

Suggestion II

The Form & Function of Hypnotic Suggestion

薬物、ギャンブル、アルコール依存症回復のエキスパート
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Roxanna Erickson Klein
 Dan Short

Tokyo, Japan
 June 2016

Conceptual Distinctions Conveyance vs. Form vs. Content

Postal Analogy

- *Conveyance*: the carrier you use to send the package.
- *Form*: the address label, how we intend for it to be recognized
- *Content*: the item inside the package.



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Voodoo

Haitian patient, *“I have lost control of my mind. I am almost too weak to walk, ever since I was placed under a voodoo curse.”*

Short, *“I am an expert in hypnosis...which is more powerful than voodoo. I will remove the curse, NOW!”*



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The Content of Suggestion Really Matters

- Voodoo death:
 - In 1942, Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon, documented several instances of psychogenic or psychosomatic death, which he termed “Voodoo death.”
 - Sorrento (1692): A young African boy went to spend the night with an older teen, who played a trick by secretly preparing a breakfast of wild hen, a strictly forbidden food. A few years later, when the two met again, the older asked the younger if he would eat a wild hen. The younger replied that he had been solemnly charged by the witch doctor not to eat that food. Thereupon the host began to laugh and asked why he refused it now after having eaten it at his table before. On hearing the news, the younger man began to tremble, absolutely possessed by fear. In less than 24 hours, he was dead.
- Suggestion is extremely powerful. We need to be more concerned with the ideas we suggest (content), rather than whether or not a trance state has been induced.



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The Myth of “Mind Control”

- One of the most common myths of hypnosis is that putting a person in trance makes them more easy to control.
 - This idea was invented by the 19th century Mesmerists, who also taught that trance could be used for mind-reading, communicating with the dead, and telling the future.
- Research has repeatedly shown that being “in a trance” does *not* make a person more susceptible to suggestion, but it does change the way in which information is processed.
 - Many athletes go into an altered state of consciousness, with time distortion and loss of self-awareness, during competition.
 - Erickson believed patients learn better in trance.
- While responsiveness to suggestion *can be* increased, this is achieved through learning & practice, strengthening of the alliance/rapport, and as a product of suggestion itself.



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Therapeutic Hypnosis

- *Therapeutic hypnosis is a collaborative exploration of possibility*, a type of communication that can be used to integrate unconscious resources into conscious activity (e.g., insight) or integrate conscious resources into unconscious activity (e.g., probabilistic reason).
 - Unconscious ability → Conscious intention
 - Conscious reason → Unconscious self-regulation
- The primary objective of therapeutic hypnosis is the wellbeing of the patient. This is in contrast to coercive versions of hypnosis currently used by entertainers, pickup artists, or extremists/cult recruiters, which seek interpersonal control as the desired outcome.



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5 Different Ways Suggestion Can be “Addressed”

- Positive Suggestion
- Negative Suggestion
- Modeling & Mirroring
- Permissive Suggestion
- Habit & Association



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Form & Function

Form of Suggestion	Function
Positive Suggestion	To elicit ready involvement & cooperation
Negative Suggestion	Distract conscious skepticism with language, while introducing ideas to the unconscious
Permissive Suggestion	Increase internal locus of control, utilize existing knowledge & personality structure
Modeling & Mirroring	Teach new behaviors and modify expectations
Habit & Association	Establish patterns for later use, or build on existing patterns



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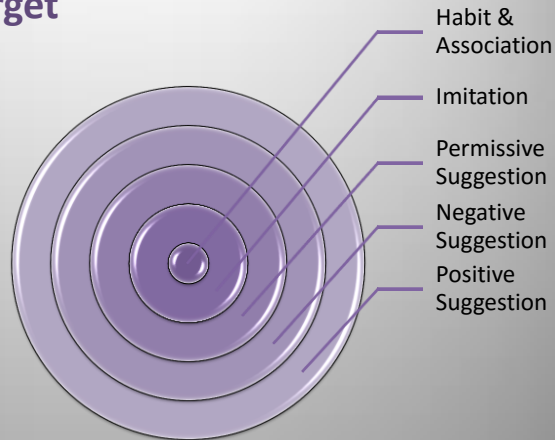
Recognize the Target

At the core of all we do and think are automatic habits and associations. These are triggered without any demand on conscious resources.

The unconscious mind is capable of processing language, without conscious involvement, but the language must be simplistic, without complex logic or probabilistic thinking.

When worded correctly, permissive suggestion depends on automatic responding, therefore it partially eludes conscious construction.

Positive suggestion is most likely to be consciously analyzed and intentionally engaged or denied.



