



CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A TRANCE SUBJECT

Lecture by Milton H. Erickson M.D.

Unconscious: a repository of learning both physiological and psychological. These resources reside in the unconscious and can be unearthed and utilized for therapeutic purposes.

Deep trance: is secured by limiting and restricting, through external measures, the subject's processes and patterns of behavior. This then leads to the development of inhibitions and, in turn, the complete arresting of behavior within the subject. This arrest of behavior is substituted for a state of passive responsiveness which can then be utilized for the elaboration of desired forms of behavior, provided they are acceptable to the subject. Under these conditions, the hypnotist's suggestions must constitute the impetus to behavior, the course and development of which must lie with the subject. The actual pattern and form and character of the subject's responses is dependent on the experiential learning of the subject. Once in the deep trance state the subject is in contact only with that part of his environment specified by the hypnotist.

Erickson's criteria for a good hypnotic subject:

Selecting a good subject:

1. Narrowing of field of attention: does the subject tend to watch me or something else with great intensity and to pay attention decreasingly to other things, which would ordinarily distract him.
2. Does the subject show an increasing interest in the idea of hypnosis for himself and an ever-decreasing interest in the general topic of hypnosis?
3. A decrease in the general physical activity and failure to make physical adjustment responses and to remarks made to him by his classmates.
4. The centering of motor activity upon some one limited type, i.e. ideomotor responses, the manifestations of any peculiar motor rhythm and the persistence of this even when obstructed.
5. The rapid change of facial expression with fleeting conflicting emotions manifested, or the development of a rigidly fixed facial expression.



6. An unresponsiveness to distractions, i.e. dropping a pencil or pen.
7. Time lag in ordinary motor responses.
8. Time lag in ordinary intellectual responses, i.e. slowness of grasping ideas.

Criteria for trance state:

1. The single mindedness of the activity or the general state of absorption in whatever the subject is doing.
2. The essential purity and intensity of the emotional responses and the difficulty of introducing a conflicting emotional response.
3. The time lag in perception of and response to alien stimuli intruded into the trance situation, i.e. the subject instructed to walk across the room has a chair thrust into his path, whereupon he demonstrates a definite need for a period of time to react adequately to this.
4. The incompleteness of the intellectual handling of intruded alien things, i.e. the subject instructed to walk across the room has a chair thrust into his path may demonstrate an intellectual inability to remove the chair properly, or will detour around it so that he continue his trip in the original straight line, without realizing redirect his walk across the room from another angle than the one originally begun.
5. The complete disregard and lack of response to, without avoidance of or provision for, all thing that do not enter into the trance situation.
6. The faulty perception of the passage of time, except where this constitutes an essential part of the activity.

Criteria for coming out of trance states:

1. The tendency to reorient in full accord with the original situation and hence a general confusion of orientation.
2. The persistence of a time lag in all sensory responses for a brief period after coming out of trance states.
3. Evidence of definite changes in muscular tonus, particularly increased muscular tonus which subsides relatively slowly, and a rigidity of movement.
4. The tendency to return to the trance state if the motor patterns of behavior during the trance state are reestablished or a significant posture in duplicated.
5. The tendency to go back into the trance if external stimuli peculiar to the trance state are reestablished.