

## A Deeper Understanding of Hypnotherapy

That the mystery of human thought is similar in nature to the mechanistic technological workings of a computer, is such a common contemporary metaphor for how we think it is even currently familiar to young children.<sup>1</sup>

It would, however, be true to say that a computer does not accurately represent the totality of human thought. Computers do not have feelings, although sometimes they can seem irritatingly temperamental. However, a computer does represent a part of human thought. The computer was created from the human mind and, as such, reflects the thought patterns of its inventor. It may be more accurate to state that computers are representative of human logic, though not of human emotion.

In the structure of a computer there exists a screen which gives, often too little, information regarding the workings and present status of the computer and its processes. The screen is all we are aware of.

The programmes of the computer that run all of its functions, and create contexts within which data is managed and handled, exist in the hard drive. This most powerful part of the computer is most often kept out of sight and concealed within a protective casing.

If we wish to change a message that appears on the screen we have to gain access to the hard drive. We do this indirectly by locating the appropriate button on the keyboard. The keyboard is hard wired to the programming centre and delivers instructions efficiently and reliably.

The human parallel would be to say the screen with its limited knowledge of all that is occurring is synonymous with the conscious mind: thoughts we know we are thinking.

Your unconscious is the hard drive of the mind. This is the realm where all thoughts you are unaware of take place: internal processes such as memory, when to wake up or eat food and externally driven functions like closing your eye before a bug flies into it or reading the subtle signals and postural changes of your opponent in a debate are all controlled by your unconscious.

It is within the hard drive of your unconscious that what might be considered programmes, or behaviours that reliably repeat are situated. Some of these are helpful and there are those that a conscious mind would classify as unproductive or even dangerous, such as smoking, success sabotaging, poverty maintenance and destructive relationship programmes.

The keyboard of the human being is the central nervous system. Hard wired into the brain, signals are sent back and forth in the forms of images, sounds, tastes, smells and physical sensations.

The buttons of the human keyboard are language.

An intuitively competent communicator, as well as the hypnotherapist, is able to deliver language in a highly skilful way that has the result of influencing the neurological pathways of the recipient. The new pathways bring about changes within the recipient's biochemistry as well their thinking.

Language does not just convey meaning; it has a direct affect upon our physiology and emotional experience. For example:

If a person were to say to someone they found attractive, for the first time, the words, 'I love you', the recipient's heart rate will change along with their body temperatures and internal images of what the future holds in store.

Likewise, if an individual, in a reasonably quiet office, a quiet conversation happened to say the word 'redundancy' a little too loudly, once again you would find heart rates will change along with their body temperatures and internal images of what the future holds in store.

Hypnotherapy can be viewed as the study of the impact language upon the psyche within an ethical and caring context, holding the welfare and well-being of the recipient at its heart.

Hypnotic language patterns and the measured vocal tonality of the hypnotherapist interact in a profound way with your unconscious. Hypnosis affords the consultant a set of learnable skills that have an inherent adaptability, much like a psychological 'tool-kit'. The language skills of the trained hypnotherapist provide direct access to the client's unconscious and, therefore, to the very programming that runs the behaviour/state for which the change is desired.

Because a supportive environment is essential in order for something to flourish, the frame of mind in which work of this nature is most effective for the client is the Hypnotic Trance.

## Trance and Altered States of Consciousness

While the debate over actual existence of the hypnotic trance continues,<sup>2</sup> a growing number of sectors within our society are not so quick to dismiss a tool that might contain some very useful advantages in accelerated learning, education, stress elimination and personal development. The concept of utilising hypnosis is becoming steadily more acceptable and its applications are becoming more adventurous: from sports coaching to stress management consultants, dentists and marketing agents. Hypnosis, or, as it is known in the business community, 'persuasion language', is utilised by some in the fields of politics and advertising and the practical applications for economic and political manipulation by mis-using the dynamics of hypnosis have been evident since Hitler enchanted a nation.

