


HYPNOTIC LANGUAGE

Its Structure and Use

*John Burton EdD &
Bob G. Bodenhamer DMin*



**Occasionally I pick up a book and
find myself wishing that I had written it.
Hypnotic Language is just such a book."**

Roger P. Allen Dp Hyp PsyV, author of *Scripts and Strategies in Hypnotherapy*

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Introduction

Hypnosis and the Cognitive Pathways it Travels

Suppose you treat a mistake, any mistake, like an oil spill at sea? What then? The oil recovery team will place barriers around the oil to contain the spill. As you imagine this, notice how the ocean outside the containers remains clear and clean. Also, knowing that oil is lighter than water and floats, resting only on the surface. This allows the water underneath the oil to remain clear and clean.

This means that the only task remaining is to remove the oil by skimming the oil from the sea... so that you can see it disappear slowly or quickly and as you do, noticing the feeling as the oil departs to leave more and more sea to see and feel...the clear and clean return. Now, how will you enjoy the sea sight as you set your sights on your future?

I used the above hypnotic language pattern with a client who came in complaining of depression. He had a foolproof way of creating depression. Any time he made a mistake he would generalize from the mistake and contaminate his whole self. He would conclude, 'I made a mistake, therefore I am a bad person'.

Does that sound familiar? He was an expert in making a bad person out of himself. He would stew for days in self-criticism, which resulted in constant feelings of depression. A vicious circle of self-criticism, pessimism and self-deprecation would put him in and keep him in a state of depression. He had the depression strategy down pat. Once he heard this pattern, it changed his way of viewing his mistakes.

From this point on, he saw any mistakes he made as isolated errors and relied on his positive memories of his many successes to nullify these mistakes. Instead of generalizing from his mistake to the whole of himself, he generalized to the part making the error and thereby brought his successful self to bear on this part. In doing this, he thus nullified any depression (a Meta-stating process—more about Meta-states later).

He reported in our next session how he had made some errors, but was not upset by them, rather he went right on working toward solutions. He stated that, for a change, he was enjoying being in a good mood and that he was feeling very competent. That was our last session.

A follow-up over six months later revealed that he continued feeling good and no longer had any of those self-criticism spells. He even began resuming some of his favorite hobbies that he'd given up while trying so hard to prove his competence.

What happens in the mind that empowers it in such a way that it can hear a few hypnotic words, and the listener turns her world totally around? You will find out as you learn the concepts in these first three introductory chapters.

All communication invites the receiver into a hypnotic trance.

In this text, a hypnotic state or trance refers to a focusing of attention on a thought, idea, concept, thing, etc. which excludes all other focusing on anything else.

It is important to recognize that all communication invites the receiver into a hypnotic trance. Whenever we make a statement, the person hearing our statement cannot help but respond to those words and to the thoughts that they stimulate. They will connect some meaning to what we say, and, at least for a moment, as they focus on that meaning, it puts them into a state—a hypnotic state of inward focus. When they focus on the meaning that they give to our statement for that moment, they enter trance.

In this text, a hypnotic state or trance refers to a focusing of attention on a thought, idea, concept, thing, etc. which excludes all other focusing on anything else. Now, as we focus on just one chunk of data, we are able to move or transport that chunk to another. In effect, we take the first thought and apply it to another thought.

For instance, if I have a problem and, during hypnosis, my focus moves from my problem to focusing on a resource for healing my

problem, I can so focus on the resource that I realize its ability to solve my problem. Then, I can move that resource to the problem and solve my problem by putting new meaning to the problem (Meta-stating). The process resembles using a computer to put up a picture of a person's face on the screen and then 'try on' different hairstyles or colors. In hypnosis you can take the problem to the infinite collection of possibilities and select the one that works for you.

The content of the problem becomes open to change from the new information that exists in our memories or imagination. This information resides in the unconscious mind. Trance permits taking conscious mind material (the problem in this example), cut off from the unconscious mind, and integrating it with the rich resources of the unconscious mind (the resource). To distinguish conscious from unconscious mind you could think of your conscious mind as represented by where you are physically, right now, as you read this. Your unconscious mind is everywhere else in the universe. And since your response to this statement is a trance, just imagine the possibilities.

Chapter Three

Gestalt Perceptual Principles in Hypnotic Language

In addition to the cognitive elements that make the brain conducive to hypnotic language, several principles of human perception play a role in making hypnotic language effective in changing perception. The perceptual principles identified by the field of Gestalt psychology play a crucial role in the process of hypnotic language.

Gestalt psychology traces its roots back to the late 1800s. It generally explores the process of human perception and the overall ebb and flow of interaction between the environment and a person. Gestalt psychology seeks to explain the process and structure of psychological events. In part, Gestalt psychology wants to reveal how people make sense of their surroundings and how they weave this understanding into an overall concept of their world.

