



Hello, I'm Steve Roh, aka. "the Grumpy Hypnotist".
I run Center City Hypnosis in Philadelphia, PA. Since 2006 I've worked with thousands of individual clients on a variety of issues.

Early on in my hypnosis career, I had the honor of being invited to contribute a column for the Hypnosis.org e-zine, one of the most widely read e-zines for professional hypnotists.

The purpose of the columns was to help fellow hypnotists with developing a mindset for getting their own practices up and running, since too many would-be hypnotists go through training courses but lack guidance on how to really get started.

This is a compilation of those articles for easy reference. I hope they are useful to you, whether or not you're intending to become a professional hypnotist.

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Michael Port's "Book Yourself Solid" within a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, Michael Port's "Book Yourself Solid" is the subject. This book is subtitled "The Fastest, Easiest, and Most Reliable System for Getting More Clients Than You Can Handle Even if You Hate Marketing and Selling". Now, I don't know if those superlatives are true or not... but Port's material is something that I think can be of great value to any service provider who deals directly with clients.

The system that Port describes is quite complete. It encompasses areas such as positioning, personal branding, trust and credibility, and a number of solid self-promotion strategies. Many of these topics are commonly covered in haphazard fashion by dime-a-dozen marketing blogs, books and gurus. But "Book Yourself Solid" stands out because it's all put together in a practical framework without a lot of fluff.

But what really makes Port's material so interesting and useful is the foundation that all these topics are built upon. The foundation or core philosophy of his system is what he calls the "Red Velvet Rope" policy and the importance of only working with Ideal Clients. Ideal Clients are the clients who energize you, challenge you, and who you look forward to working with, so you naturally do your best work with them. According to Port, one of the first things a service provider should do is to purposefully create a psychographic profile of their Ideal Client in their mind.

Then a Red Velvet Rope policy is crafted which is designed to do two things:

1. Discourage people who do not fit that profile from entering your world
2. Encourage people who fit that profile to make a personal connection with you

Now, many folks may think: "Why would you want to discourage anyone from becoming a client?? I'm struggling with getting clients as it is... that's crazy to limit my prospects like that."

Aside from the basic fact that humans tend to want something more if they perceive it to be scarce, here are a few reasons:

1. It is not fair to clients if you find that they "turn you off", but you continue a charade of giving them best possible service. I know that in theory, we should all be professionals and treat everyone the same, no matter if we can't stand

someone's personality... but in reality, you know hypnotists are as human as everyone else and this sort of dislike cannot help but seep into and negatively influence results, especially given the nature of the work.

2. It is doubly unfair to a client if they have a frustrating experience with you, because that may have prevented them from having gotten help from another practitioner who may have been much better suited for them.
3. It is not fair to the hypnotist. Working with people who you dislike day after day is pointless. Besides, working with less-than-ideal clients, where there is no "chemistry", will not lead to positive word-of-mouth at all.
4. Properly positioning yourself as the solution provider for a specific personality profile has the almost magical effect of creating a personal connection between you and the prospect, before even meeting them. This is key to creating an efficient marketing funnel... otherwise you may spend your valuable time "consulting" (aka "chatting") with people, just to build a level of comfort, only to find that you are completely unsuited to working with each other.
5. Hypnosis practitioners often seem to be promoting themselves to other practitioners, by talking about things that other people in their field would be interested in. There seems to be a head-scratching tendency of practitioners to go on and on about things that would only interest people who are already in the "health and wellness" industry (ie. presenting themselves as "certified in hypnosis, NLP, EFT, massage, nutritional counseling, energy healing, abundance coaching, etc..."). Keeping the focus on the Ideal Client reminds you that your target client is not a hypnotist and does not really care about hypnosis (or "holistic wellness" in general) in the same way you do.

Identifying your Ideal Client and designing your Velvet Rope Policy are basically means to prequalify potential clients in a structured manner. The importance of prequalifying prospects is often overlooked, because too much emphasis is placed on how to get warm bodies through the door.

In fact, I think prequalification (or more likely, total lack of it) is one of the major factors which accounts for differences between practitioners' "success rates". I will go so far as to say this is probably as important a factor as training or techniques. Many hypnotists with the same training or who use the same techniques can get wildly different results,

and I think this is because some hypnotists aggressively prequalify and filter more than others.

Imagine a practitioner who works with every single person they can get their hands on, for an issue like smoking cessation. Perhaps the hypnotist feels that they need to make all sorts of promises in order to “get” them as a client. So you get the people who aren’t too sure they want to quit, the people who get nagged by their spouses, etc. Not surprisingly getting weak results.

Now, anyone who has worked a lot with smokers should know how important it is to work only with people who are actually motivated to stop smoking for their own reasons, and who are willing to do what it takes to stop smoking (whether it’s some type of homework, changing their environment in some small way, self-hypnosis, etc.).

A lot of people understand that concept in the context of smoking. But this should also be applied in general, in every aspect of marketing your practice. The key is whether or not a hypnotist actually has the guts to turn people away, for everyone’s benefit.

A big problem with working with everyone and anyone is that it eventually wears down the confidence of the hypnotist, and a hypnotist with no confidence is one of the most pathetic creatures known to mankind. Imagine a hypnotist who wants to grow their practice in the specialty of weight loss (just like every other hypnotist it seems), and who wants to work with as many people as possible, and so promotes hypnosis as if it were like a “magic pill” that burns fat “while you sleep!”, while offering things like guarantees and sliding scale fees.

Well, of course that hypnotist would see many clients who were lazy, indulgent, and unwilling to change anything about themselves. There is of course an endless supply of humans like that, so the hypnotist actually might find many people who were enticed by that kind of nonsense. But certainly the results would be disappointing, and I assume that if you care about not cheating people who pay you money for service, that this would eventually wear you down, and maybe even cause you (the so-called hypnotist) to question whether or not hypnosis actually works!

So, if you are struggling with your hypnosis practice, perhaps the solution is not to try to “get more” clients, but rather to properly structure your marketing so that you “attract” the right clients for YOU. Because there is only one YOU, if you present yourself authentically, that means you do not really need to worry about competition. Of course, if you try to copy another practitioner’s personality you come off as a transparent fake.

Anyway, think about perception... have you ever passed by a restaurant in a touristy part of town, where the host or hostess is on the street trying to beg people to come in and have a meal? I can report with conviction that every meal I've had at a place like that, has been mind-bogglingly terrible.

Here is a big thing about the Red Velvet Rope: although the idea may seem snobby or arrogant at first glance, it is not about only letting affluent people or "high class" people into your club... it is not like the old stories about that Manhattan nightclub Studio 54 where the doorman would take sadistic pleasure in picking some lucky people to let in, while mocking those who didn't have the right look.

This approach needs to be applied with the entire purpose in mind being the long-term interest and benefit for clients and also for your own sanity, not so that you can play power games with prospects, or worse, using it as an excuse for blaming a client or rationalizing poor performance on your part.

In conclusion, the principles in Michael Port's "Book Yourself Solid" may sound kind of scary to apply at first, especially since hypnotists have a tendency to want to be feel-good do-gooders who are loving and accepting of everyone. So the idea of identifying and separating the Ideal Clients from the "duds" can seem a bit unnatural. But if your goal is to grow a sustainable and rewarding practice that helps many more people in the long run, you may find yourself doing uncomfortable things.

The "Love All, Serve All" slogan of a popular restaurant chain may be great for people who are selling hamburgers and buffalo wings, but hypnotists may want to consider that the best way to serve (and love) your clients may be to not serve them at all!

Seth Godin's "The Dip" within a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, Seth Godin's "The Dip" is the subject. This book is subtitled "A Little Book That Teaches You When To Quit (And When To Stick)". Seth Godin is a very influential marketing guru. He is also one of the very few people who I think truly deserves that moniker "guru".

This book is about learning how to quit successfully. "Never quit" is bad advice and meaningless motivational dribble. Learning to quit fast, quit often and quit without guilt, can be used as an advantage.

The key is "strategic quitting". The problem is, most people quit at the wrong time. They quit when times get tough ("the Dip"), instead of recognizing that it is part of what makes the goal worthwhile and valuable. Or, they never quit at all, even when they are on a dead-end path. Strategic quitting incorporates and plans ahead for the inevitable hard times, plateaus and dead-ends that arise during any venture.

Fundamental to applying the principles of the Dip is the idea that you need to first have a goal which is worth the struggle of getting through the Dip. How do you identify an objective that is worth pursuing?

1. Accept that every worthwhile goal has a Dip. Your goal should be to be "the best [whatever] in the world". The key is to define "the world" from the point of the view of the customer.
2. Example: "the best Swahili-speaking hypnotist in town." In the U.S. at least, the Swahili-speaking population is probably too small to matter from a marketing perspective. No Dip there. Set a realistic, but difficult goal like "Best Spanish-speaking hypnotist in the state", that is achievable and has potential for a Dip.
3. If you do not set a goal like this, you will be average and according to Godin, "average is for losers" – time, energy and life are too valuable to squander on just being average. Why bother?

I think this can be related to how many hypnotists fail to communicate the value they bring to the table, often because they do not know it themselves! Hypnotists often seem

to think that simply claiming that they specialize in “Smoking, Weight Loss and Stress Management” is enough of a compelling value statement, without providing any convincing evidence that they are the best at anything or the best for anyone.

After all, if a hypnotist has not even got their unique value proposition clear in their own mind, then there is little chance that the market will see that, since it doesn't exist!

The Dip is the barrier that exists in any system, that is there to separate the wheat from the chaff, the committed from the dilettantes. The Dip can be your greatest ally, and makes the journey worthwhile. Because extraordinary benefits accrue to the tiny minority that gets thru the Dip (rewards are not linear).

Benefits also accrue to the people who quit dead-ends and refocus on something else, because they stop paying the opportunity cost and cut their losses.

A cul-de-sac, a noncyclical dead-end, is worst place to stay (and that is where majority of population gets stuck). Quit these ASAP, no matter how safe or comfortable you are. “Working harder” or “plugging away” when you're in a cul-de-sac is waste of life and energy.

In order to objectively determine whether or not you are in a Dip or a cul-de-sac, define what will make you quit, before you start. The decision to quit or not should be made when things are going well (not during low point or panic).

If, before starting, you determine that you can't make it thru the Dip, or that the rewards are not compelling enough for you, then DON'T START. And if you realize that you're in a dead-end, forget all that “winners never quit” nonsense and QUIT.

(Can you imagine if companies such as McDonald's or Coca-Cola followed that childish “never quit” motto? They would still be spending resources on trying to sell the “Arch Deluxe” or “New Coke” instead of giving people what they want.)

As long as you plan ahead for the Dip, you can get thru the hard times easier because you know that the hard times are what will cause most of the uncommitted competitors to quit. That is good for the market because it weeds out those who were not really serious about what they were doing.

When I first started out in this field, I watched a Don Mottin video where he explained that this business has many ups and downs. Often times a height of success can be

reached, leaving you feeling cocky and invincible, and then suddenly the next month the phones stop ringing and emails stop arriving, or you have a string of less-than-spectacular session results. Don Mottin urged practitioners to maintain an “even keel”.

It is easier to keep that unemotional, even-keel attitude if you study the parts of the system that encourage quitting, so you can beat them while keeping your focus on your ultimate goal. The point at which most people quit, is the point that adds value/scarcity to your objective.

