

## SOME ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES OF HYPNOSIS

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During the course of his work in clinical or experimental hypnosis, each practitioner develops techniques, approaches and frames of reference which appear to him to be of value in the induction and deepening of the hypnotic state. Although rigorous experimental evidence which compares the relative efficacy of various methods of induction is still quite meager, it seems useful nevertheless to share techniques which have been developed in the hope that they will be validated or discarded through the experience of workers in the field. The most superior method of evaluation is of course the carefully designed experiment. However, the face value of a new method and the extent to which it seems consistent with our knowledge of the theory and practice of suggestive techniques also help us to determine the utility of new approaches.

Many of us get the impression that we have now exhausted our ingenuity in devising new techniques and that it only remains to refine those currently in use. A glance at the great variety and cleverness of the methods developed by Erickson is convincing proof that we are far from the end of our rope in inventing suggestive methods. Erickson's work particularly is dramatic evidence of the infinite richness of possibilities in this field. It should be clear that skillful practice in hypnosis taxes to the limits both our clinical skill and every conceivable aspect of our knowledge of psychology and psychodynamic principles.

The following discussion will take up some approaches to induction and deepening which are but variations of standard current techniques. One of the methods, "the finger-breathing technique" is original and is offered as a contribution to the major methods of induction and deepening of hypnosis.

I

Orientation and Preparation for Induction

Orienting the patient, clarifying some of his misconceptions, allaying anxieties have come to be universally practiced in preparing the patient for induction. I have found the following gambits to be useful at this stage:

1) The patient is told that individuals have varying experiences in hypnosis and "many people find it hard to tell, after a little while, whether they are in hypnosis or awake." The immediate and powerful suggestive effect of this statement is probably apparent. The patient's concept of hypnosis is immediately both broadened and de-structured! Early in the discussion and even before the initiation of the induction proper, the patient begins to question his own state, wondering whether he is, at any given moment, awake or in hypnosis.

2) The patient is asked to guess or imagine how he will feel when in hypnosis. If his expectations are too unrealistic, it may be useful to correct them or tone them down. At the same time, the operator gets useful data for use in the subsequent suggestive period. If the subject anticipates dizziness or lightness or numbness or heaviness, the operator proceeds accordingly.

II.

Induction Gambits

1) With subjects who are expected or already found to be resistive, it has proved to be useful to introduce eye fixation very early in the procedure. In the course of preliminary discussion, eye fixation as an aid in concentration is mentioned and followed with: "In fact, while we're discussing this you can choose some point high up on the wall ahead of you and begin to focus on it so intently that you try not even to let the eyeballs move. You can continue to talk to me while you are practicing this." Since the operator may still have a good many informative remarks to make, he can continue these in a conversational tone while taking note of S's reaction to eye fixation. As

eyelid fatigue develops, he is told that it is a good idea not to close the eyes too soon. His verbal comments during eye fixation can be encouraged, helping to distract him from the "battle of the eyelids" in which the odds are heavily stacked against him.

2) With individuals who are apparently excellent subjects but in whom rapid and deep induction is likely to prove frightening or lead to premature emotional abreactions, I find it helpful to suggest that just going lightly into hypnosis is all we need at the moment. The intuitive feeling of rapport and control that the operator experiences at such moments is conveyed to the subject as the operator says confidently: "Now I do not want you to go too deeply relaxed just now."

Encouraging emotional abreactions seems indicated with those subjects who rely on rigid defenses. Individuals who are more labile profit from the feeling that they need not have emotional outbursts at every turn in the road:

3) Having informed the subject that a very large part of hypnosis is self-hypnosis and that the operator functions largely to "instruct" him in doing much of the work himself, I say: "As you relax, a feeling of heaviness will appear somewhere in the body. Just tell me where you feel it." "Now you see this heaviness (in the legs) is something that you have produced for yourself. Just go ahead and let it spread. Let me know where it goes....."

