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The Non-Hypnotizable

Hypnosis is the study of states of mind that change a person's health. Being hypnotized means moving into another state. That's all.

Healthy environments involve rich and varied elements providing us with opportunity for change. Meaningful human changes change our state of mind. Sometimes people cannot or will not change their mental state. These people are un hypnotizable.



But it's more subtle than that. Imagine your state of mind as a ball rolling on hilly terrain being knocked about by everyday events. Healthy people respond by changing in response to changes, and find their way back to a positive state. Ill health is the inability to restore ourselves.

Depression

I met Anne at the walk-in clinic. She had come for neurofeedback because she'd heard it might help. She complained of depression and chronic pain and presented the unmovable personality of seriously depressed people. She was

rooted in her state. Her pain and depression kept her focused on being in pain and depressed. She would not relax either her body or her mind.

Depression has a particular brainwave profile and responds to particular training outside the scope of the walk-in clinic. I explored her willingness to change, and I found that she wasn't. This is not to say she could not be coaxed or cajoled into some level of change given enough time, but in these conditions she was not hypnotizable. Frustrated, distracted, and self-obsessed, she fidgeted, thought her own thoughts, and paid me little attention. In the picture of a ball rolling on hilly terrain, Anne was stuck in a hole.

The Receptionist

The conscious mind is not a deep personality, he or she is not even a very interesting person. The role of our conscious mind is to offer an appearance, filter events, and aim our attention. It is very much like our sight: a small circle of focus with which we're constantly scanning our environment. Insight is something deeper than focus, and it comes from a place of which we're not entirely conscious.

Change is precipitated by insight, and people who cannot change lack the insight that comes from being able to refocus. They are stuck on certain patterns the way the rolling ball is stuck in a hole. Maybe it's a small hole as in depression, or maybe it's a valley. In a healthy life we are always travelling; the landscape is always changing, and so are we.



We all know stuck people. To be honest, we are them. In fact, if we weren't "stuck" to some degree, we wouldn't have a regular personality. Having limits is not bad, it's necessary, but how necessary?

According to therapeutic hypnosis, we think of our conscious mind as the office receptionist, or the bouncer at the door of the bar. These people do their job well when they exercise skills based on experience.

They make mistakes when confronted with opportunities or risks that they don't understand. They also make mistakes when they're absent-minded, forgetful, hypervigilant, or combative. It's the same with our conscious mind. Therapeutic hypnosis is about getting new ideas past the receptionist and the bouncer.

Connection

Therapeutic hypnosis is a toolbox for getting people to consider change. In many respects it's like being a successful salesperson: it's not enough to sell the idea, the idea has to work. But in any event, the first step is getting the idea through the door, which is to say getting past the conscious mind.

If you see the conscious mind as a skilled and effective receptionist, then this may sound counter-intuitive. Hypnosis is useful when this is the problem: the conscious mind is not letting in the ideas you need to help you unstick, the ideas that will enable you to change state. The problem is not that you cannot navigate change; it's that you cannot start change.

Ultimately, any change that is going to work for you has to be a change that you accommodate, effect, or understand. It cannot be otherwise. The process of change and growth must always be your own. All that a guide, therapist, guru, counselor, hypnotist, or friend can do is offer you something new. To move you over the threshold. Hypnotism is rapid and effective because this is its entire focus: to empower you to change yourself.

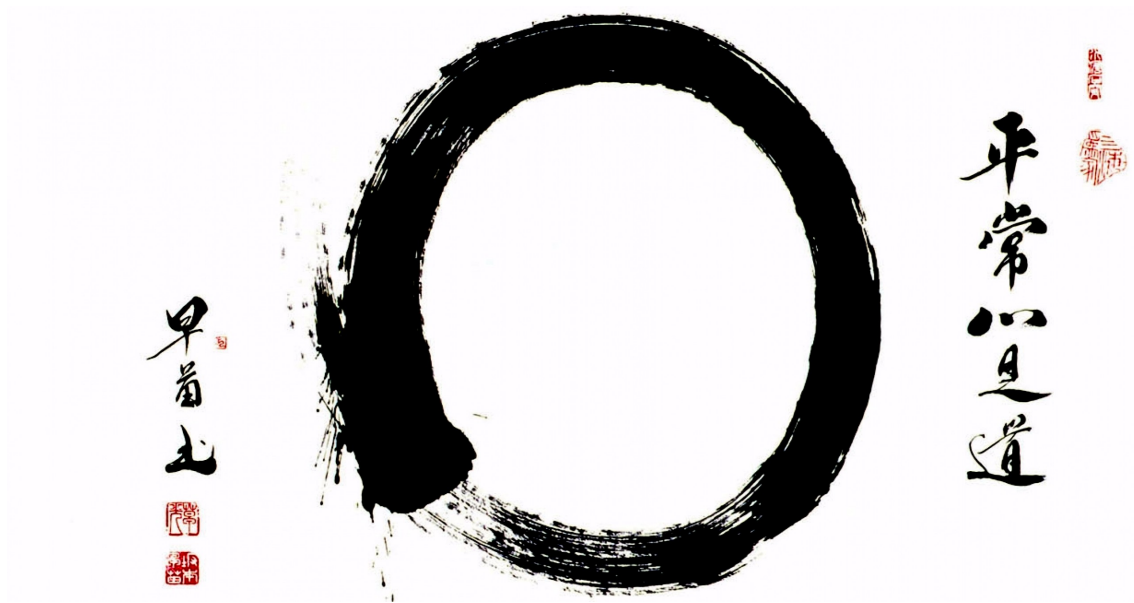


Change



I could not change Anne; she would not have it. Actually, this is not true. I don't really know what I did, nor what I could do if she gave me more opportunity. An unusual, foundational idea in hypnosis is that whatever the client does is right for them in the circumstances. I work with what I'm given, and I accept the results. Given all appearances, it seemed that Anne did not change; but change is not even or linear. In many cases the first steps to change are not apparent.

New ideas gestate in the soil in which they're sown and germinate when the time is right. This is a second, foundational idea of hypnosis: the necessity of rapport. I aim to establish trust over all other goals. Whether or not my client accepts my ideas is not as important as that they appreciate them as interesting, possible, and sincere. Good ideas are fertile; they will grow when the environment of mind in which they sprout is ready to sustain them.



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