

3. *splitting*

The human mind has a tendency to split things apart, to make distinctions. In Western cultures we divide our calendars into B.C. and A.D. We divide the day up into hours and minutes; the year into days and months and seasons. We can use this tendency to facilitate the process of trance induction and treatment. This is called *splitting*. By splitting I mean two things: dividing previously unified concepts or experiences into parts or creating new distinctions.

3.1 Make Distinctions

In hypnosis, the distinctions we propose are often between the conscious and the unconscious, but they could be between any aspect of experience and another aspect of experience. We could propose, as did Descartes, a split between the mind and the body. Or between the front of the mind and the back of the mind. Or one part of the person and another part.

Hypnotherapist: You have a conscious mind and an unconscious mind.

Hypnotherapist: You could listen with your mind, but I am really talking to your body.

Hypnotherapist: One part of you could be confused and another part of you can understand perfectly.



3.2 Split Something Previously Considered One Thing into Two or More Parts

Here the hypnotherapist reconsiders something previously thought of as one thing, instead breaking it down into at least two parts. This is sometimes done to bypass resistance and sometimes to shift thinking.

Hypnotherapist: You could have the feeling that you have had when watching a favorite scene in a movie without remembering what that scene is.

Client: I'm afraid of hypnosis because I like to be in control.

Hypnotherapist: Well, there is old-style hypnosis, which involved the hypnotist controlling the subject. What I do is the new hypnosis. You'll be in control. What I'll be is more like a coach, suggesting possibilities for things you can do inside. These possibilities are only invitations, you will decide which to take up or respond to.

Note that here the hypnotherapist has proposed a split between old-style hypnosis and new hypnosis.

3.3 Make the Split Nonverbally as Well as Verbally

It's possible and important to make splits nonverbally as well as verbally. Nonverbal splitting is usually done using different voice tones, voice volumes, and spatial locations for the voice. If the person's eyes are open, there could be visual splitting.

Erickson often used different voice tones and volumes when he was speaking about the unconscious than when he was speaking about conscious processes. He also often leaned to one side when speaking of the unconscious and to the other when speaking of the conscious. That way, even when the person's eyes were closed, he or she could hear these changes (often not consciously noticing them) and respond appropriately to the distinction.



4. Linking

The element complementary to splitting is *linking*, which involves joining together two previously unrelated or unlinked concepts or experiences. You could also think of this as creating associations. Again, this seems to be a natural human tendency. You eat a certain food and become ill, and after that unpleasant experience, that food tends to bring up unpleasant gastro-intestinal sensations (sorry about the pun). In this hypnotic skill, the hypnotherapist is deliberately proposing associations for hypnotic and therapeutic purposes.

4.1 Join Things Together Verbally

There are many forms of verbal linking and I have provided a list of some of them here so you can get an idea of the range. Of course, you can create your own new forms of linking once you understand the concept, and I encourage you to be creative.

Typical verbal forms of linking:

While you _____, you can _____.

As you _____, you can _____.

When _____ happens, you can _____.

You may not be able to _____ until _____.

As you begin to _____, you can notice _____.

As _____ happens, _____ can begin to happen more and more.

The more your conscious mind _____, the easier it can be for your unconscious mind to _____.

After _____ happens, _____ can continue/happen/begin.

The more _____, the more _____.

The more _____, the less _____.

Hypnotherapist: As you are listening to the sound of my voice, you can go deeper into trance.

Hypnotherapist: The more distracted you are by the sounds outside, the easier it can be for your unconscious mind to get free from the dominance of your conscious mind and go do its work.

Hypnotherapist: When that hand touches your face, you can go even deeper into trance.

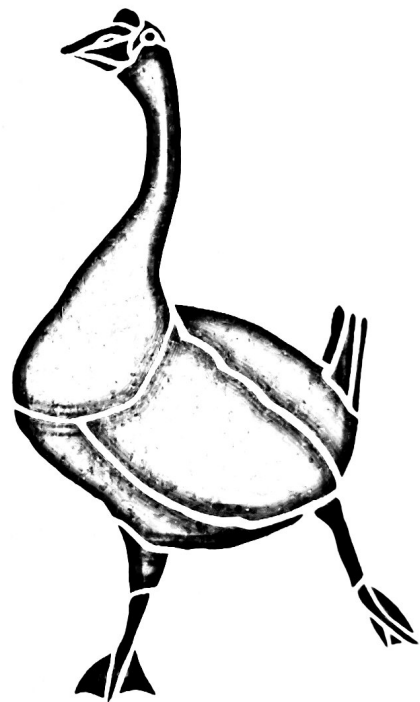
Hypnotherapist: As you begin to go into trance, your unconscious can begin to prepare to make the changes you need to make to feel better, to be more comfortable, to get some relief.

4.2 Link Something in Your Behavior or Speaking to Something the Person is Doing

You could link certain voice tones or rates of speech, or non-verbal actions, to something in the person's behavior or speak-

ing. As you gradually change your behavior or speaking, the person is likely to follow, since your behavior and theirs are now linked.

Like splitting, linking is often done nonverbally. As an example, Erickson once did this with a man who paced back and forth in his office and spoke in an anxious, hurried way. He told Erickson he was so anxious that he couldn't sit down and talk about his problem; he was on the verge of running out of the office, and pacing and talking compulsively was all that was keeping him there. Erickson began speaking very quickly to the man, matching his rate of speech and walking. Erickson then almost imperceptibly slowed his rate of speech and the man began slowing his own walking and speaking. The two had become linked.



Hypnotherapist: You could find your hand lifting [timing this word to the person's hand lifting slightly with his or her inhalation] automatically.

Hypnotherapist: [leaning to the right] Consciously, you might wonder whether you can go into trance; [leaning to the left] and your unconscious mind is already preparing to go deeper.

Next we'll take up a combination of splitting and linking that Erickson called *interspersal*.