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Leading Group Regression

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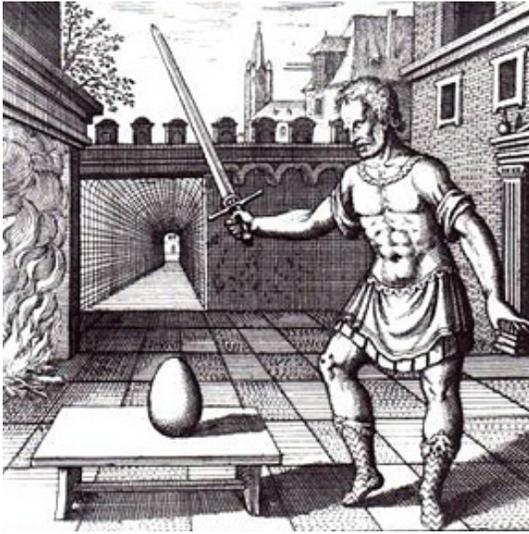
Opening a Crack

When I lead a group on a guided meditation to channel a connection to their unconscious I cannot force anyone to follow my story line. I cannot keep all of the group in any one of many possible trance states. People wander into their own spaces.

I lead a group by asking everyone to create a particular series of images in their mind's eye. Each person creates an image with a slightly different meaning.



A visit to a quiet garden can be comfortably tactile to one person, and have uncomfortable associations for another. Once a person's is fully engaged in the environment I have asked them to create it will fade into a picture of their own creation. The deeper their trance, the more likely the vision will become their own. Each person comes to own the experience, and this is what we want. In so doing the experience becomes less collective and more individual.



Leading a group is like driving a bus to a sightseeing destination, except that once the doors open each tourist dissolves into their own world. I retain the authority to enforce a positive tone, and the power to bring everyone back. This is the primary role of the container that I create: to ensure safety and to recall everyone for the trip to waking consciousness.

Powerful Places

I have been exploring how to lead individuals to powerful places when we work as a group. I do this by splitting longer visualizations into a series of shorter ones. If people are going to wander off course when they're given more time to wander, then I give them less time. I let the group container dissolve and then I rebuild it, and this works.



Going back into trance is easy once you have constructed that state of mind. Trance deepens with repetition. Trance, which is a receptive state, is not strongly disrupted simply by returning to awareness. It persists in the background for several minutes as long as nothing replaces it. To use a pond metaphor: if trance is the pond's calm surface then little ripples dissipate quickly. It is only big waves that shake everything up

and break the state.

There is a progression of imagery that leads to higher states of consciousness. This involves passing through the lower states to get to the higher ones. The lower states are corporeal and conceptual. The higher states are emotional, ethereal, and lack clear boundaries. The higher states are unfamiliar, harder to evoke and maintain. Here my role in assisting people becomes most important.

In a guided meditation people are often confused and captured by their own visions as time goes on. By leading my group on a series of shorter visualizations, each starting from an increasingly higher state, everyone moves up.



Here is how it works in practice. We start the first meditation with progressive relaxation, a slow scan of the body to release tension and increase internal awareness. We manifest the image of descending a stairway at the bottom of which appear two doors. We pass through each door in turn to find sources of spiritual strength and guidance. I ask people to be present, create detail, and make connection. We carefully return to awareness.

The second meditation takes us through a forest to a garden in which we find meaning in, and affirmation of core values. We again return to awareness with recollection. The third meditation takes us into the future to and then beyond a perfect, liberating death to reencounter, or remember greater meaning and guidance, returning again to a soft awareness.

The fourth meditation moves into a nonphysical place, one that is intentionally difficult to envision. I encourage patience and I support the creation of a stable, real experience in the transcendent realm. We envision energies that express forces larger than ourselves, energies greater than individuals.



These forces appear as deities, elementals, archetypes, spirit guides, totems, or formless energies. We refine our awareness of these identities, bring them to presence and speak to them. We exchange gifts or mementos and then return to awareness.



This program of four meditations allows each person to create a personal vision, yet it has enough structure to guide everyone. Most participants experience one or two events of deep meaning, and many others of a more subtle texture. Afterwards, people share their experiences but the important events are hard to put into words. One should not force them into words. In many cases these experiences should not be shared even if they can be put into words. The goal is to have one or two events you won't soon forget. Perhaps you never will.



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