

Ignite the Spark Within



Vikas Gautam

vkas.gautam@gmail.com
www.linkedin.com/in/vikasgautam/

Take a moment and remember those conversations – especially the short ones – that have lasted a lifetime for you. Do you recall those words that suddenly, instantaneously opened a path in front of you? Who comes to mind? Who said those words to you, exactly when you needed them? Those are your **Igniters**. And do you remember that heartwarming feeling, that gratitude, that came after?

They know you. They know what you need and when you need it, and how much of it you need. They listen, observe, and proactively learn about you by watching you going through your transactions. Most importantly, they somehow know that specific moment when you need that specific guidance that would make a huge difference to your pursuit and bring you closer to your objective.

And, more likely than not, your Igniters are not just helping you! They are likely impacting many more people and showing them the path that's right for them.

Would it not be wonderful to learn this amazing skill? Imagine becoming an Igniter yourself! How would it change your life – with your spouse, with your loved ones, with your children, with family members, at work, among friends and in society? There is enough literature available to prove that helping others helps you at all levels – mind, body and soul.

So, how do these Igniters do it? How do they learn about you? How do they know that precise moment to deliver that guidance? Well, read on and find out for yourself!

The effect of an Igniter

A moment ago, you recalled – and hopefully relived – those experiences with your Igniters. What was that like for you? What emotions and feelings did such conversations generate within you?

I have been fortunate to have Igniters in my life too. And when I relive those experiences, I feel a sense of awe and a pleasant surprise at first. As I begin to explore the path shown by my Igniters, I go quiet and feel the easing of tension in my shoulders. The meaning of that communication is the effect of revealing the next step I can and should take towards my objective. I also feel amazed and grateful, realising how much my Igniters care selflessly about my wellbeing and how confident they are about the resources I have within myself. Finally, I save these moments in my memories as visuals, in a highly associated state, which I can recall easily when I need to. Thus, these golden 'aha!' moments and my gratitude, respect and love for my Igniters stay with me forever. I have found these conversations to be very valuable in my life, hence the decision to model these exemplars.

The Igniter Model, once adopted fully, will demonstrate for us:

- Changes in self:
 - *Increased awareness, observation and curiosity all the time*
 - *Full-body listening, enhanced attention in the moment with complete focus on the person*
 - *Ability to recognise and put aside own ego and biases*
 - *Increase in self-esteem, happiness and contentment*
- Changes in those for whom you are an Igniter, and to whom you teach this model:
 - *Positive responses, feedback, and gratitude towards you*
 - *Deeper and more meaningful relationship with you*
 - *Move from Problem State to Desired State*
 - *Achieving the desired outcomes successfully*

My 'IT'

That 'Aha!' moment, in which one suddenly sees the path or realises what one must do to solve a problem at hand, through a dialogue with you.



