



DEEP TRANCE

Lecture by Milton H. Erickson M.D.

Definition: Deep trance is a level of hypnosis in which the subject functions in accord with unconscious understandings, ideas and memories, independent of conscious involvement. In the deep trance the subject is oriented towards their own inner reality...a reality which is necessarily in accord with the fundamental needs and structure of the total personality. Therefore, in deep hypnosis, the neurotic person is freed from his otherwise overwhelming neurotic behavior. Once freed, there is an opportunity for the therapeutic reeducation of the central core personality. The overlay of neuroticism, however wide reaching, does not distort this central core of the personality, although, in a normal waking state, it may conceal and disable how it manifests itself. Consequently, any attempt by the hypnotist to impose or force upon the deeply hypnotized individual suggestions unacceptable to his core personality (i.e. values, ethics, etc.) will either be rejected or transformed into pretensive behavior.

Understanding that each subject is unique in the manner they process ideas, develop understandings and manifest behavior, is the foundation for recognizing and differentiating conscious from unconscious behavior. Furthermore, by having an awareness of what constitutes behavior of unconscious origin, the hypnotist can successfully induce and maintain deep trances in their subjects.

Securing deep trances is essential for the therapeutic utilization of certain hypnotic phenomena and achieving special therapeutic results. Since successful hypnosis depends on both interpersonal as well as intrapersonal relationships, each subject must feel safe and protected. Each subject requires individual training to develop, maintain and work successfully in deep trance states. From 4-8 hours of training for both inductions and trance itself is usually required. The well trained subject is not one taught to behave in a way determined by the operator, rather, a well trained subject is one that is trained to *rely completely on their own unconscious patterns of response and behavior*...his inner reality, separate from the concrete objective realities of consciousness. The external reality is important only in so far as it might be used in the deep trance- the subject's internal reality. This internal reality should always be in accord with the fundamental needs and structure of the total personality of the subject.

Trance behavior vs. ordinary conscious behavior

Training the subject to differentiate between unconscious generated reality vs. consciously generated reality is best accomplished in relation to reality objects. The subject, in deep hypnosis, can be instructed to note well and thoroughly an actual chair. Secret removal of the chair does not interfere with his task. He can continue to hallucinate it in its original position and sometimes see it at the same time in a new position as a duplicate chair. Each image



has the same reality values to the subject. This would be impossible in the ordinary waking state. In the same way, induced hallucinations of a person resulting in two images, confronts the subjects with the question: which one is real. A solution to this dilemma is to suggest to the subject that he silently wish that a certain movement be made by the two figures. The figure responding to the wish is then recognized as the hallucinated one.

1. Orienting the hypnotic Procedures around the subject

A subject's psychological needs, no matter how trivial they may seem to the hypnotist, need to be met, as fully as possible. Oversight or neglect of these needs will often lead to unsatisfactory or even contradictory results. In this same light, a subject's needs need to be protected at all times. No matter how well informed and intelligent a subject may be, there always exist, whether recognized by them or not, a general questioning uncertainty about what will happen or what may or may not be said or done. This protection should always be given the subject in both the waking state and in the trance state. It is best given indirectly in the waking state and more directly in the trance state.

Having a "secret understanding" between the subject's unconscious mind and the hypnotist provides a means of securing deep trances in otherwise aggressively resistant subjects. This allows a conscious expression of their resistances with a sense of freedom and safety. At the same time, they can have a profound feeling that they are co-operating fully, securely, and with a feeling of accomplishment. In this way, active resistances are rapidly dispelled, resolved or constructively utilized.

2. Rehearsal method

Repeating over and over in a trance, a dream, or less preferably, a fantasy, in constantly differing guises. Another variation of the rehearsal method is having the subject visualize themselves carrying out some hypnotic task and then adding to the visualization other forms of imagery such as auditory, kinesthetic, etc. For example, a patient had a great difficulty in developing deep trances. By having her, as an induction procedure, mentally rehearse the probable general course of events for each exploratory or therapeutic

session then to hallucinate as fully as possible the probable experiences for each session, it was possible to elicit and maintain satisfactory deep trances. By giving her "previews", she was able to develop and maintain a profound trance. After the underlying causes of her problem was found, she was oriented three months into the future and then encouraged to "reminiscent" about her therapy and her recovery. In this process, a wealth of material was produced that then could be prescribed and incorporated into the final therapy sessions. This "future orientation" method allows the therapist with understandings that can readily lead to much sounder work in deep trances. This approach allows the therapist to use suggestions and instructions that are in fuller accord with the subject's total personality and unconscious needs and capabilities. It often allows for the correction of errors and oversights before they can be made and it furnishes a better understanding of how to develop suitable techniques.



3. Multiple-dissociation technique:

With the induction of multiple hallucinations in which different but related things are visualized. For example, a patient in a rather discouraged mood, was encouraged to see, by contrast, a happy incident from her childhood consciously forgotten. Soon she produced a total of 12 hallucinatory scenes belonging to her experiential past. Using these different scenes, she was able to understand her problem and devise a means of overcoming it. If the patient can't visualize, as the case of a musician, then they can be encouraged to recall the experience of having his "thoughts haunted by a strain of music". He soon became so absorbed in trying to recall forgotten memories and beating time as a kinesthetic aid, that a deep trance soon developed.

Dissociation phenomena, whether spontaneous or induced, can be used in a repetitious manner to establish a psychological momentum to which the subject easily and readily yields.

4. Post-hypnotic Techniques.

A spontaneous trance develops when a subject carries out a post-hypnotic task. The resulting trance can then be utilized as a point of departure for developing a new trance state. For example, a subject in a light trance can be given a simple post-hypnotic suggestion. "Each time I take hold of your wrist like this (gently lifting the arm) and move your arm in this manner (rotating the wrist so the hand is now palm up), it will be a signal to you to do something-perhaps to move your other hand, perhaps to nod your head, perhaps to sleep ore soundly, but each time you received the signal, you will become ready to carry out the task." A second trance develops as a result of carrying out the post-hypnotic act, and then suggestions may be given to deepen it. This process can be repeated, and a third trance, still deeper, can result, until a sufficiently deep trance develops. This arm lifting "cue" can then be used in future sessions as a time saving procedure in inducing trances.

Regarding post-hypnotic acts for the subject to execute, the more casually hypnotic work can be done; the easier it is for the subject to adapt to it. It is much better to suggest that after awakening the subject can take note of some object on the desk or coffee table in front of them rather than telling the subject that they will scratch their heads when the word bluejay is spoken.