In NLP terms, these perceptual principles make up Meta-programs (Hall and Bodenhamer, 1997a). These Meta-programs or perceptual filters provide the tools with which each person makes his map of the world. Early contributors to the research and body of knowledge in Gestalt psychology include Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler and Curt Koffka. Many others contributed to the foundation and superstructure. For the purpose of this book these three named contributors will serve as references.

The research of human perception reveals several principles about how a person organizes stimuli in his mind. These principles include ways of grouping information. Starting with the most general principle of Gestalt psychology, people organize the stimuli they sense. How we organize stimuli provides predictable avenues for hypnotic language to travel to its mark, the unconscious mind, and then to constructively influence the listener. Not only do we organize the information we sense, but also we each organize it in specific consistent styles. The perceptual principles affecting hypnotic language's efficacy include:

1. Figure-ground
2. Likeness or similarity
3. Closure
4. Simplicity
5. Dissonance reduction
6. Continuation

Max Wertheimer first identified these perceptual principles in 1912. The original principles did not include dissonance reduction. I added this principle, due to the significant influence it exerts on perception and beliefs. Leon Festinger identified the concept of cognitive dissonance in 1957. The identified categories of perception, except dissonance, began as principles of visual perception. These same principles apply to how a person organizes auditory stimuli, thus forming a foundation for beliefs, states of mind-emotion and behavior.

What you hear and selectively pay attention to and how you organize this collection into meaningful information greatly determines your way of being. Hypnotic language addresses the principles of organization and invites different perceptions of old stimuli. Hypnotic language offers new stimuli that may very well result in the individual re-organizing their beliefs in a way that better serves them.

One factor playing a role in giving hypnotic language effectiveness is our innate need to organize what we sense in such a way that allows us to understand the information.

So, one factor playing a role in giving hypnotic language effectiveness is our innate need to organize what we sense in such a way that allows us to understand the information. Humans use this natural organizational drive to provide perception or meaning in their world. Hypnotic language takes advantage of this process in order to influence thinking. The person who speaks the hypnotic language can know that whatever they convey will be taken in by the receiver and the receiver will at least attempt to organize it and make sense of it.

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To process information requires the listener to at least consider the contents of the message. For example, we do not believe a person can think about or speak about a state of mind without becoming aware of the contents of that state to some degree. The more details included in the description, the closer the person comes to associating into the state. And, notice that the more details that get included, the more the data move from nominal to ordinal to interval and ratio. This further suggests that details invite the unconscious mind into the situation or state. So, for example, you cannot suggest someone is paranoid without first stepping, to some degree, up to or into the state of paranoia yourself. How else did you determine that the other person's words and behavior added up to paranoia? The same holds true for the states of joy, euphoria or profound peace. You will find this presupposition frequently drawn on within the hypnotic language patterns. Humans seem to naturally or innately empathize. What happens after this sort of involuntary reflex is up to the individual.

As humans we seem to need some way of organizing the stimuli we sense. Sensing any stimuli takes the form of receiving rather generic information in which you detect certain general traits of any stimuli. In your visual sense, if your eyes sense a flat piece of wood about one inch thick, perhaps two feet by four feet in a rectangular shape, suspended above the ground by four cylindrical shaped wooden pieces, what would you call this? Your sensing provides the general information to your brain and then perception gives meaning to the general information. You perceive a 'table' as the result.

This organizing need occurs, in part, because this allows perceiving and ultimate meaning making by our brain. The thalamus and various parts of the cortex team up for perception. Now you can organize by using data from the item you attend to in your environment (primary awareness) as with the just cited example of a table.

Chapter Seven

Language Patterns Addressing Spiritual Matters

In this chapter we utilize hypnotic language patterns in addressing spiritual issues. This collection aims to access what, we believe, holds the most humbling and comforting power an individual may access—her spirituality. We realize that not everyone holds or believes in any form of spirituality. However, at the same time, a large number do. And, it is for these that we include this short chapter. For the reader who does not hold any specific religious beliefs, we invite you to access your higher values whatever they may be as you process these patterns.

Some of the power available from the spiritual realm stems from the awareness of being connected to the larger whole, both within the individual as a person and, more powerfully, to the whole of the universe. But, does any difference exist between the two? To know one is to know the other. These hypnotic language patterns remind you that, as humans, we simply represent a tangible form of the intangible spiritual world, both an honor and an opportunity.