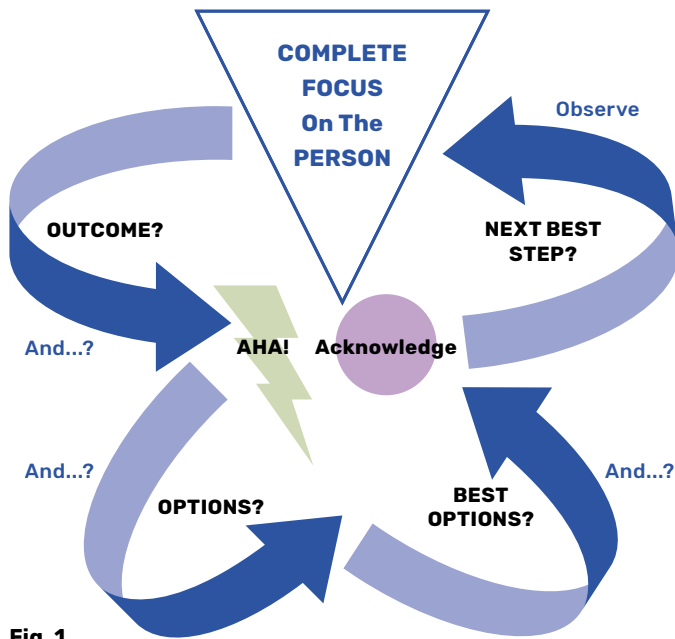


Fig. 1

The Igniter Model

- 1 A person you care about has asked you for some help about a problem they are facing.
- 2 Take a deep breath and, as you exhale, become fully available for this person. Feel all your thoughts converge around this person and the present situation. (Aid)
- 3 Begin by asking the person – in a gentle, calm, soothing and encouraging voice – about the outcome they are after. (Aic)
- 4 Pay close attention to what is being said and how it is being said. Observe the choice of words and non-verbal cues as they try to articulate their outcome. (Vic, Aic)
- 5 Build up the dialogue. Start with “And”, then repeat their own words and tone from the previous response to form your next question. There WILL be silence for some time ... and that’s good! (Vir, Air)
- 6 In a few iterations, they may have the ‘Aha!’ moment as they identify the real outcome they should be pursuing. (Ki)
- 7 Next, frame another question to bring out possible paths/ options/strategies they can consider. Remember to stand in their shoes and take due care not to add what may work for you if you are in that situation! Be a नमिन्त मात् *nimitta matra*, ‘just a conduit’, an instrument to help them analyse their own thoughts. (Vic, Aic, Ki)
- 8 Continue with the “And” questions and help them to compare the possible paths. Once they choose the path they believe is the best for them, acknowledge their choice. (Vic, Aic)
- 9 Lastly, ask what is the next best step they should take to get started on the chosen path, of course beginning with “And”. (Vic, Aic)
- 10 Continue to observe them over time as they take the next steps towards their outcome. Continue to gather information. Continue the dialogue. Continue to be their ‘Igniter’. (Air, Ki)

Key

- Aid: Auditory / internal / dialogue
- Air: Auditory / internal / remembered
- Aic: Auditory / internal / constructed
- Vir: Visual / internal / remembered
- Vic: Visual / internal / constructed
- Ki: Kinaesthetic / internal
- Ke: Kinaesthetic / external

See Fig. 1

Neurological Patterns

Spirituality / Purpose	सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः (May everyone be happy)
Identity	Igniter (sparking thoughts and ideas)
Beliefs and Values	We have within us all the resources we ever need. There is a solution to every problem. There is no failure, only feedback; there is only learning. Everyone makes the best choice available to them at the time they make it.
Capabilities	To be fully with the person – full-body listening. Patience, respectfully holding space and time. Leveraging NLP learnings, experience, domain knowledge. Empathy, putting aside own ego. Communication and interpersonal skills. Using humour effectively.
Behaviour	Calm composure – verbal and non-verbal. Responsibility towards helping the person achieve the outcome, fully committed to enablement. Sensitive to behaviour, patterns, place and time of guidance and feedback.
Environment	Informal, relaxed environment enabling honest conversation. Open and direct communication, provocative at times. Always approachable, ready to help.

Filters

- Towards (desired state)
- Auditory, Visual, Feelings
- People, Time, Activity
- Present, Future
- Other
- Match
- Small Chunk
- Choice
- Internal reference
- Associated

Developing, testing and refining the model

I learnt a lot about modelling, clean questions, neurological levels, metaphors and other NLP aspects conceptually during the Master Practitioner training. The journey to truly experience these concepts in day-to-day life was even more insightful for me.

Arriving at my ‘IT’ proved much harder than I expected, as my default filters (big chunk, procedure) restricted me to a rather broad topic. In my mind I was ‘done’ (corporate mindset), and when I attempted to impart the model to the peer NLP group, I received valuable, honest and rather provocative feedback (thanks, Ramesh and Prasanna!), which really helped. (Actually, I was laughed out of the room 😊). After all, there is no failure, only feedback, only learning!

Selecting my exemplars and interviewing them was a good experience, especially in using clean questions and taking my exemplars to experience that specific situation I wanted to model. Recalling and revising the concepts helped in modelling the third exemplar through observation, watching his podcasts and reading his published articles. Yet, the ‘IT’ was eluding me. I had all the data points I needed, but what it meant was still out of my reach.

I went back to the drawing board and continued to refine my ‘IT’ down to a specific moment. I decluttered my original model massively, removed the corporate jargon and realised that the model does not have to be very complicated. I also leveraged an aid to articulate a well-formed outcome.