In *Hidden Depths*, Robin Waterfield comments:

"If there is such a thing as the hypnotic trance, what kind of a state is it? Milton Erickson's definition, penned for the 1954 Encyclopaedia Britannica, seems admirable. It is:

"a special psychological state with certain physiological attributes resembling sleep only superficially, and characterized by a functioning of the individual at a level of awareness other than the ordinary state, a level of awareness termed, for convenience in conceptualization, unconscious or subconscious awareness."

The ASC (*Altered State of Consciousness*) which is the hypnotic trance is not a state that *makes* anything happen; it is a state in *which* certain things happen – chiefly absorption, dissociation and suggestibility. These phenomena allow direct access to the wisdom (as Erickson would put it) of the unconscious mind".<sup>3</sup>

Milton H. Erickson (1901 –1980) is considered by many to be the leading practitioner of medical hypnosis.<sup>4</sup> Milton worked with his clients as if there was an invisible connection between his unconscious and the client's unconscious and, for Milton Erickson, there was never an instance where the client's unconscious would not respond to his subtle, or overt, suggestions for change. He seemed to place his trust in the power of the unconscious mind completely. Mesmer drew a similar conclusion himself, calling this 'unconscious web' to which we are all connected, 'Rapport'.

As Liz Greene reports:

The rapport which is so important in hypnosis is one of the most mysterious aspects of the phenomenon. Mesmer thought that rapport was caused by blending of the universal fluids of doctor and patient. He defined rapport as an invisible substance flowing back and forth between two people, or within a larger group – rather like the Holy Ghost. Although hypnotists since Braid have claimed that suggestion, rather than transmission of some mysterious “stuff”, is the trigger for hypnosis, there are dimensions of the hypnotic trance which affect the hypnotist, as though hypnotist and subject had become one entity.<sup>5</sup>

Bandler and Grinder called this sympathetic relationship ‘pacing’, and further described how this relationship can be deliberately created and utilised as a prelude to guiding a client to resolution and transformation. ‘Using gentle transitional language the client’s conscious mind is put in abeyance while new learning can be introduced on the unconscious level’.<sup>6</sup>

## Physiological indications of Trance

- § Blushing or blanching of face (any skin colour changes).
- § Signs of relaxation or increasing comfort.
- § Any involuntary emotional response (tears, smiling, jaws tightening).
- § Economy of movement (slowing of breathing or blinking).
- § Eyelid changes and closure - papillary changes (differentiate between states).
- § Literalism (resorting to simplistic vocabulary - keeping to yes/no answers).
- § Sensory - perception distortions (unaccountable sweating or shivering - loss or gain in hearing)
- § Time distortion.
- § Age regression.
- § Amnesia.
- § Stretching: may not accompany yawning – or, Yawning: may be simply an automatic lung clearing response
- § Time lag in motor and/or conceptual behaviour (frequently associates with REM - may indicate reviewing).
- § Any sensory, muscular or body changes, especially apparent comfort or awareness adjustments.



## Hypnotherapy:

An application of the powerful tool of hypnotic language designed to encourage people to gain access to the roots of their problems and limitations within the unconscious and to bring about permanent change or transformation. Very well suited to fostering the further development of areas that are already good and promoting the movement towards excellence. This would be applied, for example, in the field of sports performance.

© David Rowan, 2003.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.virtuallearning.org.uk/virtuallearning/16%20dix%202.pdf> .Sourced 18<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Waterfield ,Hidden Depths – The Story of Hypnosis, Macmillan 2002, Page 313

<sup>3</sup> Robin Waterfield ,Hidden Depths – The Story of Hypnosis, Macmillan 2002, Page 329

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bandler & John Grinder, *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D., Volume O* Grinder and Associates, 1975, page139

<sup>5</sup> Liz Greene, *The Astrological Neptune and the Quest for Redemption*, Page 134, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 2000

<sup>6</sup> John Grinder & Richard Bandler, *Trance-formations*, Real People Press, 1981Page 22