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As humans we encounter so many distractions that we tend to forget our origins and purpose. These language patterns serve to remind, refresh, reassure and support the original purpose with renewed vigor. The ultimate purpose of these words is the total removal of the sense of 'pressure' and then to reconnect the individual to her concept of spirituality where 'safety' dwells. This type of thinking permits a much more effective conceptual lifestyle. These hypnotic language patterns almost exclusively rely on simply accessing secondary awareness or the unconscious

mind through expanding awareness. For, it is in our unconscious mind where one can access those high level spiritual states that promote a sense of 'safety' and 'congruency' with one's world.

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Ambassador: Humans Representing the Spirit of Purpose

The words in this pattern represent several concepts. The concepts include the ideas of a 'purposeful existence' and 'clarity' of this purpose. While we may believe we know our purpose, enacting this can become confusing at times. Encouraging a purposeful existence and clarity of purpose occurs in the reference to utilizing gifts or internal resources that each of us possess. Emphasis is placed on utilizing the gifts rather than getting caught up in tracking down the source of the gifts.

The last two lines in the pattern about whom to provide with help also play a role of clarifying life's purpose. The third principle addressed is the person existing as an extension of many supportive beings under the protective umbrella of a Supreme Being. These words and concepts also aim to create a calm, yet certain state of determination for carrying out the designed purpose. Inviting secondary awareness occurs throughout this language collection.

You represent many people, seen and unseen. Some you know and some you have yet to know. Not unlike the dwelling you now occupy, many previous occupants spent time there. They each leave behind traces of themselves and their lives that influence. You are here now but where were you before and where will you go later, yet right on time? There is only one common denominator.

Some say your 'personality' stems from your DNA while others say your 'personality' results from a chemical reaction process, environment interacting with you and vice-versa.

Maybe what we refer to as ‘personality’ is just what we show to others the most. But what we show differs within and between only representing a small fraction of the whole.

How many different four-number combinations can be made with 100 numbers? Well there is a formula for figuring such and the total is astounding, I know this much. Now, how many 2, 3, 4 or more number combinations can you make with several thousand numbers, and now with the infinite that is? Such is your personality.

When you express any trait, it must, by necessity, take an observable form. It could not be gathered or displayed otherwise. But this status is temporary, only for the time in use. Don’t be fooled by the one or two forms on display because the immense intangible lot remains in waiting, yet weightless. All traits waiting in the wings naturally take a non-form yet they inform, remaining adaptable. Don’t let out of sight become out of mind.

So what is your ‘personality’? Well, in a sense you are an ambassador representing so much and so many. You choose the best, suiting the cause, supported by many. What you choose to represent is your ‘personality’. Therefore, your ‘personality’ is simply an outward expression of your purpose.

Input comes from an inner circle yet this just represents the whole collection of circles. You get the tangible while the rest is intangible. If you make it your purpose to identify where you got what you have you will not be able to have what you got. You are an ambassador, representing a significant collective, quite a privilege. Always dispatched by the high command, you arrive with a support staff though most work behind the scenes. Do not fear those whom you have come to help, help those who have come to fear. The task then remains clear.

Appreciation: Appreciating the Ultimate Resource

The first part of this pattern simply asks the listener to go into trance. The initial trance is general and then the client is invited into a more specific trance of appreciation. This invitation happens by going into detail about a universal human phenomenon that

Dr Burton and Dr Bodenhamer's book should be part of every therapist's tool chest. The clear explanation of techniques and processes for change make it invaluable for those seeking to address the basis of problem issues to achieve swift resolution."

Jeanie Phillips, MA LPC

This book demystifies hypnotic language and makes one aware of its everyday presence. Using hypnotic language in therapy and communication can be a shortcut to understanding and change.

A truly useful and practical guide."

Michelle Quartermaine, MA LPC

We each shape our own reality. Perceptions and cognitive processes unique to each of us determine our individual perspective on the world, and we present to ourselves what we are programmed to see. But what if we could change our perceptions and cognitive processes—and consequently our reality?

One way of achieving this is by harnessing the power of hypnotic language. This remarkable book examines the structures of the hypnotic sentence, and the very cognitive dimensions that allow hypnotic language to be effective in changing our minds. Defining the three facets that allow the mind to be susceptible to hypnotic language patterns, *Hypnotic Language* provides new language patterns that address beliefs, time orientation, perception, spiritual matters and states of mind, and devises new hypnotic language applications that emphasize the importance of Gestalt principles and cognitive factors.

An invaluable resource for hypnotherapists, psychologists, NLP practitioners and counselors, *Hypnotic Language* promotes a new and deeper understanding of hypnotic language, clearly defining the divide between the conscious and unconscious mind—and those language paths that link the two. Providing a wealth of hypnotic trance scripts, this book contains innovative and original ways to induce cognitive change, and techniques that will enable you to access the infinite resources of the unconscious.

John Burton EdD works as a counselor in a private practice, teaches graduate school, and conducts workshops on various human relations and growth topics. He lives in Greenville, South Carolina.

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