Then came the opportunity to test the model. A colleague called in unplanned and wanted to seek some career advice. He was unsure if the new client-facing role he had taken up was taking him away from core engineering, which was his passion. ▶



I consciously applied the model step by step, focused on his need and his situation, and asked clean questions to help him look deeper inside. It took just seven minutes for him to find the answer he was looking for – that it was his expertise in core engineering which is making him a trusted partner for his clients. He instantly knew what he would do next! And I had my own ‘Aha!’ moment after those seven minutes, as I saw the model working successfully for the first time.

“I feel that I should have such conversations with you every quarter,” he said. *“These few minutes open the path for me for many months!”*

Now I was better prepared for the next opportunity to apply the model. It was not long before a team member approached me and shared how unhappy she was; she was ‘feeling stuck’ with the nature of work she was doing. She was also disappointed that, while she had completed an exhaustive course over a year and learnt new skills, no one was ready to offer her a new role. The model helped her realise that she does not need a change in job to utilize her new skills. She decided to approach other teams to freely offer her time to help them out, in return gaining valuable hands-on experience in new skills.

“Interestingly enough, we had a similar chat a couple of months ago, and you used that exact approach to help me out of a jam,” she said. *“That conversation has stuck with me, and when you asked during the session if there’s any conversation I’d remember for a long time – well, that was it. I’m really amazed at how you can model different personalities and then learn from them. It’s interesting to know that we can pick and choose what aspects we want to incorporate into our own communication and personality.”*

In another scenario, the model helped one of my nephews realise that he needs to timebox certain tasks and set deadlines for himself to make real progress on his objectives. He was able to shake off the inertia and procrastination. He is now working towards completing his assignments.

“Thank you for all your guidance,” he said. *“I have not felt this rush of enthusiasm in a long time.”*

Next, it was time to impart the model to a group. I requested time and permission from my team at work, where I provided

an overview of NLP, conducted a few short experience-driven exercises and imparted the model. It was generally well received (Remember, it was a captive audience, and it was the performance appraisal season 😊), along with some great honest feedback:

“Thanks for conducting the NLP modelling session. It gave me a different perspective on how to approach people, their ideas and thoughts and how to influence the outcomes of my discussions with them. I will try it in real life, consciously, especially with my kids to understand and appreciate the model. And I believe that, with practice, I will be able to apply it even unconsciously.”

“The NLP session was highly insightful and engaging. The interactive exercises and role-playing scenarios were particularly effective and made me feel that using this model can make me a better individual, both personally and professionally.”

“Learning and take aways:

- 1** *Use of right words, understanding the difference between ‘have’ and ‘want’, how these impact the body language and shift the energy.*
- 2** *Learning from observing others – observing their body language, how they analyse the vibes or energies in the room, and the impactful feedback they provide.*
- 3** *Not be a rescuer. Do we really have permission to recommend something, unless asked? This is so true. This resonates deeply and will truly help in my personal life.*
- 4** *Help individuals tap into their inner potential, rather than being their rescuers, unless they ask for help.*
- 5** *I personally felt the visualisation exercise we tried.”*

With these experiences, I found the courage to request another session with the peer NLP group to review my model. The feedback this time was positive, along with more work needed to

People are approaching me more often to bounce off their thoughts. Every interaction is a learning, and I discover a bit more about myself in each of these dialogues.

effectively impart the model, and make people truly experience it. A challenge was then thrown at me to use my model 'live' with one of the group members. One of my NLP peers was gracious enough to volunteer and share a situation she was facing right then. The model worked again, and she did get her 'aha' moment, which she shared would have helped her prepare better for a job interview the next day!

"For me, the 'Aha!' moment came when you asked about what strategies I can think of for tomorrow. I suddenly knew how to approach the upcoming interview."

These interactions and experiences provided the following valuable insights to me, using which I was able to further refine the model:

- Focusing on the person and truly listening is the key.
- A spark can be ignited within seconds – it need not be a long-drawn-out conversation.
- A simple model is more effective as it can be used across different scenarios.
- Each person **truly** had all the resources within themselves.
 - *There is absolutely no need to corrupt their map by adding my content.*

Disciple: "Guru Ji! Guru Ji! I have gone through the complete Bhagvad Gita!"
 Guru Ji: "That's good. Has the Bhagvad Gita gone through you?"

Effect of integrating the model on myself

A quote from my high school physics teacher comes to mind as I begin to write this section. He would often use this as we struggled to apply the theoretical concepts in solving numerical problems.