Seth Godin’s “The Dip” is an excellent book for people who are interested in more than just a rah-rah motivational exercise. It is not really suited for people who are content to just “get along” and “get by” in life, but I assume that people reading this ezine are not usually in that category.

Seth Godin's "All Marketers are Liars" in a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, we are going to talk about another great Seth Godin book. Last time it was Godin's "The Dip", this time it is his earlier book "All Marketers are Liars".

Actually, I lied, this article is definitely inspired by Godin's book, but I will not be doing a broad summary like the earlier articles in this series have done. Instead I will focus on one major aspect of Godin's book: the importance of telling the right stories to the right audience, in order for your marketing efforts to have any impact.

First of all, let's be clear: there's no need to get upset, jumping to the conclusion that Godin is suggesting that good marketing requires you to become a liar. Let's not be so hypersensitive and thin-skinned, shall we? Considering that as helpers, we should be models of being rational and objective. But anyway...

The story that you tell, which is subtly told via your posture in the market, needs to appeal to a specific audience. Think about it, if you wanted to influence science-fiction fans, would you spin them a tale about a lonely single mom who is struggling to raise her teenage children until she enters a relationship with a mysterious man, who it turns out may in fact be a charming sociopath who conspired to murder her husband because he uncovered a shady real estate deal that involved the biggest land-owner in the county? In other words, a story that would be more suitable for the Lifetime cable network?

If you told a story like that to someone whose favorite film of the past 10 years was "The Chronicles of Riddick" starring Vin Diesel, wouldn't you expect them to zone out once they realized that your story wasn't going to involve computer-generated interstellar power struggles? And vice-versa?

So why do so many hypnotists tell stories which have nothing to do with the problems and concerns that people in the marketplace have? In other words: why do so many hypnotists tell stories whose main plots revolve around how fascinating hypnosis is, and all the certifications they've collected, and how the hypnotist's own personal journey led to their current state of being a deeply caring, wise and wonderful healer?

Of course, the answer to that "why" is pretty simple. People in general would rather indulge their own interests and preferences for the story they want to tell. There's

nothing wrong with that, if it's done as a conscious choice and with the understanding that there is a price to pay. But I think many hypnotists struggle to attract clients because they think their job is to convince the public to care about stories that are of no interest to that segment of the public.

On the other hand, many hypnotists seem to allow themselves to get caught up in the drama and the story that clients bring to the table. It is troubling to see hypnotists on public internet forums breathlessly going on about how some client's history is so dramatic, regardless of whether such details and speculative "analysis" are relevant to solving a specific problem. It's as if working towards a practical solution is almost treated as a secondary concern.

Hypnotists should keep in mind that they are there to solve a problem, not to indulge in emotional vampirism or to sympathetically encourage a client to wallow in self-absorption and rumination. I think we should ignore the client's story (*the one that is consciously told during interviews and intake*), except to use their telling of it to identify hooks into their personality and thought processes that can be used to facilitate a solution.

Anyway, back to the subject of targeting a specific audience for your story...

Be clear about who your audience is. If you aren't clear on that yourself, you will send a confused, unfocused message that doesn't connect with anyone.

Hypnotists often seem to focus on an audience that really doesn't matter: the audience of family and friends. If you are serious about helping people with hypnosis as a business, who cares what your family and friends think?

Here's another thought: your audience is probably NOT other hypnotists. So why do so many people in this field seem to direct their marketing towards other people in the "health and wellness" industry?

You know what I mean: folks who shape their messages to appeal to other people who do the same thing they do, using jargon, titles, terminology that would only mean something (if very little even then) to other practitioners.

It seems to me that if you are offering solutions to problems related to poor health and lack of mental/emotional wellness, the last people who really need to hear about those

solutions would be people who have the same certifications, and who attend the same conventions that you do!

It's as if many are afraid to really get out there into the marketplace and tell the story of how hypnosis solves problems, to people who are outside of the field! I know, it is easier to just chat with other hypnotists about this or that, you won't face the unbearably painful possibility of rejection or indifference that you get by taking a chance and offering your services to PEOPLE WHO MAY NEED THOSE SERVICES.

And my goodness, what if... what if... you COMMIT to making a living by helping people with hypnosis and you experience FAILURE? Oh no, not that scary F-word! And not that even scarier C-word!!! Run away!!!!

This cowardice and self-doubt is often excused and disguised by justifications about how one is more interested in the lofty principles and ideals and study of hypnosis and The Subconscious Mind, not sullied or concerned with the base and lowly acts required to make a living by HELPING PEOPLE IN EXCHANGE FOR PAYMENT OF CASH MONEY.

In other words, "I love hypnosis so much that I don't want to do it on a full-time basis or for money, people who do that are just greedy." When you have forever been in the mode of "thinking about maybe getting your practice started someday", it feels comforting to believe a story like that, doesn't it?

And so the constant chatter amongst hypnotists between themselves, collective self-absorption, leads to "marketing incest"... where over time the generations become more and more ignorant of how the outside world operates, and what people outside the "community" really want and could benefit from.

After all, it's safer and more comfortable to just chit-chat with people in the community about techniques and theories and training and shared experiences and the next bandwagon for everyone to jump on... it's so nice and supportive and fuzzy in there, isn't it?

This fearfulness is often manifested by defensiveness among many hypnotists, who seem obsessed with negative media portrayals, and who seem so concerned about hypnosis not getting enough respect. Signs of this defensiveness can include a bizarre preoccupation with making sure that people know that you "aren't going to make them quack like a duck".

Why would you want your first message to a client to be a patronizing pre-emptive denial that insults their intelligence (I'm assuming here that your target market is not primarily composed of dunderheads... if it is, maybe you should upgrade your target market, as they might prove more profitable).

You might as well put a sign on your head saying "We don't get no respect" like a hypnotic Rodney Dangerfield. Sweaty and reeking of desperation for approval and acceptance...

"Please, can't you see that I am a Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist and that you should take me seriously? Come on, guys... this isn't a joke or a stage act... take me seriously will ya?"

And then people wonder why their pre-talk isn't instilling confidence.

Gee, let's go over that pre-talk again and add even MORE vehement denials about how hypnosis really really won't hurt the client, and about how the client really really is in control at all times, and about how hypnosis and the hypnotist needs to be taken seriously... there's nothing to be scared of... OMG PLEASE DON'T BE SCARED OF HYPNOSIS... I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU WHEN YOU "GO UNDER", I SWEAR!!!

See how important the story is, even the one that you *aren't* intentionally trying to tell?

Another major theme of Seth Godin's book "All Marketers are Liars" is that the stories we tell ourselves, or our customers, have more impact upon subjective experiences than reality. So place appropriate care on the story-telling that you offer to your market.

You do not want to have glaring holes in the plot, incongruities that break the suspension of disbelief that enables clients to free themselves from their limited patterns and helps them to get "better". After all, that is what we are here to do, right?

Well, I hope these perspectives are of use to you in your practice. Some of the opinions are expressed in ways designed to provoke possibly uncomfortable changes in thought-patterns, but I'm sure you can handle it.

“The 50th Law” within a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, we are going to summarize “The 50th Law” by 50 Cent and Robert Greene. A bit of background about both the authors will be useful in understanding the context of this book.

Robert Greene is a best-selling author of books including “48 Laws of Power”. His books are distillations of concepts about the nature of power, gathered from sources such as Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Miyamoto Musashi, and Taoist philosophy, combined with analysis of the historical applications of those concepts by figures such as Napoleon, Queen Elizabeth, etc.

50 Cent is a very successful artist who started life in very “disadvantaged” circumstances (to put it mildly). He managed to work his way up as a youth selling crack cocaine starting at the age of twelve, surviving nine bullet wounds as he began his musical career, eventually putting together a business empire to become one of the most recognized performers in the world.

For the purposes of this summary let us set aside any desire to moralize about the lifestyle of 50 Cent and the appropriateness of studying the nature of power.

Besides, those who are most vocal about proclaiming their morality, decrying the immorality of studying the mechanics of power, are often already part of established power structures (either actively or passively) which benefit from people being kept ignorant of how they are manipulated like pawns.

Robert Greene views 50 Cent as a modern-day Napoleon; someone who intuitively understood the laws of power and out of necessity had to apply them in daily life.

The 50th Law and the overriding theme of the book is: Fear Nothing. With the understanding that no human is born fearless, each chapter in the book is a “lesson in fearlessness” to help people get closer to that ideal.

Some of the lessons will be examined here in more detail than others; sorry, but I have to accept the reality of time constraints!

10 Lessons in Fearlessness

I: See Things for What They Are – Intense Realism

For a person to operate most effectively towards a goal, it is crucial that they are willing and able to face reality. This is what “Think and Grow Rich” author Napoleon Hill (different Napoleon here) would call “accurate thinking”, which he considered to be a necessary component of a successful mindset. Without accurate thinking, a person responds to inaccurate perceptions about their environment with inappropriate feelings and ineffective actions.

Which leads me to Sun Tzu’s “The Art of War” — the godfather of strategic texts. I think Sun Tzu’s work is fundamentally about realism and accurate thinking.

I was recently speaking with a client who is an attorney, about “The Art of War”. If you are familiar with the book, you may wonder, as he did, about the relevance of the many chapters involving subjects such as counting the number of chariots available for attack, or assessing the terrain to determine whether the ground is muddy or dry. What does that have to do with modern life?

I think Sun Tzu emphasizes calculations and terrain, because he wants to point the mind to objective analysis of the situation and environment, without subjective judgment based on the personality or whims or wishful thinking of the leader. If the terrain is swamp-land, do not treat it as if it were solid ground, just because you’d prefer it that way. If calculations show that you’d most likely lose a conflict, do not engage in the fight, just because you like the idea of possibly gaining a glorious and ego-pleasing victory.

In a way, this gets to the idea of the no-self, which is well-represented by the writings of Miyamoto Musashi in “The Book of the Five Rings”. The goal is to eliminate the interference caused by ego-based ideas about preferences, likes and dislikes. And this gets to the idea of “Accept everything as it is.”

Not in the passive, helpless sense of victimhood; but in the sense of accepting harsh reality about the marketplace, human nature, the financials of the business, and therefore being able to do whatever needs to be done to manage risk and achieve goals without hesitation or second-guessing.

In the hypnotic field, when working with clients, I think this idea is applicable in the sense that we must do our best to not create “stories” about our clients and their problems, based on our own preferences and analytical overlay.

A simple example would be the over-reliance on content-based suggestions, for example where a client is instructed to imagine being on a warm, sandy beach in order to relax, or a soothing musical theme is played during a session, because the hypnotist believes that everyone must like that kind of thing, since the hypnotist does.

Another real-life example: a client told me about how she had seen a hypnotist to improve her eating habits. During the interview, the hypnotist recommended that the client change their diet to follow a specific program. The client did not want to do that, as is their right, of course.

But during the session, with the client in hypnosis, the hypnotist decided to go ahead and tried to suggest that the client follow that program. Of course the client was able to reject that unwanted suggestion and spent the rest of the session fuming at the hypnotist — that hypnotist should have “accepted everything (including the client) the way it is”!

A more complex example would be when a hypnotist constructs a story in their mind about why a client has a problem, based on guesses and speculation about family dynamics, typically tainted by personal experiences with such matters. Often, you can see this kind of thing being played out on hypnosis internet forums when a “case study” is presented; it is sad to think that a client’s sessions might be run based on “analysis” offered by random people on the internet who are trying to diagnose a problem through an online forum, several layers removed from reality.

