
FREE HYPNOSIS

By Lincoln Stoller

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Looking for Nothing

I find myself reconstructing people using mental bricks and mortar. The bricks are memories, feelings, and sensations my clients offer as descriptions of their world. The mortar is their relationship to these, of which I'm mostly unaware. As these structures arise from someone else's reasoning, I cannot really understand them. One cannot understand another person's reasoning where emotions are concerned.

These bricks are emotional building blocks, erector sets of memories. A client brings me an issue, we explore it. We mine elements from their psyche, collecting things. Leading me on, the client identifies these bricks, like shiny pebbles, and we put them in a cart I tow along.

I, as the donkey pulling this cart, provide the muscle that pulls us through the landscape of my client's imagination, searching for deeper connections, collecting things. Sometimes a place, time or image. Sometimes we find a story, and work to draw it out, to unearth it.

Everyone's story is a cover they think compelling. A blueprint for making sense. I never believe it. As they tell it, I stare with donkey eyes, ears rotating, listening toward the distance. The story asserts sense. It never really makes it, but it is not false either. There is no Truth beneath this fable. It's just stories all the way down.

If I sense a theme, a connection between the stories, I rearrange the blocks. Rearranging memories means creating new lines in old stories. Where old blocks repeat like habit, I suggest a different script, using the same actors with different lines, or different feelings, objectives, and outcomes. I take the strongest characters from each story, not the nicest or the best.

I take my client back into their stories, with motives amplified and characters displayed. New stories hint at unusual intentions, endings maybe wanted, feared, or lost; Deeper stories of habitual thinking, life trends, and ancestral patterns. I record these stories as audio files, and my clients listen to them, going back into their hypnotic state. The task is to take these to heart, move them forward, and open new chapters.

I do this for everyone, pulling the cart, collecting bricks... or blocks; looking for the deeper story, older, or more fundamental. Like old rocks, these stories are not the most visible. They've been worked over, worn down, and no longer clear in form.

A deeper story makes less sense, or no sense. It lacks conclusion. Like the paint on old rocks, the color is gone, if ever it was there. Sometimes, it seems, the drama in today's story was added after the fact. Memories are projections into the future, disguised

as moments from the past. This is how we navigate time.

If nothing is achieved, then we have discovered an emptiness, an unknown. Nothing is "a thing," it makes space, a more potent story. The scariest bits are what you cannot see. At the bottom, the story is almost empty, dark with a glowing center. Everyone gets to thinking nothing at some point, and it's a watershed.

Free Hypnosis

In contrast to other versions of hypnosis, which rely on suggestion, free hypnosis (a term I'm inventing) is open-ended, and may have no aim. The client can take control to shape the experience. I offer help when needed. What comes up in trance is a reflection of whatever is in the client's mind and body. It's a stream of consciousness experience.

As in artistic, literary, dramatic, religious, or psychedelic experience, stream of consciousness is creative expression, opening new channels of reflection. A trip with no structure and, as the client, it is for no one's consumption but your own. As a facilitator, in spite of whatever insights I might have, my experience is not my client's. My experience of their experience is a misconception of it, maybe not wrong, but not true either.

In allopathic medicine there is a measure of health, a symptom of illness, and a diagnosis of disease. The doctor is skilled in the craft. An expert marksman aiming for the bull's eye. Much of psychology attempts this objectivity as well, but it's a charade; a kind of Hollywood stage set where the "arrow" of logic is carried on strings to a paper mache target; another story that pretends to make sense. A wave pretending to be a particle.

Free hypnosis is different. Subjectivity is both the medium and the message. Everything is a dispensable story. In most cases even the problem is a story; symptoms quickly give way to other symptoms. New issues coalesce from the remnants of old ones.

Everything is in the appearance, and the appearance is always changing. The potential for change lies in the inconsistency, those places where "the story" fails to hold. It's what's unexpected that we remember.

Like in a video game, it's a search for the power objects. When emotion comes up, or is unnaturally absent, I know there is power, and I steer toward it. I follow my sense of direction but, as a facilitator, I'm closest to "the truth" when I have the least preconception of where it's going.

Along with those who pretend objectivity comes separation. The doctor is immune from the dysfunction, the psychologist from the dysconception. In free hypnosis there is a sharing. That

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is the point. By combining rapport, empathy, pathos, and mythos I am entering your story with an open heart. I am careful not to be the soldier, parent, or lover. I am not entangled, but I am at risk.

I am the sherpa, I am the donkey. You are Don Quixote, I am Sancho Panza. We may agree your world is crazy, but it becomes my world too. Unlike everyone else around you, I emotionally join you in your world as impartial ally. Unlike you, I record my way in, and remember my way out.

“When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies? Perhaps to be too practical is madness. To surrender dreams — this may be madness. Too much sanity may be madness — and maddest of all: to see life as it is, and not as it should be!”

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote

What I lack in insight and preconception, I provide in shared experience and participation. In this I must be more guarded, grounded, and vigilant. My grounded emotions are my protection, not my personal boundaries, my resistance to transference, or my T-cells.

I am the JumpMaster strapped to your back with my parachute, falling into your world. You can dissolve, disintegrate, to give your full attention to your innermost feelings, laid out like objects on an altar, for your inner guide below. You can be vulnerable, amazed, terrified, or astounded.

The ground is rushing up. You might cry out, or you might fall asleep. Let it happen. My job is to pull the ripcord when you're choked up or checked out, and then steer us back to “reality.”

I do not reject objectivity, I just don't believe it, because there is no need to. My work strives to move beyond whatever is your last story, and back down the rabbit hole.

“Now look, your grace,” said Sancho, “what you see over there aren't giants, but windmills, and what seems to be arms are just their sails, that go around in the wind and turn the millstone.”

“Obviously,” replied Don Quixote, “you don't know much about adventures.”

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote