



TECHNIQUE FOR INDUCTION OF RESISTANT PATIENTS

Milton H. Erickson M.D. notes from taped lectures

1. State patient's problem...take control of situation by openly and directly stating the problem, i.e. you are afraid of hypnosis/doubts about your ability to correct your problem.
2. Place both your feet flat on the floor with your arms on your thighs or the arms of the chair. Focus on an object over there and not on me. By looking at that object you hold your ears still and it's your ears I want to talk to. Don't look at me, just that object over there.
3. When you came into my office today you brought in both of your minds: your conscious and your unconscious (front of your mind and back or your mind-waking and dreaming mind). It's really not important whether you listen to me with your conscious mind because it really doesn't understand your problem or you wouldn't be here. I just want to talk to your unconscious mind. You can let your conscious mind listen to anything. The street noises or the sounds in the other room. You can think about any thoughts you want, random thoughts, systematic thoughts because all I want to do is talk to your unconscious mind and it is close enough to hear me now even if your conscious mind gets bored and you close your eyes. Keep a good alert mental image or visual image alertly in your mind. Just be comfortable since I don't care what your conscious mind thinks.
4. You don't understand your problems with your conscious mind but you can learn to understand them with your unconscious mind.
5. People communicate both verbally and non-verbally. They nod their heads for "yes" and shake their heads for "no". We can signal "come here" with our forefinger or wave "bye-bye" with our hand. The finger signal in a way means "yes" come here and waving "bye-bye" means "no" don't stay. We can use our heads, finger or hand to mean either "yes" or "no". People sometimes nod or shake their heads when they listen to someone not knowing it, either in agreement or disagreement. It would be just as easy to do it with a finger or the hand.
6. I'd like to ask your unconscious mind a question that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". It's a question only your unconscious mind can answer. Your conscious mind or my conscious mind, not even my unconscious mind knows how your unconscious mind will answer the question. Only your unconscious mind knows which answer will be communicated and it will have to think either a "yes" or a "no" answer. It could be a nod or a shake of the head, it could be by lifting the index finger...let's say the right index finger for "yes" and the left for "no". It would be the other way around if you are left handed. The right hand could lift for "yes" and the left for "no". But



only your unconscious mind knows, when the question is asked, whether it will answer with a head movement, or a finger movement or a hand lifting and your unconscious will have to think through the question and to decide, after it has formulated its own answer just how it will answer the question I ask it.

7. It's a difficult situation we find ourselves in. We both have to sit back and wait and wait for your unconscious mind to think through the answer and then decide whether by head, hand or finger to let the answer happen.

8. I will ask a question, to which only your unconscious mind can give the answer. Your conscious mind can only guess, if it does at all. Maybe it will guess correctly or maybe wrongly.

9. Before I ask the question, I would like to suggest two possibilities:

(1) your conscious mind might want to know the answer or (2) your unconscious mind might not want your conscious mind to know the answer. My feeling is, and I think you'll agree, you came here for therapy for reasons out of reach of your conscious mind. Therefore, I think we should approach this matter of the question I'm going to ask your unconscious mind in a way that your own deep unconscious wishes to withhold the answer or to share the answer with your conscious mind are adequately protected and respected. This seems to be the fair way in dealing with one's self and one's own problems.

10. I'm going to ask that "yes" or "no" question and be prepared to be pleased to let your unconscious mind answer. It may share or not share the answer with our conscious mind-whatever your unconscious thinks is best for you. So, the important thing is not the sharing or the withholding because any withholding will only be for the immediate present since the progress you make in therapy will eventually (sooner or later) allow you to know the answer and at a time when your unconscious thinks is best for you. The important thing is for you to receive the help that you need in a way that meets your needs both consciously and unconsciously.

11. Now how will the answer be given? By speaking? Not hardly. You would have to verbalize and also hear. That would not be fair to your unconscious mind if it wished, for your welfare, to withhold the answer from your conscious mind. How then? Quite easily and simply by a muscular movement, which you may or may not notice. One that can be done at either a noticeable voluntary level or one that is done involuntarily and without being noticed, just as you nod your head without noticing it when you agree or disagree with a speaker or frown when you think you are just trying to call something to mind.