(By the way, the common occurrence of certified hypnotists resorting to seeking assistance from random people online should be of concern to anyone who cares about educational standards in this field. If so many hypnotists feel they are unable to get guidance on basic issues or mentorship from whoever trained and certified them, then what does that say about the general quality of trainers and instructors in this field? I mean, who the heck is certifying the folks who ask questions like “Does anyone here have a script to treat schizophrenia?”)

Also, in the hypnotic profession, there can be a tendency to rely on “affirmations” or “positive thinking” as a solution to problems, regardless of harsh reality. There is the

well-known affirmation that clients are encouraged to repeat to themselves: “Every day in every way, I get better and better.”

But what if that’s not true? In fact, could that statement ever possibly be true, unless the meaning of “better” is interpreted in a way that is so diluted as to mean nothing?

Some recent research has shown that repeating positive affirmations can in fact be counterproductive and harmful when they are not based on reality.

There is a famous quote by Jim Rohn: “Affirmation without discipline is beginning of delusion.” Delusion can be the result of either overly optimistic or overly pessimistic thinking, in the former case often arising from an undisciplined mind which is uncomfortable with and fearful of negativity. I think we owe it to our clients to make our best effort not to encourage self-delusion in either direction.

Finally, intense realism in the realm of marketing serves the purpose of making it easier for hypnotists to serve more people.

Instead of the hypnotist basing their marketing and advertising on what the hypnotist would prefer to focus on (such as the wondrous mechanics of “The Subconscious”), seeing things for what they are in terms of the market and human nature (accepting that humans are self-interested and mainly want to know What’s In It For Me?), makes it easier for the hypnotist/marketer to address the real concerns and needs of the people they are serving. And that should be the focus, right?

II: Make Everything Your Own – Self Reliance

III: Turn S___ into Sugar – Opportunism

This is the same ideal expounded by Napoleon Hill: “Within every adversity there is an equal or greater opportunity”.

IV: Keep Moving – Calculated Momentum, Flow

Of course, being a rapper 50 Cent would be interested in flow. The concept can also be applied to hypnosis. Hypnotic work should be, well... hypnotic! Meaning there should be an entrancing flow of thoughts and images and suggestions and ideas and responses to those elements in a dynamic and organic interaction.

This relates to the need to be careful about being dependent upon hypnosis scripts. I often use scripted content during certain parts of a session, because the good ones are

highly optimized in terms of both language and structure. But there's nothing entrancing or hypnotic about closing your eyes and listening to someone who is hesitantly and obviously reading from a piece of paper without any sense of drama or confidence about the process.

V: Know When to be “Bad” – Aggression

Have you noticed that oftentimes hypnotists seem very intent on making sure that people know that they are “good”, and that they operate on a “higher level of consciousness”? Maybe it's just me, but have you also noticed that many times folks who proclaim themselves as being calm and serene fountains of light and wisdom, tend to be highly reactive and defensive when things aren't going their way?

Anyway, I think hypnotists should lose the mantle of superior wisdom and enlightenment that they often wrap themselves in.

This gets to the first lesson of “intense realism” — accept that you the hypnotist are a human with tendencies towards self-interest and expediency, and do not let egoistic ideas about being “good” determine your actions.

In any case, it's just poor marketing to present yourself as an enlightened being (unless you are specifically selling to an audience that wants to buy that, of course). Clients feel relieved to find a hypnotist who does not seem intent on preaching to them from a pedestal.

One of the tenets of the fantastic book “The Go-Giver” is: the most valuable gift you have to offer is yourself, so Be Authentic. Authentic humans are flawed jerks in one way or another. Pretending otherwise is pretending, and insults people's intelligence (assuming your target market is not intentionally composed of gullible fools).

Once you become accepting of the fact that you have a self-serving and flawed nature, then it becomes easier to operate effectively in the marketplace, because you are able to accept that everyone else does too. You will not be thrown off-balance by the aggressive or (more likely in modern society) passive-aggressive actions of others; you will not take them personally or emotionally.

Miyamoto Musashi, famed swordsman and victor of over 60 life-and-death duels, wrote: “Respect Buddha and the other gods, without counting on their help.”

In the context of this article, this can be restated as: “Respect humans and their good nature, without counting on that.”

The key to using your “bad” and aggressive nature effectively is to use it on purpose, consciously, and with a specific goal in mind.

In this field, because it attracts many kind and caring people, they often are uncomfortable with actively promoting their service, or even taking payment worthy of the service rendered. This discomfort is often rooted in fear-based self-indulgence, cloaked by ideals about “noncompetitiveness”.

The rise of social networking sites has also made it easy to fall into that passive mode of non-marketing, ie. “I don’t feel comfortable promoting or advertising my services to strangers or doing the grubby work to make money... if I just get a lot of like-minded friends on these social networking sites, and make clear that I am a caring and kind human being, the abundant universe will send prosperity my way!”

Look, I believe in an infinitely abundant universe too, so I’m not making fun of that concept. But it is obviously often used as a convenient excuse for laziness and passivity, and for surrendering to a fear of competition — a dirty word in some quarters. Vigorous competition serves the public interest, and there is no conflict between the concepts of competition and abundance, unless you foolishly think that competition is about a desperate struggle for survival.

Fear-based avoidance of competition is the ultimate expression of true scarcity mentality.

Anyway, if you setup your marketing right (authentically), there really is no competition, because there is no other person who has the same qualities and quirks as you, and your unique relationship with a client. But if you are just another “certified hypnotist” who specializes in “smoking cessation, weight loss, and stress management”, then your value to the marketplace is minimal.

(Now, aggressive and active marketing is not the same thing as stupid marketing, where a practitioner makes up transparently obvious lies about their experience and credentials, or engages in shady business practices — the kind of things sometimes engaged in by practitioners who think they need to do those things in order to succeed, basically out of ignorance about how counterproductive and unnecessary it is.)

Bottom line: your acceptance of the self-interested aspects of your nature a.k.a. “selfishness” can be beneficial towards your goal to serve others.

VI: Lead from the Front – Authority

This concept is sometimes discussed amongst hypnotists in the form of questions such as “Can a fat, cigarette-smoking, meek and broke hypnotist help a client become healthy, confident and wealthy?”

Of course, just because a hypnotist has bad habits or fears does not mean that they are incapable of helping a client overcome those issues. But this is where we can relate the first lesson once again: “See Things as They Are – Intense Realism”.

Although it may not be fair for prospective clients to judge the competence of a hypnotist based on the practitioner’s own lack of success, fairness has nothing to do with reality.

It doesn’t matter what the hypnotist wants to believe; the perception, at the layer of reality that matters, is that someone who apparently cannot solve their own problem is not worthy of leading others to solve others’ problems, and therefore has little authority.

VII: Know Your Environment Inside Out – Connection

This lesson can be related to my earlier article in this series, which summarized Michael Port’s “Book Yourself Solid”, about the importance of understanding and connecting with your Ideal Client.

VIII: Respect the Process – Mastery

This is a great lesson for the hypnosis field. There are no shortcuts to mastery. There is no weekend course or DVD or website where you can learn to become a “master hypnotist”. There are only hours, days, weeks, months and years of practice and drudgery to get to that level.

What doesn’t count: chatting on the internet or reading books or listening to hypnosis podcasts or watching YouTube induction videos. It is amazing how many people in this field seem to consider themselves to be headed towards mastery mainly because they produce a high volume of messages on hypnosis forums!

Actually, if you think about the true masters of this field, they would never feel a need to remind everyone that they are Master Hypnotists; only folks who think that a certificate = mastery would be so inane.

IX: Push Beyond Your Limits – Self-Belief

Of course!

X: Confront Your Mortality – the Sublime

This last lesson is such a meaty topic that I cannot address it fairly in the time I have left to submit this. Perhaps another article will deal with it in fuller detail.

In brief, this lesson is related to the concept of “resolute acceptance of death” found in the Japanese text “Hidden Leaves”, and also the chapter about the Angel of Death in the more familiar work “The Four Agreements” by Don Miguel Ruiz.

Maybe for now we should not get too morbid (not that there’s anything wrong with a bit of morbidity), so this concept can also be related to the idea of the end of things, loss and even failure. I think it would be beneficial for hypnosis practitioners to accept the inevitability of failure in this work.

Many trained hypnotists are frightened about the possibility of failure, which I think is a reason many are hesitant about getting out there and doing the work. What a shame!

Just like accepting the inevitability of death enables you to see things in proper proportion, and to value the important things, accepting future failures helps you realize that The World Will Not End if sometimes you and your clients fail to achieve their specific goals. To think otherwise is really just a self-important delusion.

Well, I hope that some of these concepts are of use to you in your practice in the new year! I highly recommend “The 50th Law” by Robert Greene and 50 Cent, if only to stir up interesting ideas in your mind and along the way learn about some fascinating episodes in human history.

Stuart Diamond's "Getting More" within a Hypnosis Practice

This article is about "Getting More: How to Negotiate to Achieve Your Goals in the Real World" by Stuart Diamond. Diamond is a professor at the Wharton School, has a law degree from Harvard and an MBA from Wharton. His negotiation course at Wharton is the most highly sought-after course in the curriculum.

He has negotiated on behalf of many of the largest corporations in the world and consulted for governments and the United Nations. He's an overachiever, no mistaking that.

You might think, with a background like that, that his book about negotiation would be all about playing power-games and "win-win" strategies and rational thinking. But early on, he reveals that in the real world, those strategies "don't work very well much of the time".

Instead, he emphasizes emotional sensitivity, empathy, and personal human relationships. Quite the opposite of the idea of getting someone over a barrel or threatening to walk away from a deal.

This article is about how to apply some of the principles in the book to the work we do within a hypnosis practice. In that context "negotiation" being considered the process of influencing the client to achieve their desired goal.

First, be dispassionate

Diamond writes "Emotion destroys negotiations."

I understand that as hypnotists who are in the business of helping people, there is a natural tendency to react emotionally to someone's suffering, because we want to show them that we care and can "feel for them".

However, I would suggest that although it is a natural tendency, it may not be what the client needs in order to achieve their goal.

For example, when working with people who have a long history of some sort of situational anxiety, it is typical that they have been around family and friends who have tried to reassure and comfort them when they are feeling fearful and nervous.

However, from my experience with many such cases, I would suggest that a hypnotist resist their own desire to provide such reassurance and comfort.

Why? Because reassuring them by telling them “It’s OK, calm down, everything is going to be all right” does nothing to solve the problem, and in any case may be factually incorrect. Plus, it sends the message: “Your emotional upset is disturbing to me and I wish you’d stop it.”

This is even more scary when it comes from someone in authority, who is supposed to be a helper. If the expert helper dismisses the person’s fears with some logical or rational “advice”, that leaves the worried person feeling dismissed, alone and even more frightened.

People who are frightened about something have a history of going through a script where well-meaning people try to comfort and reassure them by dismissing their worries.

In the hypnosis field there is a lot of debate about how much to rely on scripts. Regardless, I think it is evident that if a script hasn’t worked for a person before, then don’t keep using it for that person.

Clients have often tried many different things before trying hypnosis. It is useful to differentiate yourself from those other things. However, it is a very bad idea to attempt to put their previous attempts in a negative light (for example by saying things like “that counseling stuff never works” or “that other practitioner ripped you off”).