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Positive Suggestion

Positive Suggestion

Function: To elicit ready involvement & cooperation.

- The type of suggestion that can be easily understood based on its surface appearance.
- It is easy to confuse positive suggestion (*form*) with direct suggestion (*conveyance*).

- All 3 are Positive
- Direct: "You are smart."
 - Indirect: "I told them how smart you are."
 - ~~Nonverbal~~
 - Subliminal: " "



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Positive Suggestion Works Best When the Subject does not Know What to Do

Positive Suggestion



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There are no people in this picture.

Their faces and bodies were removed.



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Negative Suggestion

Negative Suggestion

Function: Distract conscious skepticism with language, while introducing ideas to the unconscious.

- “Negation only exists in language and does not exist in experience,” yet it is experience that produces the core context for understanding.
- The unconscious tends to process in positive terms, ignoring negative clauses.
 - “Do not look at the pink elephant!
No thinking about pink elephants!”
 - “Do not allow yourself to imagine any clever ways in which you can use negative suggestion.”



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Avoid Negative Ideas

Negative Suggestion

- “Negative suggestion” is sometimes confused with negative ideas or pessimism. Instead, *strive for positive ideas*, which are negated grammatically.
- patients need hope and encouragement. Sometimes, these are more readily accepted, if negated.
 - “Do not go into trance, just yet.” (Good idea)
 - “Do not be afraid of failing at therapy.” (Terrible idea)
 - “Do not tell me anything you do not want me to know.” (Good idea)
 - “Be careful! Do not get yourself sick!” (Terrible idea)



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Contradictory or Contrary Responses

Negative Suggestion

Negative suggestion is like “reverse psychology,” it is most effective when some part of the patient does not respond well to direction, or is overly pessimistic.

- Direct Negative Suggestion
 - “Do not get too comfortable, not just yet.”
 - “If you are not here for therapy, you are not making good use of this time.”
- Indirect Negative Suggestion
 - “You wouldn’t forget your troubles, would you?”
 - “Many patients do not feel comfortable at the start of therapy.”



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Naikan Therapist

“The sensei comes to the patient...He bows his head to the floor, opens the folding screen, bows again, and asks the patient the topic of his current meditation.”



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Permissive Suggestion

Permissive Suggestion

Function: Increase internal locus of control

- Overly controlling parents try to construct all the solutions for their children (i.e., there is only one right way to do things, the parent's way). As a result, the children either rebel or become overly dependent.
- Overly controlling therapists tend to have higher rates of relapse, their patients maintain an external locus of control.



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Moving in the Correct Direction

Permissive Suggestion

When asked about his use of permissive suggestion, Erickson explained, *“While living on the farm, I found a horse that had left its owner...To lead it home, I mounted the saddle, held the reins, and kept it moving. I did not attempt to steer it in any particular direction.”*



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Essential Permission

Permissive Suggestion

- Psychological capacities often do not activate until identified & validated by an external authority figure.
- The problem with direct suggestion is that it demonstrates the knowledge and problem solving ability of the hypnotherapist at the expense of the patient learning what he can do.
- Essence of permissive suggestion: “You can do this in your own way, at your own time, using your own internal resources.”



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You can do this in Your Own Way

Permissive Suggestion

- “You can solve this problem in a way that fits with your beliefs and the rules of society.”
- “You can keep only as much of the problem as needed, and let go of the rest.”
- “You can make the pain go away in any way that works best for your body.”
- “You have many important people in your life. They will be grateful to see the new ways you have discovered to be healthy and happy.”



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You can do this at Your own Time

Permissive Suggestion

- “This will happen, when you are ready.”
- “I do not know if it will be one month, or two weeks, or even sooner before the problem is gone. Only your unconscious knows when.”
- “Some people like to make progress gradually, in small steps. Others prefer to experience dramatic changes, overnight. I do not know which type you are, yet.”



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You can do this using Your own Internal Resources

Permissive Suggestion

Erickson (1963), “Leading the patient to, ‘See what I can do,’ is much more effective than letting the patient see what things the therapist can do with or to the patient.”

- “Trust your unconscious mind. It knows the best way to solve this problem.”
- “The answers you need are already within you.”
- “You have a lifetime of experience and learning. From this you have everything you need to solve this problem.”



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Entirely Unconscious



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Public Demonstrations of Hypnosis

Modeling & Mirroring

The process of observing demonstrations of hypnosis has been vitally important, since its conception. What is less obvious is that this tradition is itself a form of suggestion.



“Suggestibility can also be increased by the sight of other patients in the experiment, and that by virtue of the laws of sympathy and imitation.”

