

The individual has two worlds to communicate with:- An outer world and an inner world. Hypnosis plays an important role in both of these forms of communication.

Furthermore, the degree to which outer communication is involved and the extent to which inner communication is involved will differ depending on whether heterohypnosis is being used or autohypnosis is being employed.

Although some authors have claimed that all hypnosis is just self hypnosis, this can be seen in the present context to simply be a statement about the importance of inner communication in the hypnotic process.

In this article a clear distinction will be made between the way a person communicates with the outside world and the way they communicate with their inner world. This distinction is necessary because, as we shall argue, they take different forms. It is in part this difference which helps to clarify the hypnotic process: its

induction, its deepening and its therapeutic use.

In particular, attention will be drawn to the importance of outer world communication in achieving rapport and the use of imagery in the inner communication process. Since rapport is so central to hypnosis, we shall argue here that achieving rapport depends on good outer world communication while maintaining rapport depends on good inner world communication.

There is no intention here to put forward a communication-theory of hypnosis. The intention is more pragmatic. It is simply to highlight two quite different types of communication which have important implications for hypnosis and hypnotherapy. It is only when the distinction is highlighted that a hypnotist can direct his or her attention to the most suitable way to proceed.

If you do not distinguish between two possible routes to a given destination, then you cannot possibly decide which is the better way to go!

Outer-world and inner-world communication



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An individual must communicate with other members of society. This we refer to as outer-world communication. But they must also engage in inner-world communication. What do we mean by inner-world communication?

To bring about a change in oneself, then some transformation must take place. But for this to happen, an individual must communicate the change necessary and so must engage in some form of inner-world communication. Outer-world communication seems fairly obvious. It is the means by which two or more individuals transfer information between themselves. (Although this discussion can be generalised to things in general, we shall here deal only with communication between individuals.) Inner-world communication, on the other hand, is between different parts of the same individual. Whether we are referring to outer-world communication or inner-world communication, the process involves three aspects:

Two or more elements

The method of transfer

The type of information being transferred

The point of making a distinction between outer-world communication and inner-world communication is that these three aspects differ, in each case a difference which has important implications for hypnosis.

Consider first outer-world communication. We need to communicate with one another. This could be done, and often is done, in terms of gestures. We tend to resort to simple gestures when

abroad and having no knowledge of the local language. Gestures pre-date language in human development, but are not without their use in modern society. Body gestures are still a part of our communication with one another in the outer world.

Of course, the main means of communication in the outer world is by means of words. We talk to one another. It is a fundamental skill that we all must develop if we are to function in the outer world. *How do I get to Marks and Spencers?* you ask a passer by. *You go down there [they gesture the direction] then turn right, through a set of traffic lights, and its immediately in view.*

Such a communication would be very difficult without words. Communication between individuals, then, requires at least two individuals. Second, information can be by means of words, by gestures, or some other means (such as body language). Third, specific information is being transmitted. All three aspects listed above are involved in the outer-world communication process.

Words are often necessary for one individual to communicate with another individual. That was the reason they were developed. But how do you communicate with yourself? This first begs the question of what part of the self is communicating with what other part of the self, for communication must be between at least two things. Before answering this question return to communication in the outer world. When two people are communicating (talking to one another) it is the conscious part of one individual communicating with the conscious part of the other individual.

Words are necessary for communication between the conscious parts of two individuals. Furthermore, such words must be put together in logical constructs: sentences, which conform to strict grammatical construction. This is obviously necessary if one rational individual is going to understand what another *rational* individual is talking about. Here communication is effectively between two rational minds.

However, when such communication is taking place it is invariably true that nonverbal communication is simultaneously taking place. It is the verbal and the nonverbal communication together which will determine successful interaction between two people.

In the inner world, communication is necessary between the conscious self and the unconscious self or between one part of the body and another part of the body or between the mind and the body. But how does this communication take place? It is certainly not between two rational minds! Words

are not a suitable medium of communication because the unconscious mind does not work in words. Even where communication is between one part of the body and another, words are not a suitable means for such communication. Of course, it is possible to "talk to oneself" and to try to convince oneself of something. Here a person engages themselves in logical argument as if they were talking to someone else. At times this can be useful and successful, but it is by no means the main form of communication in the inner-world. Inner-world communication is not logical and rational communication.