4) The following has proved effective with subjects with whom induction is proceeding discouragingly slowly: "You'll notice that one's willingness to go deeply relaxed fluctuates: sometimes a little; sometimes a lot. When you feel very ready, take two deep breaths and go deeply relaxed." With this gambit we accept the subject's ambivalence; show our understanding of his complex experiences; suggest that his motivational state varies from "a little" to "a lot"; encourage him to take the initiative in dissolving his own resistances; provide ourselves with a readily visible sign of his growing willingness.

### III

#### Deepening Techniques

1) If some degree of eye catalepsy has been achieved, this proves to be an excellent springboard for further deepening. I make use of the following verbalizations: "Notice that your eyes feel so heavy that it would be uncomfortable to open them. But we can help you get them open:.....by counting back slowly from ten. Most people can get them open at about six; let's see how it works with you."

This method has the following advantages: (a) It gives the appearance of allowing the subject some latitude in which to express his individuality. (b) It provides him with some concept of fake "norms" against which to measure himself. How he handles this is itself a projective device in miniature. (c) In the statement "we can help you get them open", the pronouns are chosen to produce deliberate effect. In saying "we", the operator seems to align himself with a part of the subject. The eyes are referred to as "them" and for the moment the operator and subject are banding together to fight the dissociated eyelids. Meanwhile the subject is being "helped" to accomplish what he has been told he wished to accomplish.

Allowing the eyes to remain half-open for a considerable time while other matters are discussed helps prepare the subject for later somnambulism.

2) The piling on of effects: This technique is designed to provide the subject with a number of near-simultaneous suggestions. The purpose is to give him an opportunity for conscious and/or unconscious choice of response and also to distract him in such a way as to minimize resistances. Let us say that a numbness of the right hand has just been suggested. This is followed with: ".....and while the right hand is getting more numb, the left arm might get so loose and rubbery that it just slips off the arm of the chair; and while your left arm is getting looser, the head gets so heavy that it nods to one side." The subject can then permit himself the response that develops naturally. Good subjects respond to all suggestions, but acceptance of any one of them facilitates the

deepening process.

#### IV.

##### The Finger-Breathing Technique as a Method of Deepening

This technique has been devised by the writer and is proposed as an effective and relatively uncomplicated method of deepening the trance. The technique has proved to be substantially easier to apply than, for instance, the method of hand levitation which is often cumbersome and time consuming by comparison. It has served well in inducing as well as deepening the trance and to date has failed in just two out of thirty-five attempts.

It has been found most useful to introduce finger-breathing after eye closure has been achieved. The following verbalization has been employed: "Your eyes feel so heavy that it is very uncomfortable to open them. Now I am going to awaken you partially by counting backwards from ten. At seven or six or five you'll be able to open your eyes but notice that they're still very heavy and they blink."

Following this....." Although the eyes are heavy you can keep them open a while and you can concentrate on the index finger of one of your hands. Let us pretend that at the tip of the index finger, the skin is so thin and porous that air seems able to enter; and every time you take a breath it is as if air enters the finger and goes as far as the knuckles, which sort of take the role of the lungs. Now supposing you try this for four or five breaths and tell me what sensations develop in the finger."

A considerable variety of sensations is reported. Subjects report feelings of warmth, coolness, sensivity, numbness, tremor and lightness, stiffness, etc. The effect can then easily be extended and elaborated: "Now you can control this just as you control your own breathing. As you take a deep breath and hold it, notice that the air is trapped in the knuckle. Now as you breathe out a little at a time, you can see and feel the air go down the finger a little at a time." The effect can be further extended so that the wrist, the elbow and then the shoulder take the part of the lungs.

Subjects are generally impressed by this phenomenon and find it amusing to participate.

This technique has a number of advantages. It is keyed to a natural body rhythm, but one which is partially under the subject's control. The subject is struck by his ability to achieve some control over the effect (e.g., trap the air in the knuckle) as he modifies his breathing pattern. Thus he plays a more active role than, for instance, in hand levitation. Furthermore, the particular sensation that is to be developed as he tries four or five breaths is left unstructured. Since he is not told to experience a particular sensation, but is asked what develops, it is rare for the subject to report nothing at all. Then, in extending the phenomenon, the operator builds on an effect already achieved and proceeds in a "natural" manner, thus improving the chances of success.

It is hoped that other investigators will find a place for this technique in their work with hypnosis.