

Use of dissociation in hypnotic psychotherapy

Human beings learn a tremendous amount about dissociation through a lifetime of their dream life. At night, as we sleep, lying perfectly still in our beds at night, we have several dreams, every night. And, in those dreams, as our bodies lie perfectly still in our beds, in our dreams our bodies can be running, being chased, falling, dancing, swimming, fighting, screaming, crying, laughing, even flying...a whole range of physical and emotional behaviors. Yet, all the time, we are really just laying quietly asleep and not really moving. These are experiences of dissociation from our bodies that we repeat over and over again throughout our life time.

In hypnotherapy, you can expect a hypnotic subject, while in trance, to develop a dissociation from their bodies without any previous hypnotic training.

How does a hypnotherapist go about eliciting and utilizing dissociation in their hypnotized subject to produce a kind of objective detachment from, not only their subject's bodies, but from their emotions and their everyday identity? How can this detachment from the ordinary waking self greatly increase the subject's objectivity and subsequent insight into their own life situation and the problems that bring them to seek help?

(Hypnotic script, with modifications, paraphrased from M. H. Erickson's lectures on tape)

"Do you see that chair over there? I want you to watch that chair. Shortly, you're going to see down in front of that chair, some shoes with (use some aspect of the subject's shoes, i.e. style, color). Describe those shoes to me. I want you to see those shoes and the feet in those shoes and then the legs extending up. But still, that chair will be

empty. **It's a strange sight, isn't it?** Then you'll see the knee level and then a dress (or pants) covering the knees. But you won't be able to see further than half way up the thighs. (test for catalepsy).

Just watch that figure grow. How does that person look? It seems that their legs are stretched out comfortably at rest. Any questions come to your mind? It looks like your dress (pants) (mention something specific about their current clothing). Now look a little higher to the shoulder level. Higher. Are you sure that's you? **Now, if you look, you'll only see yourself sitting there.** Are there really two of you? There must be two of you? You don't understand that, Okay? There's a Maria over there and a Maria over here.

And, I want you to look at that Maria over there because the one sitting over there is going to think about something. **Something you don't ever remember.** It's something that happened when she was about seven or eight years old. Something that amused her or pleased her very much. Or it might be something that displeased her very much, but it's something that she would or you would be willing for me or for any stranger to know. I want you to watch her face as she remembers something that happened to her when she was seven or eight. She's going to get a very revealing expression on her face, either of pleasure or displeasure.

You tell me how her face looks. Watch it now. Don't miss a single phase of that expression. Tell it to me rapidly. What does her face look like now? I can't see it. How do you feel about that Maria?

Now just watch that Maria over there. What do you think is going to happen to her? You don't know. I want you to look over there and watch Maria because things are going to change. She's going to fade a bit and get hazy and then, all of a sudden, you'll see her sitting there. A seven-year-old child. Do you like her? You really do. How is she

dressed? Look at her. Tell me what she's thinking. Look at her. What's she really thinking about? Is she thinking about that rash on her arm? Where is it on her arm? That girl is changing.

*If you don't want any of this, you won't understand. You don't know who that girl is but that little girl is the same little girl, only you don't know her. Tell me about her. She's about to cry and you'll be able to guess why she's crying. You don't know her. You only know what's in her mind. **Look in** and see what's in her mind. What she's crying about. You don't know. Oh! She must have got a spanking. What made you think she got a spanking?*

I'm going to let that little girl grow. Watch her. She's growing up: 10 years old; then 12. Now 14. Look at her.16. Watch her. Did you enjoy watching her? Have you ever watched yourself grow like that? Now close your eyes. I'm going to ask you to awaken and I when you're awake I want you to remember everything that happened in the trance. Will you do that? I want you to discuss it for me and you'll do that with comfort. Do you understand. Is that something you would be willing to do?