



TIME DISTORTION IN HYPNOSIS

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DEFINITIONS:

Experiential time: the passage of time is known only through our sense of experience and it is from this experience of time that we know the duration of the interval or event.

World Time: the time it takes for the earth/world to rotate a certain distance, i.e. one second, minute, day, week, year, etc. This distance is recorded on a clock dial or on a stopwatch. It can be referred to as clock time, physical time, objective time, real time or world time. The world time of an event or experience is then measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, years, etc.

Seeming Duration: this is a person's answer to the question: "How long did it seem?" This can refer to an interval or an event. The seeming duration of an actual interval of time or an event can also be referred to as the "estimated personal time". It is the estimate of the duration of an event or time interval in absence of a clock or a clock-substitute or the necessary data for calculation. The estimate of time is usually given as "long" or "short" or it may be expressed in seconds, minutes, hours, days, etc. These, of course, are experiential seconds or minutes, etc. The question you're asking the person when you're referring to "estimated personal time" is: "How long did the event seem to take as you lived it and not how long your think it was on the clock or stop watch?"

Time Distortion: When the seeming duration of a time interval (seconds, minutes, hours, etc.) is very different from the clock reading of the same time interval, we say that time distortion is present. In other words, when the discrepancy between the clock time and the person's experience of time is large, we call it time distortion. In the waking state, time distortion is a common experience. When we're bored, time seems to slow down and when we're absorbed and intensely interested in something, time speeds up. In times of danger or narrow escape, time seems to pass very slowly, or in "slow motion". It is not unusual for a person involved in an emergency situation to report that their performance was improved because they seemed to have all the time they needed to make decisions. People who have nearly drowned or had "near death experiences" report reliving large segments of their lives in seconds of real clock time. For individuals involved in time distortion situations, time is experienced by them to be proceeding at a normal rate.

Suggested Personal Time: When we say to a hypnotic subject that he be someplace or perform some activity, we say we are assigning him a task or activity. If we specify the task, such as taking a walk, changing a tire, playing a



game, buying a pair of shoes, watching a tennis match, listening to a piece of music, or watching a movie, he still has a wide field to choose from including the time and the place of the activity.

1. Continuous activity: this refers to an activity that does not require the completion of a specified limit, such as walking for 10 minutes, picking flowers for 30 minutes or listening to music for 10 minutes.

2. Completed activities: this refers to an activity that progresses to a completion such as changing a tire, walking 5 kilometers, counting a certain number of objects, etc. This kind of activity is not limited by duration.

Starting signal: “Now”. The signal for the hallucinated activity to begin.

Termination signal: the signal, given by the experimenter, for the hallucinated activity to stop, or in the case of tasks with no allotted time, the signal, given by the subject that such activity has stopped. This signal will be: “Now! Make your mind blank”.

Allotted time: the time the experimenter designates, by signal, when the subject is to begin a task and when he it to end it. The interval between the signals is the Allotted time. It is the clock reading of world time and is never told to the subject during the experiment.

Example of competed activity:

E: You are in a field of cotton and you're going to pick some cotton. Tell me what you see.

S: (subject describes a field of cotton)

E: Stay there and listen to me carefully. When I give you the starting signal, which is “Start”, you will pick four rows of cotton, counting the balls of cotton as you pick them, one at a time. You will not hurry. When you have finished, let me know by raising your right hand. “Start”.

The subject raised her right hand 217 seconds after the starting signal and reported that she had picked 719 cotton balls. She picked with her right hand part of the time, and with her lefthand part of the time. She picked only the ripe balls, leaving the green ones alone. Sometimes she stopped and brushed the leaves aside to make sure that she hadn't missed any. She didn't hurry, but she worked steadily. It was late afternoon and the woods along the west edge of the field cast a shadow. She stated that she seemed to have been working about an hour and twenty minutes. When asked to demonstrate, by counting aloud, the rate which she picked the cotton, she counted 56 in one minute.

Example of continuous activity with an allotted time of 3 seconds.

E: you are now in a field of cotton and you're going to pick some cotton balls. Tell me what you see.

S: (describes a field of cotton)

E: Stay there and listen carefully to me. When I give you the starting signal by saying, “Start”, you are going to pick cotton balls for an hour and a half. You will not hurry and you will count each cotton ball as you pick it. Here comes



the starting signal, “Start”. (three seconds later) E: Now make your mind blank. Your mind is now blank. Tell me what happened please.

S: The subject reported that she picked and counted 862 cotton balls, one at a time. Again, she had not hurried, but worked steadily. From time to time, she brushed the leaves aside to make sure that she hadn't missed any. It was very “real” and was comparable to her performance in the previous task. Asked how long it seemed, she replied, “An hour and twenty minutes”. Asked to demonstrate, by counting aloud, the rate at which she picked the cotton, she counted 68 in one minute.