James Braid, 1860



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Modeling & Mirroring

Modeling & Mirroring

Function: Teach new behaviors & alter expectations.

- Father Glassner's exorcisms (1770's) were routinely attended by large crowds. His habit was to lay a brass cross upon the head of the patient, causing the patient to collapse. When commanded to rise, the patient would comply, praise God, and announce his cure.
- Jean-Martin Charcot's demonstrations (1880's) were watched by patients, who when magnetized responded with convulsions, then catalepsy, then lethargy, and finally somnambulism. The consistency of the responses convinced Charcot that hypnotizability was the result of an abnormal neurological condition, but it was really imitation.



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Does Imitation Lead to Reality Distortion?

Modeling & Mirroring

Power of Imitation: Solomon Asch, 1948, found that the ability to accurately perceive the length of a line dropped from 95% to 25% when 3 others were seen making a false report. (No trance induction was required for this distortion of reality to take place.)



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Hypnosis & Learning

- **Modeling emphasizes visual learning and the human tendency to unconsciously imitate others' actions.**
- Mirroring creates a feedback loop, such that the patient's own behavior is modeled. This allows the patient to learn more about his or her actions.
- Humans are visual learners. Large portions of the cerebral cortex are dedicated to optic input.



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Therapeutic Application

Modeling & Mirroring

Ancient Proverb: *"An apprentice near a temple will recite the scriptures untaught."* 門前の小僧習わぬ経を読む。

- Conducting therapy groups, so that patients can "piggy-back" on the work of others. I used this in Haiti, to treat as many as 60 individuals a day.
- Going into trance yourself, so the patient can see how to do it.
- Offering vivid descriptions from case history, of other patients overcoming their problems.
- *"Practice what you preach."* Do for patients the same that you are teaching them to do for others.



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“Journey: many steps,
many breaths.”



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Habit & Association

Habit & Association

Emphasizes automatic learning, or unconscious conditioning, during which a desired response is paired with a specific trigger.

- Establishing a “yes set,” by making several statements that will elicit an automatic response of “yes”.
 - “You came to me for help, you are here now, you can hear my voice, and you are responding to therapy.”
- Using the same a cue each time the patient is expected to go into trance.
 - Fixing attention on the same object, using the same hypnotic voice or the same hypnotic gaze.



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Practice is Essential

Habit & Association

- Telling someone, “You will breath deeply,” is one form of suggestion. Having that person watch you breath deeply is another form of suggestion. *Practicing* deep breathing, while discussing upsetting ideas, is the most penetrating form of suggestion.
- Often, patients ask me for a “tool.” I tell them how to respond to the problem, using 3 easy steps. I ask if they understand. They say “yes.” I ask if they can do the three steps. They say “yes!” I then test them using role-play. Only 1 in 10 will be able to do it. Always have patients practice new skills.



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Imagination is Another Form of Experience

Habit & Association

- Habit and association is most often achieved through a pairing of some stimulus and an elicited response. For example, a patient receiving chemotherapy, might vomit in the waiting room.
- Imagination is another means of creating experiences during which new stimulus response pairings can be achieved.
 - “Close your eyes and see yourself talking in the confident manner that you desire. Now see it happening again and again, with many hundreds of people. This is becoming your natural way of speaking.”



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Meditation or Trance?



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Learning Requires Concentration

- Erickson (1979), "You use hypnosis [trance] not as a cure but as a means of establishing a favorable climate in which to learn." (quoted by Jane Parsons)
- "One of the most common questions I receive from Americans who work with Japanese is, *"Why do Japanese fall asleep in meetings?"* The fact is, when Japanese close their eyes in meetings, most of the time they aren't actually asleep! Often, closed eyes are a sign that a person is listening intently and concentrating on what is being said."



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Therapeutic Trance

- *Therapeutic trance* is an intense inward focus of attention that tends to bring forth unconscious knowledge or unconscious behavior.
 - Spontaneous trance often occurs for both the patient and the therapist throughout the therapy session.
- The concept of trance, as a special state of consciousness, was developed by James Braid and heavily influenced by his studies of the Yogis in India, and the seemingly miraculous feats accomplished while in a state of meditation.
 - For this reason, meditative states and trance states do not need to be regarded as separate entities.



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Breakaway Groups

- Gather into groups of four.
- Take turns offering suggestions for arm levitation. Do not say which type you are using. When you have finished, the group will guess.
 - Direct suggestion
 - Indirect suggestion
 - Permissive suggestion
 - Modeling
 - Eliciting habit



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