"This is where life becomes difficult, isn't it?"

I feel like I am on a journey of self-discovery and NLP is the vehicle. Every session, from Foundation to Business Practitioner to intensive Master Practitioner, has propelled me further in realising what-I-do and understanding why-I-do-what-I-do.

There is definite evidence of changes within me. I am consciously observing myself now on more occasions. The language I use – externally and for internal dialogue – is changing as well. "Buts" are on their way out. "And?" is becoming my go-to word. I make sure to label my opinions as "for me", and I no longer impose my likes and dislikes on others. I am beginning to consciously use the Igniter model on myself as well as on others. Quite often, my first response to others is "So, what's the outcome you are looking for?"

I am holding time and space for others better, observing others consciously, listening better and talking less (well...work in progress!). People around me – my family, friends, colleagues – are noticing these changes. I often hear comment like "staying calm", "always available to help", "open to listen". People are approaching me more often to bounce off their thoughts. Every interaction is a learning, and I discover a bit more about myself in each of these dialogues.

I am also asking for and receiving rich feedback through which I am *very* aware that I have a long way to go... I am aware that I need to watch my default patterns, filters and beliefs in action and analyse which of these are helping or hindering my self-discovery journey to be my best self. I truly believe that it is a lifelong journey, and NLP is a tool I am using to make a difference to ignite the spark within myself, and in others.

My exemplars

Ramesh Prasad

I was fortunate to be invited to an NLP Foundation Training in 2016. I thoroughly enjoyed the subject as well as the experiential

learning mode Ramesh used to impart the concepts. That got me hooked on the subject. I reached out to Ramesh again in 2022 and signed up with the Business Practitioner Training in a serene farmhouse setting. Attending the intensive Master Practitioner Training in 2024 was the logical next step for me. During these sessions and in between, I always found interactions with Ramesh extremely helpful and insightful for me and exactly what I needed. Therefore, he was a natural first choice for me as an exemplar for my project. You can get to know Ramesh and his passion at <https://www.onefluencer.com/>.

Demonstration of 'IT'

Proactively observes delegates' patterns. Delivers feedback in a crisp, direct way and at an instant which is best suited for their outcome.

Ramesh's model: "See a need, help fill the need"

- 1 Engage with the delegate to understand their "want". (Aid)
- 2 Keenly observe the delegate as they go through various activities. Create or leverage a variety of situations for the delegate to experience – and generate rich observations. (Ke)
- 3 Notice the words they are using and the non-verbal behaviour they are demonstrating. (Air, Vir)
- 4 Identify the patterns and verify through repeat observations to confirm 'default' patterns. (Aic, Vic)
- 5 Correlate their 'want' (from Step 1) with the patterns observed (in Step 4). Analyse which of the patterns delegate is demonstrating will aid in fulfilling the need, and which patterns may need a change.
- 6 Step into the delegate's shoes to understand what the delegate may really 'need' to achieve the 'want' (Need is often in unconscious mind to begin with). (Ki)
- 7 Provide specific and on-the-spot feedback to delegate – leveraging their own behaviour from a few moments ago to help them understand their patterns. Observe the response keenly to measure the impact of the feedback. (Air, Vir)
- 8 Help the delegate as they figure out their unconscious need, and what they need to change to fulfil it. (Ki)
- 9 Go back to step 2 and iterate until the delegate has enough of their own examples to learn from.
- 10 Support the delegate to identify the path forward which will lead them to change their patterns and fulfil the 'need' thereby achieving the 'want'.

Ritesh Malviya

I have known Ritesh since 2013, when we started to work as colleagues. We instantly connected as we found a huge set of common values, beliefs and styles of working. Over time I realised that Ritesh's vast knowledge in the financial domain is an excellent asset and requested his help in my financial planning. I have learnt so much from him in many aspects of life. His calm composure, his 'always on' nature and ability to give full attention to the listener prompted me to choose Ritesh as an exemplar for my project. You can get to know about Ritesh at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ritesh-m-88241315a/>

Demonstration of 'IT'

Responds exactly and instantaneously with the financial investment strategy that is best for me at that time

Ritesh's model: "Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself"

- 1 When someone asks for advice, first ask yourself to clear your heart of your own biases, of negativity, of competition. (Aid)
- 2 Connect with your inner self and recall the purpose –



There is definite evidence of changes within me. I am consciously observing myself now on more occasions.