In this experiment, this subject experienced about the same amount of time in three seconds as she did in 217 seconds.

Training: Time required for training-3-20 hours. The overall goal of training is for the subject to learn to detach from outside world.

1. State of detachment and deep involvement in hallucinated experience. The subject is told: “during these experiences you will be learning to become more and more unaware of your surroundings in the waking world. When you hear the starting signal, you will find yourself in the midst of the assigned activity and, as you learn, the experiences will become increasingly effortless for you. As you proceed in your own inner experience, not only can you learn to carry out the instructions I give you, but you'll also be able to make all the necessary decisions that you are faced with while carrying out the assignment I give you, just as you can do in your waking world.

2. Reality tone of the hallucinated experience. The reality tone of the hallucinated experience is dependent upon a free flow of material coming from the unconscious mind. In helping your subject understand how to “let things happen on their own”, it is helpful to remind them of their own experiences in dreaming. It is helpful to emphasize that they already have the ability to carry out hallucinated experiences because of their vast experience in dreaming over their lifetime.

PREFACE TO TRAINING: DISCUSS “TIME” AS A CONCEPT. HYPNOTIST SAYS TO SUBJECT:

“There are two kinds of time: one, the time the clock tells us, and, two, our own sense of the passage of time. The first kind of time is called world time, solar time or clock time. . It is the time used by science. It is how astronomers measure all of their observations, four light years away, etc. Clock time is also the time we use in our school, work and home life. The second kind of time is subjective time or personal time.. The most important thing about personal time or subjective time is that it changes, depending on our situation. For example, if two people are asked to guess the length of a five minute interval with out the aid of a clock, they may have very different ideas as to the duration of the interval. If you're enjoying yourself or deeply absorbed in something, time is shorter. If you're bored or you're in pain, or discomfort, or anxiety, the five minutes would seem much longer. This is what we call time distortion. While in a hypnotic trance you have a special feeling of time. In the trance you have what feels like an unlimited supply of your own special time, which you can use for whatever you need. So, you'll never



have to hurry when I give you a task to complete. I always want you to remember that whatever the time on my watch might say, it really isn't important to you because it doesn't have anything to do with you. Knowing all these things now, you can relax and take your time. As we practice these tasks, they will become easier and easier for you. With practice, the experiences will become more and more clear and more and more real, so that you will actually live them. With each experience, you will go deeper and deeper into your trance experience. The experiences will come by themselves, without any effort from you, when I give you the starting signal and the experiences will immediately stop, when I give you the termination signal. "

Step (1) training subject to allow "free flowing":

The following instructions can be given to the subject in a trance: "when I give you the starting signal by saying "Now", you will let some sort of visual image or scene come to your mind. It makes no difference what it is. As you watch, other images will come of their own accord, one after another. These images will become more and more clear and more and more real, so that in time, you will find yourself actually there, in another world. You will be apart of that world, which will be just as real as the waking world and you will truly live such experiences. After a while, I will say to you: "*Now Make your mind a blank*". Then all activity will stop. I'll then ask you to tell me what you saw or did, but you only need to tell me what you feel comfortable in sharing with me."

The subject should be allowed several minutes of "allotted time" for this kind of early training activity.

Step 2: training in assigning tasks:

The next step is to assign specific tasks. These should be familiar ones and the instructions should be as general as possible. You can assign him to do anything he wishes, such as imagining himself in a certain place (i.e. at the mall, driving his car down a certain street, going to the store/market to buy food, etc.) Before assigning a task, the subject should be asked: "*How will you signal me that you've completed this task? Will you lift a finger, a hand, a hand and arm, or nod or shake your head?*" Here after, what ever signal the subject chooses can be used to signal the end of a task.

After several times doing tasks, the word "imagine" is dropped from the instructions and replaced with "*You will be*" in such and such a place, or "*you will be driving your car, Buying food, etc.*"

During these assigned activities, the hypnotist needs to remind the subject that when they do these tasks, "*It will seem so real to you that you actually live the experience.*"

Step 3: A series of tasks with completed activities:

The subject should be told that they will be given a series of tasks or activities that they will have plenty of time to complete. To make sure the subject has enough time, a series of tasks without any allotted time should be assigned. The subject should be told: "When you complete this task, signal me with your special signal". The hypnotist



should record the length of time in seconds from starting signal “Now” to termination signal previously chosen by the subject. When the subject signals completion of the task, they should be asked how long it seemed (duration). The following kinds of tasks can be assigned at this point in the training: 1. Take a walk; 2. buy a pair of shoes; 3. Order a meal in a restaurant; 4. draw a picture.