Inner-world communication is best undertaken by means of images. These images may include words, but they are only contained in the image to give the image substance and wholeness. They are simply an integral part of the image, but not in place of that image. Images are the only effective way that the unconscious mind can acquire information from the conscious mind; images are the only effective way that the mind can influence the body.

Why is this so? If you wish to communicate with a child of one year of age you must reduce your communication to gestures. You cannot say to a one-year-old, 'Now stop doing that and pick up what I have just given you.' (You could, but it would make no sense to the child!) You must adapt your communication to the mode of the receiving individual. In the same manner, the conscious self can only communicate with the unconscious self by adopting the mode of operation of the unconscious self. Even where one part of the body affects another part of the body, if this is done as a deliberate act, then it needs to be accomplished by means of images. This will be elaborated on more fully in a later section.

Free flow of thought

Communication, of course, is in two directions. If the conjecture being advanced here is correct, then when the unconscious self is communicating with the conscious self it must do so in the mode of the unconscious self. Although this is so, it works in a different way. It works by supplying flashes of insight. These flashes of insight can then be put into words (or even mathematics!) and

communicated to other conscious minds.

It is unfortunate that scientists in particular highlight such insights but treat them as the exception rather than the rule; a random event which cannot be cultivated. They can be made to be common and individuals can cultivate them. What is required is to improve the skill of communication between the conscious self and the unconscious self. Education teaches

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language as a basic skill of communication. But this is a skill of communicating in the outside world. What about the skill of inner communication? Education supplies no such training. In fact, they assume that it does not exist! But it does exist, and like all forms of communication, we need to develop its skill.

When one individual is communicating with another individual there are certain requirements. They must be within hearing distance of one another, background noise must not be too great, they (usually) must be speaking the same language, they must construct sentences according to accepted conventions, etc. But what conditions must exist between the conscious self and the unconscious self for good communication? Since such communication takes place in the brain - and one may conjecture between the left brain and the right brain - then the conditions necessary are what helps brain processes. The requirement is a relaxed and calm state of mind. The type of mind that allows the 'free flow of thought'. A very descriptive phrase which captures the free flow of communication between the conscious self and the unconscious self.

The relaxed state is typical of many forms of therapy. It is an essential element in meditation, it is essential in autogenic training, and it is essential in hypnosis. But the relaxation response, as Benson has argued, needs to be cultivated. Unlike the 'flight-or-fight' response, which seems to be programmed into our nervous system, the relaxation response needs to be learned. An individual has to learn how to activate their parasympathetic nervous system in order to calm themselves down. A hypnotist can only give guidance and imagery to help this process along, but only the individual can activate their own parasympathetic nervous system.

Hypnosis in the communication process

Having made a clear distinction between outer-world communication and inner-world communication, we can now clarify some aspects of hypnosis. The first obvious point is that heterohypnosis is part of outer-world communication while self-hypnosis is part of inner-world communication. Heterohypnosis must largely be by means of words, and involves communication between two (rational) minds. It must conform to expected conventions of outer-world communication. Like all outer-world communication, this is more successful the more an individual can concentrate and the more they can pay attention to what is being said. This is even more successful, the more the hypnotist can reduce other sensory information being picked up by the person being hypnotised. In this sense, the induction routines employed in all forms of hypnosis are a means of focusing the attention of the individual on the communication being undertaken, ie on what is being said and what is being conveyed by the words. Getting a subject to close their eyes, although not essential, does improve the communication process. It does allow concentration and attention on what the hypnotist is saying and

not on what is going on around them.

Successful induction, however, is undertaking one other important act. This is switching the subject's communication from outer-world communication to inner-world communication. It is here that we observe what is meant by the phrase "all hypnosis is self hypnosis". To the extent that hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness, then only the individual themselves can alter that state. To alter their state then they must engage in inner-world communication. Such inner-world communication is activated and helped along by the hypnotist - by outer-world communication - but it is not what brings about the hypnotic state. The hypnotic state can only be brought about by the individual themselves: can only be brought about by inner-world communication. Heterohypnosis, then, involves two forms of communication: outer-world communication and inner-world communication. Its success depends on the success of these two forms of communication.

When a person does not enter hypnosis the present analysis highlights two possible causes:

Poor outer-world communication
or
Poor inner-world communication.