- ▶ सर् वे भवन्तु सुखिनः – let everyone be happy – and how it fuels your own sense of fulfilment. (Air / Ki)
- 3 Get into full-body-listening mode. Focus fully and give complete attention to the person's verbal and non-verbal cues. (Ke)
 - 4 Visualize yourself in the person's shoes as much as possible. Leverage what you have known and learnt about the person so far and how the present context connects to that knowledge. (Vic / Ki)
 - 5 Use your knowledge and experience to construct the advice/guidance that will be appropriate for the person in the current context and which the person will be able to put in action and sustain.
 - 6 Ask yourself if you would follow the advice/guidance yourself, and how you would have felt receiving this guidance. Still standing in the other person's shoes, would this advice help in showing the path to the person? (Aid / Ki)
 - 7 Convey this advice/guidance to the person along with the reason/rationale behind its applicability to the person's background and specific current context.
 - 8 Observe carefully the effect of your communication on the other person.
 - 9 If the effect is what you visualized for yourself in Step 6, proceed to complete the transaction. If the effect is not what you expected, record this new information about the person and go back to Step 5.

Sajid Ahmed

Sajid joined my current organisation in a senior leadership role. From day one it was clear to me that he is a charismatic leader and that I have a lot to learn from him. I have worked with him on several interesting projects over the past six years, and I have grown as a professional with each interaction. I am amazed by Sajid's ability to instantly switch context and have a very precise yet deep conversation with an individual, and in the next instant repeat the same with another individual on a completely different topic! You can get to know about Sajid at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sajidahmedin/>

Demonstration of 'IT'

In just 30 seconds, Sajid laid out a plan for the entire year, which was best suited for me and which I executed to achieve successful outcomes.

Sajid's model: "Teach 'em how to fish"

- 1 Prepare:
 - Know your business. Know your outcomes. (Aid)
 - Understand the dynamics and various moving parts of the organisation as best as possible. (Aid)
 - Actively look for connections and internalize the information that can impact your objectives, positively or negatively. (Air)
- 2 Recollect:
 - Just before or as you engage with a team member, recollect key programmes or tasks the person is engaged in. (Air)
 - Recollect recent conversations and information gathered

through various forums and your own analysis in the Prepare phase. (Air)

- Formulate the direction/advice which would be the best next step towards the outcomes important to the team member and to you. (Aic, Ki)
- 3 Engage:
 - Deliver the direction/advice to the team member in a direct, crisp manner. (Aic). No prelude or formality is necessary as you are signalling this as an ongoing conversation.
 - Keep the direction/advice at the strategic level. If required, use a whiteboard to lay out the vision. (Vic)
 - Connect the advice tightly to the outcomes important to the team member and to you. (Ke)
 - Trust that the team member will leverage the capabilities – existing or to be developed – to refine the direction and figure out a way to implement the strategy. (Ki)
 - Assess the impact of your words and hold the space for the team member to ask any questions/clarifications. (Air, Ke)
 - 4 Validate:
 - Look for the impact of outcomes achieved in conversations with relevant stakeholders in subsequent interactions. (Air, Ke)
 - Continue short conversations with team member to check on status/roadblocks and to provide feedback. (Aic)

Acknowledgements

Signing up for the NLP Intensive Training with Sue Knight (www.sueknight.com) and Ramesh Prasad at Cherai Beach was probably one of the best decisions I have taken towards my personal and professional growth.

This project is the outcome of the work allocated to me to complete the Master Practitioner level certification. The process was highly enriching as I researched more about the NLP concepts as well as applied them in real life situations. Admittedly, I had to do multiple iterations and rework; however, I learnt something more each time about NLP and about myself.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Sue and Ramesh for never giving up on me, never 'rescuing' me and always supporting me until I successfully completed my project and certification. Special thanks to Ramesh for agreeing to be my exemplar!

I would also like to thank Sajid and Ritesh for also being my exemplars. This project would not have been possible without you. I continue to learn from you in each transaction.

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Finally, I would like to thank my lovely daughter Mugdha, who proofread the complete project and provided many useful insights in the way I could express myself better. ■

*To Vikas
I wish you a lifetime of
learning, listening (whole body)
and love.
Very sincerely
Sue Knight*

NLP at Work

The Difference That Makes the Difference