12. What shall that muscular movement be? Let me suggest several possibilities but first let me describe the difference between a conscious muscle movement and an unconscious muscle movement. The conscious mind's response can not be withheld from you. You know it at once. You accept it and believe it, perhaps reluctantly. There is no delay. It springs to mind at once and then you promptly make the response. An unconscious mind's response is different because you don't know what it is to be. You have to wait for it to happen and consciously you



cannot know whether it will be a “yes” or a “no”. It does not need to be in accord with your conscious answer... your conscious mind’s thinking..you will have to wait and perhaps wait and wait to let it happen and it will happen in its own time and at its own speed. (Insuring that the patient learns both to share unconscious activity and to withhold it from conscious awareness greatly speeds psychotherapy.

13. Now what shall the movement be? Most people nod or shake their heads for “yes” or “no” and the question I’m going to ask you is that kind of question, one requiring either a simple “yes” or a simple “no”. Other people like to signal be lifting up one of their index fingers, one meaning “yes” and the other “no”. I usually , as do most right handed people, like to use the right index finger for “yes”and the left for “no”. But it is often the other way around for left handed people. Some people have expressive hands and can easily, voluntarily or involuntarily, move their right hand up to signal “yes” or their left to signal “no”.

14. I don’t know if your unconscious mind wants your conscious mind to look at some object or to pay attention to your head or fingers or hands. Maybe you would like to watch your hands and if your eyes blur as you stare at them waiting to see which one will move when I ask my question, such blurring is understandable. It only means that your hands are close to you.

15. Now we come to the question. I don’t need to know what is to be your choice of movement. You have your head on your neck and your fingers on your hands and you can let your hands rest comfortably on your thighs or the arms of the chair. The important thing is that you’re comfortable while you wait your unconscious answer. So, now you are in a good position for any one of the possible movements. Asfor the question I’m about to ask to your unconscious mind, that too, is not really important. What’s really important is what your unconscious mind thinks and what it does think neither you nor I can know. But your unconscious does know since it does its own thinking but not always in accord with your conscious thoughts.

16. Since you came here for therapy (hypnosis) and you’ve ask me to help you, I can ask questions related to your request, but I would rather ask a simpler one. Let us ask a question so general that it can be answered by any of the muscle movement I described. Now here is the question that I want you to listen to carefully and then to wait patiently to see, or perhaps not to see, what your unconscious answer is.

17. My question is this. ***Does your unconscious mind think it will raise your hand or your finger or move your head?*** Now just wait patiently for the answer, wonderingly and let the answer happen.



NEXT STEPS:

1. Place hands
2. both minds in office. Doesn't matter what conscious is thinking.
3. Don't understand your problem with conscious mind
4. Peo. communicate verbally and non-verbally:forefinger, hand, head="yes" or "no".
5. I'm gonna ask your uncon. a question that it can ans. With "yes" or "no". Only uncon. knows whether it will ans. With head, hand or finger.
6. It's a difficult situation we find ourselves in. Wait. To let it happen.
7. share or withhold the answer. Let's respect your uncon. mind's decision whether to withhold or share. If it withholds, the important thing is not the withholding or sharing. The important thing is to receive the help that you need in a way that meets both con. And uncon. needs.
8. By speaking? Not hardly. You would have to verbalize and also hear. That would not be fair to your uncon. How? By a muscular movement, which you may or may not notice. Voluntary level or involuntary level. Just as when you nod your head or shake it without noticing you are doing it.
9. What shall muscular movement be? Con. Muscle movement and uncon. muscle movement. Con=no delay. Uncon.=you have to wait you don't know. Let it happen.
10. What shall movement be? I'm going to ask a question that can be ans. By simple yes or no. Peo. Like to signal with finger, right index meaning "yes". Rt. Hand=yes and nodding the head=yes.
11. Now we come to the question. I don't need to know what is to be your choice of movement. You have your head on your neck, fingers on your hands and you can let your hands rest comfortably on ...What's really important is what our uncon. mind thinks and what it does think neither you, me, or my uncon. knows. Your uncon. does its own thinking.
12. I could ask a question related to your earlier request. But I would rather ask a simpler one...one so general that it can be answered by any of the muscle movement I described.
13. Does your uncon. think it will raise your hand or your finger or move your head.
14. Let's wait patiently for the answer, wonderingly and let the ans. Happen.