



EGO-SYNTONIC TRANCE EXPERIENCES AND INDIRECT SUGGESTION

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Rather than attempting to control the subject's responses, the hypnotist should give suggestions in a manner that merely stimulates the initiation within the subject of the development of an experience that belongs to the subject alone. In this way, the subject's experience will be based upon his own patterns, forms and character and consequently, they are more likely to act, in the future, upon the ideas, concepts and suggestions inherent to their own trance experience.

To illustrate, a well dissociated, hypnotized subject is invited to look down upon their favorite continent from outer space. Asked what she was looking at, the subject stated: "the lions in Africa". "What about the giraffes" the hypnotist asked? "I don't see any giraffes. I love the lions," she replied. "But, how can you miss the giraffes with their long necks?" the hypnotist asked. "I'm just interested in the cats," she said as tears began to roll down her cheeks. "I just love them".

Thusly, the subject has made her experience in accord with her own ideas, wishes and constructs while disregarding the hypnotist's imposed wishes. In

this way, the trance reality for the subject becomes **ego-syntonic**; with all the color and décor of the subject's own life, a way that also allows personally meaningful experiences to emerge, take form and provide direction for future actions.

Ordinarily, the subject in a deep trance state is only in contact with that part of his environment specified by the hypnotist. At the same time, they are greatly limited in their response to external stimuli. Accordingly, in the case cited above, the subject was a psychology student who had volunteered to be a hypnotic demonstration subject in front of 18 of her classmates, During the time the subject was hallucinating her favorite cats in Africa, the hypnotist made an *indirect* suggestion for her to alter her external "map" of the room (external reality-established prior to going into a trance). The hypnotist said, in a rather disappointed tone, "your classmates are starting to leave. I wonder why? Don't you think they're rude? Look! They're leaving in twos and fours. It's just going to be us alone soon. Do you see them leaving?" The subject responded affirmatively but appeared



unaffected by the hypnotist's utterings because she was deeply absorbed in hallucinating her favorite cats in Africa. (In reality, none of the students left the room at any time during this subject's trance.)

Later, after the subject awakened, the hypnotist repeated his statement that he thought her classmates were rude for leaving during her hypnotic experience. He then told her: "Watch! They'll even lie about it. I think they're a bunch of liars. Watch!" And then, one by one, he asked her fellow classmates, if they had left the room and came back.

Bewildered as to how they were to answer and given the double bind they found themselves in, her classmates hesitatingly and unconvincingly, denied having left the room during their classmate's demonstration. The hypnotist pointed to their confused faces and said to the volunteer, "See! They're bad liars", to which the subject immediately attempted to rescue her classmates. She stated that she'd seen them leave by twos and fours but it was only in her mind that they'd actually left.

What had happened? Given the subject's limited ability to comprehend her external reality because of the effects of her hypnotic trance (an external reality which included her fellow classmates), she responded readily to the hypnotist's indirect suggestion for her to alter her pre-trance, "external map". It wasn't really important to her while in the trance since she was viewing a personally meaningful experience-her cats in their natural environment. However, once back in her classroom reality, she was caught in a difficult dilemma.

She was watching the confused and bewildered faces of her classmates in response to the hypnotist calling them "bad liars". She felt compelled to come to the aid of her fellow students who were becoming increasingly uncomfortable, somehow due to her trance experience. In response to their distress, she modified her previously established trance "map" (them leaving the room and coming back), by stating that it was all in her mind that they had left. Thus, she was responding to both realities: her waking reality, which includes a nine month relationship with her classmates, and the trance reality, in which she was indulging herself in her favorite animals-African cats. Since this was a teaching situation, in which the hypnotist was illustrating to graduate students in psychology the nature of the hypnotic reality and how to develop meaningful emotional trance themes for the subject, he assumed that both realities were "fair game" for instruction. Given this subject's rather outgoing, congenial nature, her response to her classmates was not a surprise. She responded to the double bind she had found herself in by altering her own trance experience, an experience that had only minutes before brought her to tears of joy. While in a trance, she had accepted a change in her (external) "reality map" without question, due in part to the indirect manner in which the suggestion was given, but also due to the nature of deep trance dynamics where the subject's contact with the outside reality is greatly diminished and highly dependent on the hypnotist.

In the case cited above, the subject had taken



responsibility for the change in her trance map because of her inability to recognize the indirect nature of the hypnotist's suggestion. If the hypnotist had given the subject a rather direct suggestion, like: "imagine your classmates are leaving in twos and fours," then, after awakened, she could have pleaded "not guilty" by matter of hypnotic suggestion.