

'Challenge Ralph'

Rebuilding the reputation of NLP in Turkey

When Ralph Watson first went to Istanbul in April 2004 in order to lead an NLP Practitioner course, it was quite an experience. Andy Coote reports





Ralph Watson knows how it feels to get out of his comfort zone. He first went to Istanbul in April 2004 in order to lead an NLP Practitioner course in English (with translation to Turkish) for a sponsor out there. “That was quite an experience”, he tells us, “firstly because I was working through translation for a nine-day period and I had absolutely no knowledge or experience of the Turkish language. Imagine the challenges - teaching Milton language patterns that are being translated into a language the structure of which is totally different to English” he smiles at the memory. “We had so much FUN working out how to switch them round and get them to work. Then, to add another level of interest, I discovered that the assistant they had assigned to me spoke no English either. Picture this one - a group of three people engaged in an exercise. They are being monitored by me (at a discreet distance) and my interpreter is translating every word so that I can follow the process. My assistant is monitoring another group and then she has to feed back the results through the interpreter.”

Rather than finding the situation nightmarish, Ralph found the whole experience so charmingly bizarre that he enjoyed every second of every day. He found the people “amazing”. “In all my experience, I have never met people with such ENERGY! They asked constant questions, happily explored where many are cautious to tread and, well, imagine an NLP course where everyone gets up and sings and dances at least twice every day - and I mean EVERYONE! It was like a nine-day learning-party”

And they did learn. “One of my great joys is to observe people in the process of gaining insight to themselves and, when they are ready, making some positive changes for themselves - some big, some small, all powerful.

I watched people in Istanbul who sat in tears of pleasure at changing the way they perceived a relationship. There’s no price on that. None at all”.

That, along with his experience of Istanbul, ensured that he went back. “Have you ever arrived somewhere for the first time and been just so SURE that you’ve been there before? Ever felt totally relaxed and at home, so to speak? Well, that’s what I experienced in Istanbul. It’s an amazing city in an amazing country and full of amazing people. I’ve been welcomed everywhere I’ve been and I’ve worked all over Turkey now. I really love working here. It also sparked my interest in exploring personal development in different cultures. To date, I’ve been to Croatia, Russia, China, Holland, Italy, the Czech Republic and Gulf States. I’ve been very lucky indeed”.

So lucky, in fact, that his vision for NLP in Turkey borders on the evangelical. “Since I came to Turkey, I have met some amazing people,

worked with literally hundreds of students and seen some go on to become NLP Trainers in their own right. I’ve also been aware that there are training companies in Turkey whose sole outcome is to make money from teaching

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NLP and who have little regard for quality or ethics. They have seen a blank cheque and want to write a large sum on it. I want that to change. I want to see an evolution in NLP training in Turkey. One that brings with it a growing community of trainers and practitioners who respect each other, acknowledge the value of what they do and communicate. NLP itself has been damaged in Turkey because organisations have been ripped off by so-called “NLP experts” and so have individuals. I have friends who are afraid to tell people they are NLP trained! That can’t be ➤



right, surely. My outcome is to re-establish NLP in Turkey as a respected set of tools for personal, and professional, growth”.

Ralph has set himself a big challenge by any measure. And the approach needs to be fundamental, he believes. “My opinion is that we need to, quite literally, start again. I am planning to run some NLP programmes that are thorough in their content, ethical in their approach and designed to produce NLP Practitioners and Master Practitioners who really know their stuff and walk their talk. It’s going to take time and it’s going to need support. People here don’t enjoy the level of income that they do in the West and they don’t have the level of employment benefits either. A sixteen day programme takes a lot of filling and I’m looking to create new approaches with sufficient flexibility to empower people to learn. We need to find new ways to teach NLP that will fit with the culture here and not try to make the culture fit to us. That’s been tried - and it didn’t work”.

Ralph’s goal is to encourage people to become part of a new generation of Practitioners, Master Practitioners and then Trainers. “I don’t care if that takes years. The end result will be worth it. If we can get NLP back to the level of respectability that it enjoys elsewhere in the world”.

The challenge is, to Ralph, one worth taking on. “I really love what I do and I would not do anything else. All I ask is the chance to carry on doing it. I do what I do best and I intend to do it well”.

Ralph’s appetite for new frontiers is considerable. He is already working across Europe and into the Middle East with corporate clients. “The next year is already full of exciting things so I’m thanking the universe for all

of it. In collaboration with a major Adult learning Centre, I’m about to establish the London Centre for Personal Excellence, which will be based in the East End of London - another of my favourite places - and will be offering programmes to both businesses and individuals on a wide range of subjects from pure NLP to Leadership Development. We have an amazing new venue that will be opening very soon so watch this space!”

He is also hoping to bring people from the UK, and elsewhere, to Turkey for an “NLP holiday” experience. They will be advertised from the middle of 2007. “I’m exploring venues on the South Coast of Turkey as well as here in beautiful Istanbul”.

Ralph is an Accredited Trainer with ANLP. It is a strategic move for him. “ANLP is an inclusive association and my intention is to use that for the benefit of the students in Turkey. All students who attend at Practitioner and Master Practitioner level will have an opportunity to become part of the ANLP community with their own entry on the website that will promote them for the quality of their work. It’s part of that evolution. Image is important to Turkish people and to be a Member of an association with its attendant benefits will help them establish their credibility”.

He is also an INLPTA Member and sees no clash in that. “INLPTA stands for quality, professionalism and ethics, as does ANLP. What better standard to fly on what we aim to achieve in Turkey. I acknowledge and support the standards and work of INLPTA in everything I do. That won’t change. What may change, if it has to change, will be the structure of the trainings in Turkey. We teach flexibility in NLP. I’ll be practicing what we preach. Any perceived clash will lie only in the mindset of those who think we must do it the way we’ve always done it.”

For you, the reader of this issue of Rapport Ralph has this message. “You’ve read the article. Now come and meet the cast. Get booked on Easyjet and come and learn in the most amazing country on earth!”

We’ll maybe see you there. ●