Why? Imagine pulling up to car dealership in your old car, looking to make a deal on a new car. The salesman shakes your hand, looks at your car and says, “Sheesh, what a piece of junk! How much did you pay for that? Buddy, you got ripped off.”

How’s that feel? It feels lousy and you have bad feelings towards that salesman in front of you for making you feel that way! So, using a “common enemy” can be a powerful tool but it must not be done in a crude and unsubtle fashion.

What are my goals?

Being dispassionate is in the service of a goal. Successful negotiation depends on the goal being kept in mind, but it has to be the right goal.

Diamond emphasizes that the least important person in any negotiation is You. The most important person is that person in front of you, and the “pictures in their mind”.

If your goal is “to make them happy and pleased with me as their hypnotist” then that is not their interest! This misalignment of interests can be felt and recognized and probably accounts for the greater difficulty that every beginner hypnotist encounters.

It’s also useful to make clear to clients that their goal should not be “to please the hypnotist by being a good subject”. Many client problems are related to the desire to be a people-pleaser, sacrificing the desired objective in order to be “liked”. You can use the hypnotist-hypnotee relationship to train them into experiencing how people-pleasing isn’t necessary.

Standards

Diamond addresses tough negotiators. He suggests that you find out how the undesired behavior violates some internal standard of the tough negotiator.

Here is an example: a successful professional was suffering from ritualistic repetitive thoughts and behavior for all his adult life. During our talk, he repeatedly used the word “hokey”, including in reference to a previous attempt at doing hypnosis, which to him seemed to involve someone trying to mystically heal him by using their positive energy.

After doing some work which reorganized the initial learning event that initiated the repetitive habit, I started talking about how certain businesses always seemed to be in demand, like palm readers, fortune tellers and storefront psychics. This seemed like a totally off-topic tangent.

I went on and on about these types of businesses and how there always seemed to be people who read horoscopes and astrology charts every week in the tabloids... etc. I went on and on about these things, so much that he got irritated enough to snap: “I don’t go to palm readers and I don’t go to fortune tellers”.

“Exactly! Because you are not superstitious and you don’t believe in those hokey rituals.”

He called later and said he was amazed, that his habit of 20+ years was gone, calling it a life-changing difference.

When we invisibly challenge an unwanted behavior by using a subtle reminder of a standard aspect of their self-image, the unwanted behavior has little power.

This leveraged use of their core standards can be applied, for example, to the fellow who self-identifies as being a control freak — instead of being worried that “he’s going to be difficult to hypnotize” or “he’s going to be stubborn and keep smoking”, we hypnotically reframe the habit as something antithetical to control.

Or it can be used for the tattooed and pierced bartender who disdains society and its rules. Instead of the hypnotist worrying that “she’s gonna be a tough one” and trying to “convince” her into healthy living, we can use her rebellion to help achieve her goal, by framing sober living as a rejection of the “sheeple” mentality that’s all around her.

Credibility

Diamond identifies credibility as one of the most important factors for negotiation. In the hypnosis field, many hypnotists are very worried about credibility. Unfortunately, this worry often causes them to overcompensate, by trying too hard to be credible in exactly the wrong way.

They overcompensate by desperately trying to assure potential clients of how successful hypnosis will be... by trying to project confidence in the form of “Yes! Hypnosis will help you! I just know it, by golly! It must work! It will work! Please trust me!”

Everyone who wants to solve a personal problem would like to hear that. But the problem is, no one believes it, even if they’d like to hear it.

Not exactly... the only people who would believe that kind of thing are gullible and foolish people, generally an undesirable client base for intensely personal work (after all, we are not talking about selling late-nite TV pasta-makers or snuggly towels that will help you develop the perfect six-pack stomach).

People who understand human nature (hopefully that would include working hypnotists) understand implicitly the concept of the “damaging admission”. A damaging admission is the proactive declaration of risks, uncertainties and possible downsides to your offer. Done skillfully, this increases trust and credibility. And anyway, it’s just the right thing to do!

“The Greatest Salesman in the World” within a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, I am going to summarize “The Greatest Salesman in the World” by Og Mandino. This is a classic book of the motivational genre, often referenced by figures in the sales and marketing world.

With a title like that, it is surprising to often find this book in the Christian Inspirational literature section of a bookstore. The reason is clear once you read the book. Not only is it set in biblical times, but the story is cleverly tied together with significant events of that time. I will not reveal specifics about the plot because it is enjoyable to see how it unfolds.

Note: I am personally not a follower of the Christian religion so this is not meant to be some kind of subtle proselytizing. The principles in the book would be of interest to anyone, regardless of faith or skepticism.

From a hypnotist’s perspective, I find it notable that classic, enduring books such as “The Greatest Salesman in the World” often are structured as stories within a story (another example being “The Richest Man in Babylon” by George Clason, which also has a storytelling theme centered around ancient-times).

This is an example of the power of metaphors, and how they have the ability to resonate with people and “stick” in their minds, much more than a simple series of facts which are presented dispassionately.

In fact, the structure of Og Mandino’s book can be viewed as a set of metaphors in nested loops with direct suggestions embedded within. The book is setup mainly as a story being told to an old friend of the “main” character, who is a great merchant, as he recalls the story of his youth and lessons which were taught to him by an older great merchant of those times.

I think that is a classic application of indirect communication — the themes of the book are not being pressed upon the reader as a lecture from the author, but within a story being told by someone to someone else about something that happened a long time ago in a land far away.

I believe this is a well-known tactic in hypnotic indirect communication, for example: where in certain cases it can be useful, instead of directly instructing the client “now do

this” or “do that” in order to elicit hypnosis, they are told a story about how the hypnotist once went to a presentation where the presenter told a story about how once upon a time during a hypnosis demonstration in college, their professor was able to help a subject go into hypnosis just by telling them a story about how someone once went into hypnosis just by listening to a story about someone who went into hypnosis by listening to a story about a person who went into hypnosis.

Anyway, that older merchant revealed that he was in possession of a set of scrolls which contained the secrets to becoming incredibly successful. The central part of the book involves the content of each scroll being revealed, chapter by chapter. I will not specifically describe the content of the scrolls, because the way the book is structured, they are meant to be studied one at a time.

I will say, however, that the contents of the scrolls are very relatable to anyone who uses hypnosis to bring about positive self-change or change in others.

Og Mandino appears to have a useful understanding of human nature. For example, he understands the power of habitual behavior; he knows that humans are creatures of habit and only have the ability to choose between good habits or bad habits.

The book accepts that humans experience a wide range of emotions and encounter many adversities and disappointments. Mandino himself was no stranger to this, because he only wrote the book after hitting rock bottom as an unsuccessful traveling insurance salesman whose family had left him partly as a result of his alcohol use.

So you may wonder, what gives him the right to write a book about the greatest salesman? Well, this book is not about “how to sell stuff”.

The general themes of the scrolls include persistence, the power of operating with good intentions, action-orientation (since good intentions alone are not enough), emotional mastery, and total rejection of complacency.

A brief passage from one of the scrolls gives you the flavor of this work:

“I am not a sheep waiting to be prodded by my shepherd.
I am a lion and I refuse to talk, to walk, to sleep with the sheep.
The slaughterhouse of failure is not my destiny.”

Although this book is largely about self-reliance and being able to master oneself, one of the scrolls relates to the natural human tendency to call out to a “higher power” at times of trouble.

This can be applied when working with hypnosis clients, because from what I understand, humans who struggle to make some sort of significant change in their life, can potentially benefit if they make it about more than “just themselves”, in other words, if they frame it in the context of a larger spiritual meaning.

(I admit that in working with clients I often neglect to leverage this spiritual aspect, mainly because I find it difficult to gauge the level of “spiritual motivation” that can be applied, especially given the generally short-term nature of the hypnotist-client relationship).

Anyway, in hypnotic terms, these scrolls are very simple, yet powerfully written, direct suggestions framed within a metaphor that the reader can emotionally relate to (the struggle to succeed and achieve goals). The scrolls make use of the power of repetition and are written in the first person. The surrounding stories are richly told and describe a vivid world that anyone who has seen “The Ten Commandments” can immerse themselves in easily.

I am guessing that Og Mandino would have made a great hypnotist!

Well, I hope this short summary of “The Greatest Salesman in the World” by Og Mandino is of interest to you, and possibly even to some of your clients! I highly recommend it.

Even though I mentioned that this book is not about “how to sell stuff”, I think this book can help anyone, especially hypnotists, start thinking about “sales” in a different way. I think it is far too common for hypnotists to do nothing with their training, using the excuse that “they aren’t into being a salesperson”. This claim is sometimes made with an air of implied superiority, many times hiding insecurity.

The messages in this book can help people see that being complacent and satisfied with being a poor salesperson (or marketer) is nothing to be proud of — that just means that they lack the desire or inclination to add real value to other people’s lives in the open marketplace.

PS. Interestingly enough, none of the great merchants in the story are the “Greatest Salesman” described by the title. The identity of that person is one of the wonderful surprises which awaits the reader of this book, so I will not reveal it here. Read it and find out — it’s a short book and enjoyable reading.

“The 48 Laws of Power” within a Hypnosis Practice

In an earlier article, I summarized “The 50th Law” co-written by 50 Cent and Robert Greene. This time, we will cover an earlier book by Robert Greene: “The 48 Laws of Power”. As mentioned in the earlier article, Greene has become popular by writing a series of books that examine principles of power as they have been expressed through various historical episodes.

We will proceed with the basic assumptions that powerlessness is not a virtue, and that the study of power and manipulation has no inherent moral content. Some folks might disagree, and that’s OK.

Greene freely points out that some of the laws contradict each other, and within each chapter he also provides counter-examples where the law is not valid.

This in itself is a refreshing change from the pile of personal development books which claim to reveal the unchanging laws of prosperity and health and wealth... unveiling the secret principles of the universe (now available at Barnes and Noble in paperback!), which if followed consistently and faithfully, must certainly lead to wondrous results. If we saw a client with such tendencies towards absolutist thinking, that would generally be regarded as an unhealthy and maladaptive attitude, would it not?

Greene’s work assumes that you have a brain, and other people around you have brains too, and the interaction and environment that results from each brain’s differing motives, moods and machinations towards self-interested goals are too unpredictable and ever-changing to be approached with rigid wishful thinking.

So I think this book can be valuable in helping to develop a more flexible mindset for the benefit of yourself and your clients — in one sense, to help defend against other people and power structures using these laws to manipulate you, and in another sense, so that you may use these laws as necessary to get what you want.

Of course, with limited time and space, we cannot cover all 48 Laws so we will just pick out a select few:

Law 2 – Never Put too Much Trust in Friends, Learn How to Use Enemies

A common recurring theme when working with confidence-related issues is how many clients still carry the effects of negative experiences from classrooms, schoolyards or

lunchrooms. Bullying seems to come in all sizes, surprisingly often from little girls who would rival Josef Stalin in their tyranny and the fear they inspire in their social circles and classroom totem poles. Such an experience seems to aggravate the natural need for approval from others, turning it into an unhealthy underlying obsession.

