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# IT'S NOT ABOUT HYPNOTIZABILITY

By Lincoln Stoller

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The question of who is hypnotizable is the wrong question, and I recently had a client who demonstrated why.

Teak found me through my web site and was attracted to the idea of medical hypnotherapy. He did not know exactly what it was and, indeed, I never know exactly what I'm going to do, or am doing. However, I do begin by listening.

Teak presented as a bright and pleasant person in his middle 30's without any evident physical, mental, or spiritual burden. Because he had not filled out my online intake form, we began with a series of questions which pushed his buttons. His primary concern was tension in the jaw which turned out not to be TMJ, but a generalized tension throughout the face. The presenting issue was not the main issue, or obviously related to it, as is so often the case.

Teak had a list of health issues a yard long emerging from autoimmune dysfunction, with a general diagnosis of chronic fatigue, which is no diagnosis at all. He was constantly fatigued, in stress, with a headache, and in pervasive pain. It had been this way since he was a teenager and his condition had become increasingly burdensome over the years. There was no initial physical or medical event, and there was no respite from it.

I asked about his image of a safe place. Teak gave me subdued colors, physical contact, and forests with moving water. He worked as an outdoor counselor at an alternative school.

Regarding prior trance work, Teak said he'd done some shamanic vision work. He liked sitting with nature, but had unpleasant experiences when guided to imaginary landscapes. To my question of what was unpleasant, Teak answered, "anger, fear, and terror." Unprepared to explore these issues, I made note and went on.

Teak was constantly tired, in pain, and with headache. He was allergic to chemicals, medicines, foods, odors, and therapies in every class: essential oils, analgesics, meat and dairy, over-the-counter and prescription drugs, and herbal remedies. He reacted badly to western medicine, acupuncture, and psychotherapy. No one had been able to offer help, and no one could explain what was going on. By the end of our session, however, I had a good idea of what was going on.

Teak didn't want to spend the whole time talking about himself, and had come for an experience. That was my cue to begin my act in this novel, and medically impossible situation. Feeling like a sideshow, I decided the best way in was through relaxation.

## Relaxation

The terms hypnotizable, trance, suggestible, and ability to dissociate are often confused. The definition central to my work is my client's able to evoke and experience their unconscious, and I

don't care how they get there.

I use progressive relaxation as an induction, and also as a test to learn what comfort is to my client, how it's evoked and appears. Relaxation is comfortable for almost everyone, and one of my only goals is to make people comfortable. Relaxation was not comfortable for Teak.

I focused Teak's attention on the crown of his scalp and passed down his face letting my patten focus on muscle groups and the emotions they store. I evoked concern in the forehead, judgment in the eyebrows, vigilance in the eyes, protection in the bridge of the nose, pride in the cheeks. We build into our jaw the emotions of courage, action, assertion, and confidence. Relaxing memories, issues, and ideas beneath the facial tension.

Teak was in a light trance, appearing physically relaxed, still, eyes closed, breathing slowly and fully. Becoming grounded was another goal and I used these as doorways, looking for clues.

I directed Teak's attention to his breath and pulse. I asked him to find a comfortable count of four within a single beat of his heart and, without verbally counting, setting this as a rhythm of the ebb and flow of his attention. Layering this onto his pulse and, beyond that, feeling these rhythms contained within the rise and fall of his breath. Judging from appearances Teak could find physical parsimony which, if not leading to a deep trance, was generating a degree of comfort.

## Conflict

Now I wanted to explore Teak's self-image, and I began a guided visualization. We began traveling along a path in a quiet wood that led to a set of stairs leading down, following flowing water. I was combining a staircase deepener with creating a safe space built from Teak's favorite elements.

I asked Teak to envision traveling alone through the woods, and sense the presence of supporting energy, to envision that energy as an animal, person, or thing. To give it a form and a place outside himself.

I started to see tension in the form of shifting in position, discomfort in the chair indicative of back and neck discomfort. He started to yawn continuously. I'm sure there was honest physical discomfort, but I was also watching a spreading anxiety and a shift out of the trance state.

I asked him to narrate what he was seeing or experiencing, what was emerging as an accompanying form or energy. "I don't think I can do this now," he responded. "I'm feeling anxious... afraid." His brow was furrowed, his skin itched, and he could not

keep his eyes closed.