In heterohypnosis it is necessary for the hypnotist to establish which is the case. If it is outer-world communication, then the hypnotist can do something about it. If it is inner-world communication, then it is more difficult for the hypnotist to change the situation.

In the case of self hypnosis, the problem must squarely lay with inner-world communication. Even so, good outer-world communication will always be more successful than poor outer-world communication. There are successful communication practices and there are not so successful practices. A good hypnotist knows how to communicate with the person they are hypnotising. Because the hypnotist will be hypnotising different subjects, then they must learn to change the means of communication that best suits the person that they are hypnotising. A hypnotist who uses the same induction routine for all subjects is not a good outer-world communicator. (It is like opening every letter with "Dear Sir" whether you are writing to the telephone company, your friend, or even your spouse!)

A good hypnotist is one who knows what most attracts and holds the attention of the subject. Induction, then, is largely a question of good outer-world communication.

Rapport

An essential aim of the hypnotist is to achieve good rapport with the subject. Good rapport has always been difficult to describe, but it generally means building a relationship of trust and confidence, and enabling the subject to relax and let go. It is quite clear, however, that if a hypnotist is not communicating effectively with his or her subject then they cannot be achieving a successful rapport. Good communication is a

pre-requisite for good rapport.

Good rapport requires suitable verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. This is because rapport has to involve an emotional influence between the hypnotist and the subject. If verbal communication were enough then it would be possible to hypnotise subjects just by talking to them in any tone of voice and with any degree of intonation in the voice. But experience shows that this is not the case. A relaxed response on the part of a subject can be achieved more easily and quickly not only by a suitable choice of words, but also by a suitable intonation of the voice and the pacing of speech. People in rapport mirror and match each other. It is through rapport that pacing and leading, major skills in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, play their part.

The rapport which is essential between hypnotist and subject is necessary for hypnotic induction, but for continued hypnosis and hypnotherapy the rapport must take on a different character. Once an altered state of consciousness has been developed in the subject, then the rapport must be with the right brain, with the unconscious mind. There is no reason to suppose that a rapport with the conscious mind is the same as a rapport with the unconscious mind. More to the point, hypnotic depth and hypnotherapy requires good rapport at the unconscious level. Put another way, a hypnotist must know how to communicate best with the subject's unconscious mind if they are going to succeed in their endeavours. Such communication, however, must illicit in the subject a communication between the subject's conscious mind and their unconscious mind.

Hypnosis and imagery

The hypnotist must endeavour to create imagery which the subject can relate to and which has emotional meaning to the subject. When this is done, rapport is maintained. If this is not achieved, then the rapport initially achieved between the hypnotist and the subject will be lost.

Once the hypnosis is established, deepening is the next stage. However, deepening now depends on inner-world communication. It is therefore necessary for the hypnotist to switch mode: to switch to practices which are successful for inner-world communication. In the case of self hypnosis, this must begin immediately. It is commonly stated that when hypnotising a subject the hypnotist should change their voice to a slow, almost monotonous pace, with constant repetition. This element of the deepening process is a characteristic of good outer-world communication. But it also helps to activate the inner-world communication that must be undertaken by the subject. Even so, simply using words on their own is not sufficient. It needs to be supplemented by imagery. This is because inner-world communication largely takes place

between the left and the right hemispheres of the brain, and, as we have pointed out, it is necessary to use the mode of the receiving agent. The right brain, the right hemisphere of the brain, is not rational and logical. It is intuitive and holistic.

It operates according to patterns, relationships and symbolism. It is the mode in which dreams operate. A hypnotist can say to a subject "*You are feeling hot*". This is an outer-world form of communication. It may or may not be successful. If it is successful, it is most likely because the subject has already converted this statement to an inner image. If they have not, if the information is processed purely in the left side of the brain, in the logical and rational side, then it probably will not be acted on. On the other hand, if the hypnotist knows that it is essential to communicate with the subject's inner-world, then it is much easier to say something

like "*You are in a desert, the sun is shining down, you have been walking over the sand now for some hours and you are feeling the full extent of the sun's heat on your body.*" This image, which creates in the subject an inner-world communication, is far more likely to create a feeling of hotness. Why? Because it operates in the mode suitable for inner-world communication and not outer-world communication. Some theorists see this process as presenting images in an indirect way hinting and intimating what is required of the subject by the hypnotist. But it is more reasonable to suppose that all that is happening is that such imagery is the means by which a logical rational mind of the hypnotist can influence the unconscious mind of the subject. It certainly does not mean that the suggestion will automatically succeed. What it does mean is that it is more likely to succeed than using

outer-world forms of communication. This distinction has been well recognised in psycho-cybernetics and by Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