As human beings and social animals, clients of course have a need to be liked and to have friends. But I think it can be healthy for clients to learn to accept that some percentage of people out there just won't like them, and that they should not expect that people will not act in own self-interest just because they carry the label of "friend". Then they can devote more energy to their own interests, and not on seeking conditional approval from others (unless that is what they consciously seek to get, which is a valid pursuit — example being entertainers who enjoy the attention and applause from a great performance).

Fearfulness of being disliked or making an "enemy" is debilitating. But consider Gandhi. Sure, hundreds of millions of people think he was some kind of living saint and a paragon of humanity. Others would think him a fool or worse because of his lifestyle and his philosophies and some of the controversial statements he made. Billions of people couldn't care less about him and would probably make fun of him for being some skinny brown dude with glasses who went around wearing a sheet. And many people downright hated him... in fact, enough to murder him.

So what does that say about being liked or disliked, or having friends or enemies? After all, if people react negatively to someone like Gandhi and his achievements, what the heck are our clients supposed to do in order to win approval from others?

In his efforts to liberate India from colonial rule, certainly Gandhi expected to make some people upset and make enemies. But he didn't let that stop him. Being "liked" did not seem to be high on his list of priorities.

I think this law can also help hypnotists who are hesitant to go all-out and vigorously offer their services to the public. It seems there is quite a lot of fear out there, about offending other practitioners or making them upset by threatening them as a new competitor in the marketplace.

The people who are worried about upsetting existing practitioners are probably the people who would be upset by competition. Still, it may be a good thing that timid certificate collectors are unwilling to do the work, since it prevents them from working with the public.

Also, most certificate collectors who continue to dither about doing the work seem focused more on expanding their circle of hypnotic friends and networking with them. That's nice, but it is a distraction.

This tendency seems to be because of a desire to be part of a supportive group of people with shared interests regarding the Subconscious Mind, inductions, language patterns, etc.

Unfortunately that is not the same set of people who could be helped with hypnosis (and it is often not even the same set of people who actually DO hypnosis).

In the movie "Donnie Brasco" there is a relevant quote that goes something like "I know you like him, and you think he's your friend, and you think he's helping you, but he's hurting you."

Don't allow a desperate desire to be liked stop you from doing what's in your best interest, and from seeing that other people have their own interests to look after.

Law 4 – Always Say Less Than Necessary

This is a law that I struggle with personally, when working with clients (and sometimes when writing e-zine articles).

Good, simple work done succinctly can be of more benefit to clients than a hypnotist rambling on and possibly saying something that would undo good suggestions. There seems to be a part of the mind as a hypnotist that is needing to say something, anything... just to fill up time and space, even if it is not necessarily best for the client experience.

It seems counterintuitive for a hypnotist who helps people by communication, to purposely talk less. But I do know that often I have gone further than needed and perhaps left the client with more of a confused, befuddled experience of "what the heck is he babbling on about?", when instead the session could have been wrapped up nicely with a few short suggestions. Something to be on guard against!

Law 8 – Make Other People Come to You, Use Bait if Necessary

This is a good law for hypnotists who want to attract clients — not "get" clients. The idea of trying to "get" clients causes a funny feeling inside, so don't do it. It is like fishing, you can either try to chase a fish around and hopefully grab it, or you can lay bait that is

appealing to the fish and then reel them in. Forcing them to act first in order to become a client causes them to think it was their idea, and none of that icky “selling” is required.

Law 11 – Learn to Keep People Dependent on You

This is one law that I have a strong aversion to, but I understand why it is included among the laws. I cannot stand the idea of people being dependent and needy... so the last thing I want are clients who are dependent upon me.

But in the personal development field it is a common theme to “sell people on the idea of independence, but covertly breed dependence”.

This is just something to be aware of because I think especially in the hypnosis field, it seems people can be strung along into taking an endless series of courses or workshops, with the promise that this next course will finally lead to confidence and success.

(This of course is not a general indictment of continuing education in the form of workshops and training, etc.)

Law 19 – Know Who You’re Dealing With, Do Not Offend the Wrong Person

This law applies to the hypnotic field because the nature of the work can attract the Wrong Person. And there are definitely people who are the Wrong Person to attract. There is not enough attention given to the risks involved with carelessly taking on all clients without considering their suitability, especially for most of us who are not licensed mental-health care professionals.

The problem with this line of work is that by the time a practitioner realizes they are in over their heads, then it could be too late. Extricating yourself from an unhealthy or unsuitable client relationship can be very tricky.

It is not as easy as telling a client: “Gee, I don’t think I can help you anymore. Here’s a referral to someone else.” You do not ever want to hear the response: “Oh. I guess I really am hopeless. You were my last chance. Goodbye.”

And you probably do not want to start getting calls (or visits to your home) at 3AM from clients who are freaking out.

I think this subject of client suitability is not given nearly enough attention, given the risks involved. I suspect that is because most practitioners are struggling just to find

clients to work with in the first place. But it is something that should be at the front of every hypnotist's mind when consulting with a potential new client. It would be good if training courses placed more emphasis on this issue.

Well, I am running out of time to submit this article. I hope you got something useful from this article, or at least it entertained you for a little while. "The 48 Laws of Power" is a thought-provoking book which might not be to everyone's taste, but it's nice to sample something other than the micro-waved fish sticks that seem form the bulk of self-development material on the bookshelves.

Check it out, and you will find that many of the laws may be personally repellant, but provide interesting insight into many aspects of society.

“The Four Agreements” within a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, the subject is “The Four Agreements” by Don Miguel Ruiz. This is a popular book in the personal development genre and many people will be familiar with it. I think this book will be worth reviewing, even if previously read, because the message of the book resonates well with themes found in hypnotic work.

It is an excellent book to recommend to clients; several have mentioned the powerful impact this book has had when read in parallel with a series of sessions.

This book is told in the form of a tale being shared by a Toltec wise-man. When recommending this book to clients, I let them know that the beginning of the book is presented in that manner, but it doesn't promote or depend upon any specific belief system.

Most clients are not interested in the prospect of “ancient shamanic wisdom” being shoved down their throats, and so I do not want them to be put off by thinking that the entire book is like a lecture from a spirit-being of light (although that may in truth be an accurate description of any book!)

Once the reader gets past the metaphorical framework of ancient Toltec wisdom, which for many people can be quite appealing — an excellent example of remarkable marketing, then the concepts can be considered in light of our individual experiences.

The underlying main theme of “The Four Agreements” is that what we think of as daily existence arises within a collective dream or illusion that is known as the “dream of the planet” or society's dream. These consist of rules and delusions that people have collectively agreed to over time, in the form of culture and other kinds of shared beliefs.

This is a useful perspective to acquire for people who are looking to change something in their life, such as hypnosis clients. It makes apparent that everything is the byproduct of illusions, including our fears and beliefs and judgments. This is an important step in being able to change what is experienced as “reality”.

“The Four Agreements” also explains how humans become trained to go along with the inherited dreams of society and the dreams of the people around them. This process is called “the domestication of humans”, and it leads to humans being led further away from whatever their individual true nature is. The author presents this concept in a way

that everyone can relate to, more closely than if it were presented in a dry theoretical explanation of the “socialization process” or “imprinting”.

I think Don Miguel Ruiz is quite brilliant in his use of the phrase “domestication of humans”. Because domestication is a term used in reference to things like dogs or cats or cows, when you are confronted with the reality that we all have been domesticated, some part of us will be repelled by that.

Like Charlton Heston in *Planet of the Apes*, you would take offense to being treated like an animal, caged in a set of habitual thoughts, feelings and behaviors, being expected to obey those masters. This can motivate us to reject inherited training or beliefs — “Take your stinking paws off of me, you damned dirty ape!”

Also, just like illusions are malleable, the concept of domestication offers the hope of reversibility and interruption of old patterns and training.

The four agreements themselves are simple yet meaningful. Like many kinds of “Laws” or “Principles” found in this sort of book, they can have the property of appearing too simplistic and banal when viewed with a simplistic and cynical eye, especially when presented in a set of bullet-points. But if one can resist the urge to make things more complicated than they need to be, one can appreciate that this book simply contains a very clear and useful description of human existence, which is a pretty awesome feat.

Since I cannot fairly treat each agreement in depth in this space, I will just briefly relate each agreement to something either a client or hypnotist could understand.

First Agreement: Be Impeccable with Your Word

This is very relatable to hypnotic work. Don Miguel Ruiz describes how the word has the power to shape reality. It can be used as “black magic” or “white magic”. Words can hurt and destroy when used carelessly. If you are a hypnotist you will certainly have seen the effects of negative speech inflicted upon your clients as they were youngsters.

Clients often compound the “black magic” spell that was placed upon them as impressionable children, by continuing to use negative words and language against themselves as adults, even in their attempts to make positive change. “I should’ve been more confident and said something... I’m such a loser.”

I think hypnotists also could benefit from learning to be impeccable with their words, not only in terms of hypnotic suggestions, but also from their marketing — I am thinking

specifically of the unfortunate tendency of some people in this field to inflate their credentials or otherwise mislead the public.

When someone is not impeccable with their word, uses the word to weave falsehoods that causes emotional poison within the person who is making up the lies (usually out of ignorance or desperation). That kind of poison is repellant to the healthy, successful people that you want to attract to your business, while that poison simultaneously attracts the foolish, the ignorant, and the lazy people in the marketplace.

Second Agreement: Don't Take Anything Personally

When you read the previous paragraph, did you feel a funny feeling? Were you kind of insulted by my implication that some of you, Dear Readers, may be lacking in integrity? Did you then think to yourself: "What a hypocrite, first he warns about the impact of negative speech, and then he talks about foolish ignorant and lazy people"? Did that then give you the comforting feeling that you can now close your mind to further challenging statements?

Well, guess what? I don't know you, Dear Reader. I have never met you (probably).

Even if I have met you or know you personally, I am not writing about you.

YOU are not the center of my world.

The second agreement, *Don't Take Anything Personally*, is absolutely necessary for hypnotists, I think. When, on occasion, a client has difficulty with either an induction process or the change-work itself, it is good to remind oneself not to take it personally.

They are not trying to "resist" YOU.

This keeps the focus on getting the client wherever they need to go, instead of a hypnotist vs. client mindset, approaching it as if the hypnotist is supposed to "convince" the client to change. How silly!

Clients can directly experience what it means to be able to not take things personally, in the form of hypnotic work that involves releasing anger or bitterness towards people who have hurt them. The hurt and pain cannot be denied but hypnotic work that neutralizes anger can be a stunning experience for people who have never experienced the reality that even the most hurtful, abusive and terrible treatment from others was never personal.

In a normal state, that sounds difficult to believe if it's just offered as comforting advice, but a hypnotic experience is not comparable to just hearing comforting advice like "don't take it personally".

Third Agreement: Don't Make Assumptions

The habit of making assumptions often plays a large role in difficulties that clients have in their lives. For example, people who have tended to let people "walk all over them", often have a habit of assuming that people should treat them fairly, even if there is prior evidence against that.

They assume that other people think and feel and perceive the world the same way that they do, and are hurt and disappointed when they are "let down". So instead of doing something different, they continue to focus on how the other person (or life in general) *should* be treating them.

From a hypnotist's perspective, I think insight-based work, when done properly, has the wonderful property of being based on direct client experiences, and not on guessing or theorizing or assuming. This reduces the reliance on the hypnotist trying to assume some sort of content will have impact on the client — whether it is some metaphor or script that the hypnotist thinks is suitable, or even something like the selection of background music.

