinary people to do the same.

"They find the physiology or language that works for them and allows them to be the person they want to be. If you're doing a presentation and you feel nervous, you think about how you want to appear up there and you can change."

NLP can help with a whole range of specific problems, such as phobias, quitting smoking or losing weight, as well as more general issues, including careers and relationships.

Some people achieve results with



Life coach Susan Lever: "it's about discovering what you really want..."

behavioural change but that is often temporary. Someone who loses a lot of weight by changing their eating habits, for example, can put it on just as quickly if they become depressed and turn to comfort eating. Susan tackles the underlying causes.

The important thing, she says, is for a person to establish what they want. A lot of people are unhappy with their lives but they only think about the things that are wrong. They may never have considered what changes they would like.

"You think what things you would like in your life, you imagine it and you decide what the first step to getting it would be. Sometimes there is conflict, like a man who wants promotion at work but that would mean missing out seeing his children grow up. You can resolve that using NLP."

Anyone who is interested in working with Susan is given a 30-

minute free phone consultation to establish whether they can work together. Not everyone is a suitable candidate.

"There are some people who just want a quick fix. They want you to do all the work for them but I can't do that because I can't live their lives for them. It's about them discovering what they want. I can show them the signposts. The rest is up to them."

If a client decides to go ahead, Susan works with them on an individual basis. They talk about what they want to achieve and how they're going to do it and Susan takes them through a series of exercises until they find what helps them. It doesn't focus on their problems, but rather encourages them to think about the "world outside the box".

Going over a problem again and again may only reinforce it. With NLP, you have to decide what you want to use from your life and what you want

to leave behind. Someone who really wants to change can see a difference in six to 12 hours, whether that's their career, relationship or health and the change is often profound.

"It is a kind of toolbox for life and that is what's so exciting. How can we be more effective in living our lives the way we want? Most people want to be happier, especially when there are so many terrible things happening in the world at the moment. This is about them taking the power back themselves."

Susan holds individual NLP sessions at the Natural Therapy Centre in Guisborough. She is also holding a group training day on May 15, which is suitable for workplace or personal development.

● For more information contact Susan on (01287) 638322 or visit her website at www.susanlever.co.uk.