He was having an abreaction, and was exiting his comfort trance, yet this abreaction was also a trance reality. He lapsed into a full abreaction to his own preferred environment, toward his own safe space. His normal awake state then, it seemed fair to say, was one of a constant abreactive trance.

## Hypnosis

Some schools of hypnotherapy might describe Teak as an analytic, non-hypnotisable subject, but this was not true. Using a strictly physical form of relaxation Teak allowed a comfortable trance, but encountering a different part of himself evoked his discomfort. For the purposes of hypnotherapy, I would say that Teak was always in an hypnotic state, and that this hypnotic state was one of being under psychosomatic attack.

His symptoms of general autoimmune function seemed to well match his inner psychic landscape. A person who feels under attack in the mental space to which they are attracted is likely going to feel under internal physical attack all the time. I have not heard it said, but I would suspect it may be true, that people with an autoimmune issue carry a mirror issue in their psyche.

There was nothing more that I could do in this session with Teak. Our time had run out and he was now combative and uncomfortable. The best I could do was calm him down, which did not really work, and allow him to project negativity without my allowing it a home by accepting it.

He was no longer listening to me. I had become the cause of his problem and he was in escape mode. It was at this point that my own boundaries felt assailed. I was fascinated to find myself experiencing his same symptoms: frustration, anger, and the beginnings of a headache.

Western medicine may claim to know nothing of the etiology of Teak's condition, which Teak claims started from nowhere and follows no rhyme or reason. To me his condition was dramatic and obvious: he was psychically at war with himself. I very much doubt that there was no initial event, or that his condition came from nowhere.

Teak displayed clear boundaries clearly violated. He externalized negative energies toward me, his surroundings, and his body. He did not follow my induction leading toward a suggestible, healing space, but he was hypnotizable under other conditions. It would be wrong to portray him as being at any one point on a simple hypnotizable spectrum.

Hypnotizability is not so much a property of a person, as a variety of states of mind. The real question is what states of mind prevail, are the best, and are they well regulated? In Teak's case his trance states were injuring him, and they were out of control.

It is interesting that Teak found me in the first place. My web site indicates I engage in the kind of guided visualization that Teak found uncomfortable. He was looking for an alternative, and somewhere in himself he probably knew my alternative would trigger his discomfort, yet he came anyway.

Part of using what the client brings to you, is letting them decide what to take from their experience. Teak may be back, or not. I hope I played the role he was looking for.

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## Hypnosis is Life

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because George takes care of what needs to be said and I am his instrument.

Joanne Goulding shares some important stuff in her article on the worst things we say to our kids. Yes, children are in a hypnotic trance and what we say has an immediate and lifetime effect. She also tells us the correct things to say to our kids which should also go along with their knowing they are loved. Studies show it makes all the difference in the world related to their well-being, health and longevity.

I call them mottoes to live by because of my parent's words and have met people who say they grew up with mottoes to die by. As one woman said, "My mother's words were eating away at me and maybe gave me cancer." The simplest three are: For Decisions - Do what makes you happy. For Troubles - God is redirecting you. Something good will come of this. For material things and wealth - They are to be used to make life easier for all people.

Norma Auerbach writes about Chakra Clearing and the benefits of focused breathing, background music and more. As she mentions you need to find the time and place to perform this healing activity. I compare this to creating the still pond, or quiet mind, which can reveal our true image and reflection. The quiet mind is a powerful healing tool which is available to us all but not easy to create in the modern world but it is possible. The ugly duckling and a tiger raised by goats, when his mother dies, do not know their true identity until they are upon, or taken to, a still pond where they see they are a swan and a tiger and not an ugly duckling or goat. Their past does not have control of their thoughts and so the truth becomes apparent to them.

Last but not least is Debbie Lane's powerful article's title: I Am A Work In Progress. Yes, we are all works in progress so rehearse and practice until you get it right. When you devote yourself to helping others you will be amazed at the coincidences which begin to happen, as Debbie did too. Also of great importance is finding what I call Life Coaches who can help you to become your true self and a Love Warrior, who uses love as a weapon when difficulties arise. People don't know what to do when my inner child says, "I love you." in the midst of conflict. If you rehearse and practice you will find your next life will be much more productive and healing because of what you learned in this one. Life is a school and death a graduation. That is why graduations are called commencements and not terminations.