This agreement, *Don't Make Assumptions*, is also why I think suggestibility tests are very flawed and counterproductive within a client-based context. They create the assumption of some arbitrary level of "hypnotizability" based on absolutely nothing relevant to the particular client and their issue.

Apparently, there is a belief that suggestibility tests are still useful as a means of impressing people who experience or witness them, but from the perspective of a typical person uninterested in "hypnosis" itself, but who just wants to solve a problem via that approach, I have to say that these tests are deeply unimpressive — perhaps they were more awe-inspiring in the era of World Fairs and vaudeville?

(note that there is a distinction between suggestibility tests and the concept of "convincers" / trance-ratification.. the latter are quite useful when working with clients)

Fourth Agreement: Always Do Your Best

This agreement sounds too simplistic, but the key aspect of this agreement is that *your best changes from day to day and moment to moment*. You cannot be expected to always outperform your previous performance. It is nonsense to have a great day and expect to have even greater and greater days in a smooth progression.

When people have unrealistic expectations about anything, including hypnotic change-work, then they are more vulnerable to disappointment and frustration. I think hypnotists can do their best by preparing clients for inevitable bad times ahead, instead of leaving them vulnerable by suggesting that life will be a fairy tale from now on. And even hypnotists can benefit by accepting that if they have been “on a roll”, that it’s not going to last — and that’s OK.

This agreement about *always doing your best* reminds me of a story told by the famous copywriter Gary Halbert. He once spent some length of time in federal prison for some offense.

It seems that in prison, there is little room for wishful thinking. Some days were just better than others. Over time, he got to be very self-aware of when he was having an “off” day — if I remember correctly, this process was accelerated because of some incidents where he got into dangerous conflicts with other inmates as a result of carelessness.

He learned very quickly that when he was feeling down on a particular day, the best thing to do was just to step back, disengage from the outer world, retreat into a (relatively) safe place, and regroup. He did not question his own strength or confidence or character; he did not berate himself for not getting a grip on himself and his fears. He just took a time-out and escaped for a while.

This is similar to what Napoleon Hill recommended in his later years, the technique of creating an imaginary fortress in your mind. These approaches take into account the fact that people will some days feel weaker and less motivated than other days; allowing for temporary escape as a means of recovery and regrouping is simply good planning.

It reduces the compounded mistake of unproductive guilt and frustration towards self. Well I hope this article has been of interest to you. “The Four Agreements” is an outstanding book and I think it is very relevant to the work that hypnotists do.

PS. The audiobook narration by Peter Coyote is excellent! I highly recommend that you check out the audio version on iTunes. Mr. Coyote has a hypnotic narrative voice, and

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towards the end of the audiobook there is a wonderful meditative/hypnotic experience that I think cannot be fully experienced through the written word of the physical book.

“Kitchen Nightmares” within a Hypnosis Practice

Hello, I’m happy to offer my latest article for the Banyan Hypnosis E-Zine. This series is intended to help hypnosis professionals by briefly summarizing books from outside of the field, and describing how the information can be applied within a hypnosis practice.

This time, we will do something a little bit different. Besides, not all of us are bookworms, so this time we will take a look at the TV program “Kitchen Nightmares” and what we can learn from it as hypnotists. Hey, it was either that or “Jersey Shore”!

“Kitchen Nightmares” (KN) is a popular reality TV program starring Chef Gordon Ramsay. Chef Ramsay is famous (or notorious) for having absolutely no patience for sloppy execution in the restaurant business. He is well-known for his explosive outbursts of profanity whenever someone fails to meet his standards. The thing that makes Chef Ramsay tolerable is that he clearly loves food and is serious about cooking done properly.

Anyway, in each episode of KN, Chef Ramsay visits a restaurant that is on the brink of disaster. After observing the restaurant operations and sampling a meal, he acts as a consultant who is tasked with fixing the problems in the space of a few days.

This show is really more about human behavior than about cooking. Even though the restaurants and the owners are a varied bunch, there are commonalities in each of these rescue operations that I think are interesting:

The Delusional Owner

An astonishing thing about this series is that in practically every instance where Chef Ramsay is called in, after Ramsay identifies the problems (which almost universally involve filthy kitchens, terrible food, bad service and miserable décor), the immediate reaction of the owner is to angrily deny that there is anything wrong, and there must be some other reason that the restaurant is failing.

After being shown a walk-in refrigerator full of rotting and moldy food inventory, the owner appears to develop a curious form of negative hallucination, as if they had never noticed it before.

After Chef Ramsay points out that the dining area is empty, the owner experiences positive hallucination and somehow sees a room full of happy customers, and revivifies all the times when customers told him how great their meal was.

After witnessing Chef Ramsay nearly vomit from eating a sample dish, the owner gets angry at Ramsay because “It can’t be that bad. People love our food. He’s just a jerk!”

And confronted with a group of former customers from the community, who are given the opportunity to give completely honest feedback, the owner attacks them as liars and people who have no understanding or appreciation for his establishment’s fine dining experience.

The most difficult change that Ramsay attempts to bring about is the realization from the owner that the owner (or at least the owner’s emotions and habits and complacency) IS the problem, and the source from which all other problems stem. The drama of the “Kitchen Nightmares” show is watching the reality of the situation clash with the habitual denial of that reality by a hapless owner.

This is common to people who are struggling in any field, including hypnosis. It is natural that humans want to only hear things that they want to hear, and easily ignore the rest. But although this is natural, it is a tendency that hampers skill development and process improvement. It is why most people have a tendency towards mediocrity.

For example, one of the most common things that damages the confidence of a new hypnotist is hearing “I don’t think I was hypnotized” from a client. The automatic defensive reaction is for the hypnotist to after-the-fact try to convince the client that they indeed were hypnotized.

The hypnotist takes the position that they are the expert and the client’s report of their experience is not valid, and tries to basically persuade the client that they are too stupid to have an opinion about the matter. That may sound harsh, but that really is the meta-message being communicated to the client.

This is a losing game to play, because if someone positions themselves as an expert in hypnosis, it is quite reasonable for the client to expect that a hypnosis expert could create an experience that feels “hypnotic” in the frame of reference of the client, is it not?

As hypnotists we know that there is no specific way an individual will feel when they are hypnotized, but at the same time, as supposed experts we should have no problem creating an experience for them that leaves little doubt about the hypnotic experience.

Of course, a restaurant customer should not be the one telling the cooks how to prepare the meal. Similarly, a hypnosis client should not tell the hypnotist how to run a session, and it is advisable to ignore the self-diagnosis of a client as to why a problem started, and that kind of thing. However, I think it is not advisable to ignore the feedback of a client or customer by taking the attitude that “I am the expert, they do not know what they are talking about.”

Convincers and trance ratification are crucial so that clients realize that something out of the ordinary is happening; otherwise the all-too-common (and completely natural) response is: “I closed my eyes and got kind of relaxed but otherwise I don’t think anything really happened.”

The worst time to “convince” a client that they were hypnotized is after-the-fact. That is like having a mediocre, nothing-special meal at a restaurant, and then afterwards the chef stops by your table and tries to talk you into believing it was delicious and a mind-blowing culinary experience, and if you don’t believe him, you must be one of those awful frustrating “resistant” diners, who “just wasn’t ready” to have a good meal.

That's not gonna work.

Covert testing and close observation of the client is also important for proper state management, and can help bring the hypnotist’s attention to potential issues with a client’s hypnotic experience (if they are even hypnotized at all). A competent and professional chef would not just send out food to the dining room without ever sampling it and checking it for quality. No matter how many times they’ve cooked a dish before, they would not just say “Send it out... I know my food is good, I’ve made this a thousand times before.”

A hypnotist who does not at least covertly test, and who does not run convincers, is basically sending out suggestions with that same careless and complacent sloppy attitude (which probably masks insecurity about it possibly NOT being good — they’d rather not know). So they should hardly be surprised when clients reject suggestions, sending them back to the kitchen, and when clients tell them that they are unconvinced that anything special really happened.

Really, the “I don’t think I was hypnotized” statement does not have to be so damaging or discouraging. The real damage of that statement is the natural defensive response that it provokes, because the defensive response does nothing to develop genuine confidence.

First of all, accept that if you are starting out, you might hear that a lot! Don’t ignore it or fool yourself into thinking that you are really a great hypnotist, and those are just ignorant or resistant clients. The fact is: just like me or any beginner, you will probably stink early on (although you might still help lots of people anyway, even if you mostly stink).

And accept that once in awhile, even after becoming more confident and having a lot of successes under your belt, you will occasionally still hear that “I don’t think I was hypnotized” — but this should be an uncommon occurrence.

Sometimes it’ll be because you failed to hypnotize them. Sometimes it’ll be because you failed to convince them that they were hypnotized (when they were). And once in a rare while it’ll be because the client really is an ignorant doofus.. just as any business serving the public occasionally runs across a real knucklehead. Oh well.

But if you hear that statement consistently, that means a re-examination of your operating procedure is in order. Not just the pre-talk or convincers, but whatever you do even before the pre-talk such as client selection and pre-screening.

Whatever you do, don’t be like those silly restaurant owners who just pretend that everything is great. You’re too smart to fool yourself for very long; eventually you will be exhausted by the internal charade and throw in the towel, when all you really needed to do was to fix the parts that weren’t working.

Well, I am nearly running out of time here to submit this article, so I will run through quickly a couple of other points about “Kitchen Nightmares” and hypnotic work.

The Menu of Mediocrity

Another common characteristic of these failing restaurants is that they often have huge gigantic menus with an enormous number of options for diners to choose from. The owners apparently believe that this will attract more people. The logic seems to go: if I have 10 items on the menu, and only a few customers, then maybe if I put 100 items on the menu, maybe there will be ten times as much business.

One of the first things Chef Ramsay does with these menus is toss them in the garbage. Ramsay knows that approach is a sure way to kill a business by leading to a lot of wasted inventory that never gets used — or even worse, horribly old food inventory that does get served. The cooks in the kitchen struggle to maintain quality when they are trying to prepare unfamiliar meals from a menu that contains a mish-mash of different cuisines.

Similarly, I think hypnotists sometimes think that the way to get a struggling practice to grow is to add on different modalities, or doing things like trying to sell audio programs online and other types of brand extension. Let's try adding life coaching and energy healing and massage and nutritional counseling and wedding photography and clown-for-hire at children's parties and oh yes also become an instructor or trainer or marketing guru in all those areas.

Come on.

Think about it: when you imagine a fine-dining experience with a master chef, do you not imagine an elegant menu tightly focused around a culinary theme, every ingredient, flavor and texture of every course selected with utmost care and thoughtfulness?

Or do you imagine holding a big 3-ring binder with laminated plastic sheets describing all the hundreds of choices to choose from? It's your choice: whether the market sees you as the master chef, or the guy in the kitchen who's running a deep fryer.

The Emotional Breakthrough

Finally, the last common theme running through each episode of "Kitchen Nightmares" is that when the hapless owner hits bottom and is unable to deny reality any longer, the transformation almost always occurs as a result of Chef Ramsay creating an emotional and out-of-the-ordinary experience for the owner (and often the owner's family).

Chef Ramsay often does this by taking them on a "field trip" of sorts to get them out of the box (restaurant) for a while for an excursion. This is often the pivotal point after which the owner "wakes up" and accepts the change.