After each task has been completed and the subject has described how long it seemed, the Hypnotist should ask how real it seemed to them and what happened. In this part of the training, the Hypnotist is assessing the “reality tone” of the subject’s experience. At the same time, the hypnotist is assessing the ratio of time distortion: between the subject’s (subjective experience) and actual seconds in real time. Early in the training the seeming duration may be way out of proportion to the amount of activity reported by the subject. However, with practice, this disproportion tends to disappear and the amount of activity becomes more appropriate to the experiential time.

Step 4: Continuous activities with both suggested personal time and allotted time.

At first the subject is given a task without any allotted time, allowing the subject to signal when they’ve finished the task. Then, the subject is given the same tasks with the instruction saying: “when the time is up I’ll give you the termination signal, which is: “Now. Make your mind blank”, For example, when I give you the starting signal “Now”, you will be at a beach, or walking down town, or walking in the desert.” Reliving of a pleasant part experience is a useful kind of task at this point in the training. Emphasis is on the use of the future tense: “*You will be*, in school, at work, on a vacation, at a movie. Again, the subject should be asked for a report after each task about how long it seemed to them and what happened. Time distortion will soon be evident to the hypnotist. At some opportune moment the hypnotist can point out to his subject the growing discrepancy between how long it seemed to the subject vs. the clock time. This will help him to realize that time distortion is a fact and that he’s beginning to experience it quite easily and regularly. In this way, the subject will become accustomed to finishing both “completed” and “continuous activities” within an allotted time.

Step 5: Shortening allotted times, progressively.

The hypnotist now runs a series of tasks, either completed or continuous with suggested personal times (i.e. “you will do this for 10 minutes, or half an hour, or one hour.) At first, give the subject plenty of time, like 60 seconds. Then, progressively, shorten the allotted times down to 10 seconds. If your subject gets “caught short” of time, he will soon learn to adjust to a shorter and shorter allotted time. In other words, he’ll begin to fit his hallucinated experience into the interval allowed him without feeling hurried or compromised in any way. For the subjects that have difficulty at this stage of their training, usually in the form of disbelief, practice and the use of deeper levels of hypnosis will help overcome their difficulties. The hypnotist must be fully convinced that it is possible for the subject to distort time, otherwise you and your subject will get stalled at the is point in the training. You can show the subject earlier progress as proof of their developing ability. Here is a suggested format to use in helping your subject fit his hallucinated experience into a shorter allotted time:



Starting at 0 seconds: “when I give you the starting signal by saying ‘Now’, you will get a haircut..

10 seconds: “Now”.

20 seconds: “Now, blank. At the next signal you will wash your car...”

30 seconds: “Now”.

40 Seconds: “Now blank. At the next signal you will buy a pair of shoes...ending at

50 seconds: “Now”

You can also have your subject repeat, over and over, the same task, always keeping the same allotted time. While the subject may not be able to finish his task at first, he will learn to do so, without feeling hurried in the slightest, with practice. This will facilitate high degrees of time distortion in future tasks.

It is important to reassure the subject, with conviction, many times, if not every time after you give the starting signal. The following statements from the hypnotist will help: *you will always have plenty of time; you won't have to hurry; you'll have all the time you need; relax and take your time; you have an unlimited supply of special trance time, so use as much as you need; or you are to do this slowly, without hurrying; Remember, you're going to finish this task, and you won't hurry; You will finish the task; you will take as much time as you need without hurrying.*

When Erickson trained his subjects for time distortion he would usually end each one of the above statements with the question: *“...won't you?”* “You will finish, won't you?; you'll take as much time as you need, won't you?” Each time the subject answers “yes” to that question, he is increasing the likelihood that he's going to successfully carry out the task. The hypnotist can also add an additional reinforcement by asking: *“are you sure”*, each time the subject answers “yes”.

Overall, the hypnotist needs to understand how important it is to reinforce the idea that the subject's experiences are going to be “very, very real, so that you will actually live time.”

It's important for the hypnotist to realize that time distortion is a natural by product of trance and, especially, hallucinated trance experiences. The subject will be able to hallucinate familiar experiences easier than unfamiliar ones. As they progress, they will feel encouraged and become more eager and cooperative. Consequently, their performance will improve greatly. Finally, the hypnotist should remember, practice makes perfect.

During all of the subject's training, the hypnotist should give the subject his undivided attention. Hypnotic subjects are quick to pick up the slightest change in the hypnotist's attitude through changes in voice tone and inflection. The subject may resent these deviations on the part of the hypnotist.

Finally, it is important to remember that no two subjects are alike in their abilities. After a few hours of training, the hypnotist needs to make the decision to either continue or stop training those subjects that show no progress.