I think this is very much like the change-work we do within hypnosis. After all, Chef Ramsay could sit there all day long and try to intellectualize and show the owner spreadsheets about the restaurant finances and use rational arguments in attempts to help the owner wake up to reality, but in the end the resolution is found by powerful emotional experiences, bypassing the rational logical faculties.

Well, I hope you got something useful out of this article, or at least it entertained you for a little while. Chef Gordon Ramsay is fun to watch, and “Kitchen Nightmares” is an interesting theater of human behavior.

Perhaps for the next article, I will take on The Situation and the rest of the “Jersey Shore” gang in the context of hypnotic work!

PS. For simplicity, I used the male pronouns when referring to the restaurant owners. In the program, there are just as many desperate female restaurant owners as there are males.

“Crucial Conversations” within a Hypnosis Practice

This time, we will briefly summarize “Crucial Conversations” (multiple authors). This is a popular book that is very appropriate to study in the context of hypnosis, since it is all about communication.

First let’s define what the authors mean by a “crucial” conversation.

Definition of Crucial Conversation.

1. opinions vary
2. stakes are high
3. emotions run strong

The work we do with hypnosis clients actually may not fully fit this definition. Why? Because although b) and c) are very often the case, a) is not, or at least should not be. The reason is, up to a certain point, I think the hypnotist’s opinions shouldn’t matter. This relates to the Crucial Conversations concept of “the Pool of Shared Meaning”.

Filling the Pool of Shared Meaning.

Wow, that sounds pretty heavy, dude. But it just represents the idea that when people interact for a common purpose, they each bring their ideas and beliefs and motivations to the pool, and hopefully find a way to mix and combine them in a way that achieves that common purpose.

Oh no, it’s that dreaded buzzword: “synergy”!

I think hypnotists can do well by being careful to keep their meaning (their opinions, judgements and analytical interpretations) out of the shared pool as much as possible.

Of course, as helpers we hypnotists know that we shouldn’t make our clients feel like we are judging them. But I wonder if people realize that by implicitly (or explicitly) emphasizing positive happy thinking as the right way to be, then implicitly they are pre-framing the other person as being defective, or “not as good as I am”.

People often talk about “meeting the client where they are”. But then will turn around and try really hard to present themselves as fountains of positivity and confidence and happiness.

You know what? Not everyone wants or needs to get into a pool that's filled with "light, love and warmth" in order to achieve their goals and to lead a fulfilling life. Many people who could benefit from this kind of work find that sort of thing to be repellent.

In the self-help field, people seem to try really hard to project that kind of thing in an effort to make people feel good in their presence. But that's like putting up a sign that discourages people from getting into the pool in the first place.

What you hope to present as a tasty Baby Ruth chocolate candy bar, full of kindness and caring and positivity, may be perceived very differently by a client who sees that brown thing floating in the swimming pool!

Dialogue Skills are Learnable.

Crucial Conversations is all about dialogue. But consider the popular concept of the "Elevator Pitch", a concept that made sense in the original context of trying to acquire venture capital funding.

Lots of experts and coaches will tell would-be achievers "You need to perfect and practice your elevator pitch". Then you're supposed to go to networking events and pitch your stuff all over the other people there.

But as Michael Port (author of "Book Yourself Solid", one of the other books I've summarized in this series) points out, have YOU ever been eager to listen to someone else give their "elevator pitch"?

And, have you ever been excited or eager to GIVE an "elevator pitch"?

Sure, it's a skill, but it's not a dialogue.

So, if you don't look forward to hearing elevator pitches, and no one wants to hear your elevator pitch, and no one wants to give an elevator pitch, why try to perfect a skill that is about doing something no one wants?

This leads to the next point, about focusing on what people really want.

Focus on What You Really Want.

Here's another controversial idea for hypnotists: Do not focus on "building rapport".

Here's why: let's imagine a client whose goal is "to be more confident in social settings".

So, during the consultation, we explore what it really means to them. What would it mean for them to be a good socializer?

"OK, so imagine I'm at a party. There's someone I'd like to meet. What would I do if I were confident? Well, I would go up to them and introduce myself. I would tell them about what I do for a living and make it really interesting. Then I would tell them a funny joke. Then I might tell them a cool story about the vacation I just came back from. Then I'd launch into the elevator pitch that I've been practicing. Want to hear it?"

Did you notice something?

Somehow, in this imaginary social event, there doesn't seem to be anyone else there. It's almost like the other people there are not significant. They are not of any real interest, except to serve as an audience for this wonderfully charismatic and confident individual.

That is naturally what happens when a person focuses on "being confident" or "being charismatic".

So, can you imagine a hypnotist meeting with a potential client, with this belief drilled into their head: "You must build rapport and gain the confidence of the client, here's how..."

Then the hypnotist tries to implement all the things they've studied: techniques and tips and tricks like mirroring and matching, using utterly fascinating hypnotic syntax, etc. etc.

But I think that is a totally confused and backwards misrepresentation of cause vs. effect.

Here's an idea: just listen, open your awareness, and pay attention to the individual right in front of you. Forget all that rapport stuff when you're interacting with a real live human being.

Refuse the Sucker's Choice

Speaking of confidence, there is often a tight coupling between "confidence" and desired action.

People often say *“I would get started with doing hypnosis but I am not confident yet. If I could just get more confidence, then I could start helping people.”*

So many people get stuck in the idea that if they aren't confident, then they can't get started. That is a form of Sucker's Choice. It causes them to spend a lot of time and energy trying to gain confidence when it's just a completely imaginary prerequisite for action.

Guess what? You don't need confidence to get started with helping people. Who cares if you're confident or not? Get over yourself!

The story that *“I need confidence or I can't take action”* is just fiction. It belongs in the fantasy section. And not with the “grown-up” quality fantasy books — it belongs on the shelf among all the teen vampire book series.

Master My Stories

Boy, my brain is a story-telling machine. It can't stop.

One morning, I got a voicemail from a client who was supposed to come in later that day. The voicemail asked if I took insurance and what the fees were going to be. On my site, this information is clearly available before appointments are made in the first place.

I heard this voicemail and immediately the story-telling machine started in motion.

“So annoying! This person can't even be bothered to read the information that's in black-and-white. Why would they setup an appointment if they can't afford to pay for the service? I bet they're going to complain about how it costs too much, even though they spend money on cigarettes. They're going to tell me a sob story about some disability or being out of work and how they need me to give them a discount. I bet they're going to try to make me feel guilty about how much I charge. Geez, people are so irresponsible for wanting insurance to pay for this kind of work. Don't they understand it's about personal responsibility, not about a co-pay? What am I doing having to deal with idiots all the time? People are so stupid! I think I like cats better than humans. I should get out of this business, it's too many hassles, it's not worth it. What the heck am I doing with my life? I wish a comet would just hit the earth and then I wouldn't have to deal with this!”

Whew! All this from one voicemail.

This story-telling machine kept churning out this narrative at a low-level for a few hours, in the shower, on my way into the office, in-between appointments, until I had a chance to call the person who left the voicemail.

Of course, when I called them, it turned out to be a very pleasant conversation. They simply were not in a financial condition to afford the service, but they did not ask for any special consideration or pity. Instead, they were very apologetic, and said they would just have to work on saving up the money. They seemed like a very nice person.

This episode relates to the Crucial Conversations chapter “Master My Stories”. A key concept is that “other people don’t make you mad” (or otherwise emotional). You and only you create those emotions.

I got angry about this person trying to make me feel guilty — when that never even happened! It was all a story in my mind. Crucial Conversations points out that these kinds of stories usually have a common plot: either a Victim story, a Villain story, or a Helpless story.

If we learn to recognize these stories, we can save ourselves a whole lot of “agita”. That day, I spent my morning and part of the afternoon in kind of a bad mood because of my story, for absolutely no reason! So it can be good to learn to be skeptical of our own stories. But this also applies to “positive” stories, like being the Hero or Healer or Savior.

When I get feedback from clients expressing how much better they feel as a result of working with me, and if they describe me as something like a “wonderfully calm and friendly presence”, that’s nice, but I like to remind myself of how one little voicemail can lead my brain into a storyline that indicts the entire human species as worthy of mass extinction... from “You’ve Got Mail” to “Armageddon”.

Mastering My Story is a crucial skill for anyone who deals with people like hypnotists do. Remember to question why the story is making you feel the way you do, and what evidence you really have, or don’t have, that supports that narrative in the first place.

Well, I hope this hypnotic summary of “Crucial Conversations” has been of interest to you and provoked some useful thought processes. This summary is not in any way a complete representation of the concepts in the book. There is a lot more to it, but I hope this is a good introduction to checking it out for yourself.

“Supernanny” within a Hypnosis Practice

In a previous issue, we took a break from summarizing books and instead used Gordon Ramsay’s “Kitchen Nightmares” TV show. It’s good to give the Kindle a rest once in awhile, so let’s tackle another TV show that is curiously related to the work we do as hypnotists: “Supernanny” starring Jo Frost. Coincidentally, it is also a program which originated in the United Kingdom, just like “Kitchen Nightmares”.

Jo Frost, the Supernanny, is a nanny who has a reputation for successfully dealing with hardcases. The show involves her being called in to rescue families that are overwhelmed by the chaos and mayhem of little tots gone wild. Simply watching this show can be a very effective form of birth control, as you witness the despair of overwhelmed parents.

Supernanny is a contrast to Gordon Ramsay, but only at first glance. Although their styles are different, in substance they are quite similar. They both have high expectations and are not afraid to demand more from people who have gotten complacent.

Still, Supernanny does not express herself in the way that Chef Ramsay is known for (explosive outbursts of foul language) — so far, Supernanny has not yelled at one of her little tots with the classic Ramsayism “you stupid donkey!” If anything, that would be more appropriately directed towards the parents, who in many cases have completely abdicated responsibility and let the children run the household by default.

Now, I must say that I do not have children myself, just a Himalayan cat named Mia. So I cannot really judge these parents for what they go through (although, on this show, it often appears that they are barely making even the smallest effort to be parents).

Which leads us to the first hypnotic lesson of Supernanny:

1. Respect Your Clients For Having the Courage to Seek Help

In reality shows like Supernanny, it’s easy to judge the parents for making mistakes that seem obvious to viewers. In fact, I think part of the formula that makes these kinds of shows popular is that they provide an outlet for judging and criticizing the participants.

As with anyone in a “helping” line of work, although we all strive to be professional and non-judgmental, it is only human to have some head-scratching moments where you wonder “How can they not see how silly their excuses are?”

For example, weight control clients sometimes talk about how they eat out of boredom, because they have no interests or activities aside from spending every night in front of the television eating Cheetos.

Then, in the next breath, they will say that they are just too busy and don’t have time to work out or to get proper meals for themselves. Hmmm...

As an external observer, you cannot help recognizing the silliness of that kind of curious irrationality, but one thing that makes it easier to refrain from engaging in non-productive judgement is to remind yourself that this person in front of you is the one who took the initiative and was proactive in doing something to get better.

Just like the parents on Supernanny, they may be exhausted and mentally drained, so you must recognize that their irrationality may not be a fundamental character trait or flaw, but merely the result of the exhaustion that any human would feel in that circumstance.

It must take an enormous amount of courage and/or desperation to invite Supernanny and her camera crew into your home, knowing that your problems are going to be exposed. In the same way, I often ask myself if I personally would have the guts and/or insight required to go seek help about whatever issue was troubling my clients.

Another thing that makes it easier to develop this very powerful sense of respecting your clients is to make sure you only work with clients that you can develop this kind of respect for!

In an earlier article, I wrote about the “Red Velvet Rope” policy, where you intentionally strive to limit your client base to people who inspire you to do your best for them. This includes making sure your marketing is filtering out and rejecting people who are unlikely to earn your respect in the first place (people who want different results in life without having to change anything, people who set out with the intention of finding another thing that they “tried, but it didn’t work”).

When you genuinely admire and respect your clients for having the courage to seek help, and you believe in them because you sense that they mean business, your belief

in them is communicated unconsciously during your interactions, which is kind of important for the type of work we do as hypnotists.

2. Insist That Someone Be “the Adult” in the House

Understanding, empathy and respect are necessary, but not sufficient to bring about a desired change. Supernanny insists that the parents act like the adults, which seems like a new concept for many of them.

Part of Supernanny’s role is to teach the parents leadership skills, which are not an innate skillset that most people happen to have. Often, people have context-specific leadership skills that just need to be generalized into other areas.

I think this is similar to what we do as hypnotists, especially when we use techniques that involve helping different “parts” of us become more in sync with each other. We help clients understand that there may be different parts of us at varying stages of maturity and development, and differing motivations and ways of handling things, but that fundamentally they all have the same goal.

By hypnotically helping these parts learn to communicate, trust and appreciate each other, then they can work better together, and the friction of screaming and yelling and throwing tantrums can become a thing of the past.

This requires helping the client clearly assert themselves as the Adult, or the Leader... greater than the sum of all parts. If they do not take leadership, no one will — and of course, the hypnotist will not play that role for them. The idea of a hypnotist, or any “helper”, leading someone else’s life for them can be seen to be absurd.

In that sense, this sense of taking responsibility can also be applied to the commonly heard complaints that many hypnotists express, about how their clients seem to be lazy, unmotivated, expecting magical results without effort, etc. You also hear hypnotists express frustration about how the general public just doesn’t understand or respect or seem to care about hypnosis.

Hey hypnotists: you need to take responsibility for that. If, as a whole, your clients seem to be lazy, unmotivated, and seem to distrust you and your expertise, YOU are doing something wrong.

You are attracting the wrong people because you are failing to do your marketing correctly (marketing is not the same as advertising). You are doing a dis-service to

them, so you should apologize to those people who you feel are lazy, unmotivated, and willfully ignorant, for wasting their time.

As the supposed expert, shouldn't you be able to expertly select and focus on the people who would actually benefit from your work?

And if it seems that everyone you talk to is creeped out by the idea of hypnosis ("everybody is scared of it, they don't want to talk to me about it")... get real... you might want to consider that there is something about your approach and how you project yourself, that sends out the "creep" signal. It probably has nothing to do with hypnosis.

3. In the End, the Nanny Can Only Do So Much...

"Supernanny", like "Kitchen Nightmares" and all shows of this type, have the nature of being a sort of short-term intervention, with ultimate longer-term results being up to the parents or the restaurant owners. During the time that Supernanny is in charge, she is able to add structure, establish rules, and direct activities for the entire family.

It is quite similar to how a hypnotist, during the course of a hypnotic experience, has a high degree of control over the thoughts, emotions and behavior of the client. This can be a very powerful learning experience for the client and help them in many ways.

But of course, at some point Supernanny has to move on, and the hypnotic client has to live their daily life. They are free to choose what to do with those skills and learnings. In these programs, it is common to end the episode with a brief update on how the family is progressing.

In most cases it appears that the family has grown closer because of the experience and that many of the lessons have been built upon with positive results. However, there are inevitably families (or restaurants) where it seems that the skills that were taught are just put on the shelf and the family for whatever reason has just decided that they're more comfortable with the old ways of doing things and the resulting mess.

I think it's necessary for hypnotists to develop a tolerance for this kind of result, which is not the same thing as being complacent or uncaring. This tolerance is needed for doing this kind of work in a sustainable way — becoming heartbroken or personally upset by such things is not only unproductive, but also terribly egocentric.

Well, I hope this hypnotic consideration of “Supernanny” has been of interest to you and provoked some useful thought processes. I know some people would think that this kind of reality TV show is too trivial and mindless to be worthy of discussion, but it’s good to accept the human need for light entertainment once in awhile, and sometimes you can get something of value even from something silly, if you look for it.

Which reminds me, the TV show “Saved By The Bell” contains many hidden life lessons... but that is another story.

“Rework” in a Hypnosis Practice

In this issue, we summarize "Rework" by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson. Fried and Hansson run 37signals, a company that is well-known in the technology field because of their lean and agile approach to product development.

Their products (including "Basecamp" and "Campfire") are very popular, largely because they are intentionally designed to be as simple as possible, with only the essential feature set. Hypnotists who are operating on a budget would be well-advised to check out their web-based software, because their "basic" versions are generally free.

Brief personal background: before doing hypnosis I was involved in the software/database field in roles as a programmer/architect, and also as a manager of application developers.

The main thing in designing and developing systems, is the art of not painting yourself into a corner. It is critical to manage complexity by keeping things as simple as possible, while still designing with enough flexibility to take into account changing requirements and the evolution of functionality.

When it comes to managing people within a project, a fundamental principle is to avoid adding more people to the project than is absolutely necessary. This is because adding people ("throwing bodies at the problem") causes geometric increases in the amount of potential friction within the project, as well as necessitating more and more communication (aka. more emails, more status reports, and more meetings, hooray!), thus leading to greater opportunities for mis-communication.

"Rework" is a sort of manifesto for people who want to develop something, with minimal bloat and maximum value delivered. I think we can find some interesting parallels that may be of use to anyone who is considering getting started in the hypnosis field.

Of course, there is a very significant distinction to be made between the scalability of a hypnosis practice, compared to something like web-based software. But the concepts in "Rework" are still valuable because they can help a practitioner focus on essential basics, instead of getting distracted by features and needless complexity.

So, here are interpretations of selected key themes that are found in "Rework".

Enough with "Entrepreneurs"

It seems that many hypnotists go through training, but experience a great deal of hesitation about getting started actually working with people in their local market. They are filled with doubt about whether or not they are cut out to be "entrepreneurs", so maybe they read books about "how to be an entrepreneur", hoping they acquire that mindset.

But why bother? People who are "entrepreneurs" are not sitting on the fence for years telling themselves "someday I will get started". It doesn't matter.

Just start a business that makes money by delivering value, and forget the whole egotistical desire to tell yourself and the world "I'm an entrepreneur".

Start a Business, Not a Startup

Similarly, people often have some emotional connection with the idea of being the founder of a "startup"... but "Rework" urges us to start a business, not a startup. In the hypnosis field, you will often hear advice such as "treat it like a business". That's OK advice I suppose.

But the problem is, most people who are interested in this field are nowhere near adopting the mindset of a business owner. So, here is some contrarian advice:

Treat yourself as an employee of your hypnosis practice. Trick yourself into treating it like a J-O-B!

Here's an exercise: create an organization chart for your practice, just like you'd see in a "normal" business (or one of those FBI charts that show the organization of a Mafia family).

Outsource accounting and legal functions in the chart, unless you are insane or a masochist. But, in every other position (marketing, business development, manager, president, etc.), place YOUR name.

Then, show up to work and do your job(s).

The interesting thing is if you do this exercise, you will see that the "hypnotist" job function is important, but it's just one part of the whole thing. This will give you a different perspective towards your practice.

Learning from Mistakes is Overrated

There are enough mistakes being made all around you, more than enough to learn from.

I am sure you've heard the scary statistics about how often businesses fail? You know, "90% of businesses fail in the first 5 years". Boo!

When I hear that statistic, it triggers a big shrug. Reason: if you look around, and you see how other people operate, it's no wonder at all...

Corollary — since 90% of businesses fail, consider this: should you really listen to the advice that appeals to that 90%? Maybe not.

(PS. that 90% figure is just off the top of my head, I don't recall the specific studies and statistics, but you get the idea)

Ignore the Details Early On

That 90% detail gets to another point: don't get caught up in details. Dithering about fee structure or logos or business cards is a form of procrastination.

Who cares? You provide service, you collect money. End of story.

You Need Less Than You Think, and No Time is No Excuse

We all have limited time and resources. Every person only has 24 hours in the day. So how can it be that some people say "I don't have time to get started".

Well, consider that most activities that would-be hypnotists engage in are a form of "busy work", so it's no wonder that they don't have time to get started.

Collecting certificates. Chatting online. Evaluating software for making CDs. Trying to choose designs for brochures or business cards.

"I network with other hypnotists, spend my free time writing hypnosis scripts, and ask my friends and family if they like the color scheme on my website and my proposed logo?"

These things are irrelevant to the task of getting started and creating something of value. And spending any significant time on creating a business card or brochure or pretty logo is not of value to anyone.

Sound Like You

Speaking of business cards and brochures (neither of which I use myself), consider how incongruous it is when a single-person enterprise tries to act big. You know, whenever I see the term "LLC" anymore, I have to laugh a little bit.

Nobody Likes Plastic Flowers

Not only does incongruity repel potential clients, but so does self-declared wisdom.

Who the heck wants to be around someone who proclaims on their website:

"As a deeply enlightened person, I am thrilled to share my inner light with all who encounter me. I am a profoundly humble individual whose wise and peaceful presence inspires people to achieve their own fullest potential."

(This is a slight exaggeration from an actual "About Me" page)

Check yourself, do a purge from any marketing materials of any preachy gloss and sheen. No one believes you're perfect, and pretending otherwise puts you in the position of being a pretender.

Embrace Constraints

People who are struggling to get started will often focus on their lack of [insert blank here]. Lack of time, lack of money, lack of support, lack of confidence. Only thing NOT lacking seems to be excuses.

In "Founders at Work", Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Computer, described how early on, he couldn't afford the hardware to build computers, so he used pen and paper to teach himself how to design the original Apple computers. Because he was able to iterate through designs very quickly just using pen and paper, he was able to achieve amazing breakthroughs.

Eventually he wanted to build an actual physical machine, but he still couldn't afford a full-featured terminal, so he just used a TV set from Sears, and figured out how to hook up a keyboard and motherboard to the off-the-shelf TV set.

These breakthroughs might not have come about if he'd been limited by having greater resources.

Of course, we can't all be like Wozniak, but we can learn from his attitude. He did not make excuses, he figured stuff out and worked with what he had.

Less Mass

A major theme of "Rework" is the idea that being small is a very positive thing. There tends to be a bias that leads to desire to be bigger.

But being bigger sacrifices agility while adding organizational inertia. In other words, bureaucracy and "human resources" issues. Yuck, no thanks.

I think hypnotists can be very happy and successful if they simply focus on running an individual practice that helps a lot of people in their community.

Speaking of inertia, there seems to be a belief sometimes that if hypnotists were covered by insurance, then it would be easier to build a successful practice.

Considering the virtues of simplicity and agility, the idea of making one's hypnosis practice dependent on insurance reimbursement is very unappealing. I think this is another example of silly excuse-making ("if only my service was covered by health care, then I would have clients").

I hope this summary of "Rework" has been of interest to you. Check it out, it is a quick read and is built in bite-sized chapters. It will, hopefully, encourage hesitant people to GET STARTED and GO TO WORK.

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