Imagery for inner-world communication can itself be good imagery or poor imagery. What constitutes good imagery? Good imagery is that which facilitates good communication between the right hemisphere of the brain and the left hemisphere.

It is important to realise that this will vary from person to person. There are, however, some basic principles which will operate in all cases. This is not surprising. Outer-world communication is most successful when it conforms to basic patters (eg basic sentence constructions) which are recognised by everyone. The same is true of inner-world communication. That this is so is readily established by the fact that dreams have a mode which is common to most individuals and to individuals in all cultures. All humans dream. Dreams operate

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with images and convey holistic impressions. Words are usually irrelevant, and where they are used they are used to convey meaning (eg “two”, “to” and “too” will all imply symbolically the same thing) or are used in the form of puns, etc.

It is the whole image of the dream sequence which is important. Furthermore, the dream sequence may be quite bizarre. What matters is the emotional impact of the dream(s). So too with verbal images communicated between the hypnotist and the subject. It is not a question of the image being indirect, hinting or intimating, it is a question of whether the image has emotional content for the subject. If it does have emotional content then it will have an immediate impact on the unconscious mind. **What is often lacking in hypnotherapy is good imagery.** This is not surprising since there is little training in image work. A considerable amount has been written on hypnotic induction. Yet this process is relatively easy. What is far more important, especially for hypnotherapy, is creating suitable images that will influence the emotional level of a subject.

Inner-world communication, to be successful, must operate according to images, and must act on the emotional level of the subject. There cannot, therefore, be a set of images for all individuals and all situations. Images must be chosen according to the problem and chosen according to the individual being hypnotised. A good image, a successful image, is one which arouses the emotional level of the subject. It is an image which the subject can relate to.

Relaxation training only the beginning

The study of hypnotic suggestibility undertaken by Josephine Hilgard indicated that suggestibility was more successful in such subjects as: persons in the armed forces; nurses; students; individuals of a religious disposition; individuals who could lose themselves in a novel; artists; etc.

In terms of the hypothesis being advanced here, all these correlates allow good inner-world communication. Such individuals have already developed, often without realising it, good inner-world communication techniques. During hypnosis, they simply draw on these techniques unconsciously.

This does lead to an alternative programme of study. Rather than study the correlates with hypnosis, as done by Josephine Hilgard, why not study in more detail good inner-world communication techniques? Even more to the point, why not train individuals in how to develop inner-world communication techniques! Training in relaxation techniques is only a beginning, it is only one aspect of inner-world communication, albeit an important one.

Implications for the therapeutic use of hypnosis

The distinction between outer-world communication and inner-world communication has important implications for hypnotherapy. Good hypnotherapy, successful hypnotherapy will depend on:

Good outer-world communication

Good inner-world communication

It is necessary, therefore, for the hypnotist to develop good techniques for both forms of communication. However, the techniques for good outer-world communication are not the same as good techniques for inner-world communication. Furthermore, only the subject can undertake inner-world communication. Although the hypnotist can improve their own outer-world communication, they are only in the position of guiding the subject in how to improve their inner-world communication.

A hypnotist cannot force a subject to have an image, they cannot have the subject's image for them. An image must be formed in the mind of the subject at their own instigation. Only the subject can undertake inner-world communication.

What constitutes good outer-world communication? This would include, in no particular order:

Talking clearly

Being understood

Being visual as well as being auditory

Saying exactly what you mean

What constitutes good inner-world communication? Again let us present a list in no particular order.

Clear flow of thought between the conscious and unconscious mind (left and right brain)

Being relaxed

Being oneself (not pretending)

Not expecting too much

Good imagery

Emotional involvement in the imagery

Although both lists are not in any way new, what they do is to direct the attention of the hypnotist to possible avenues of improvement. Furthermore, they raise the question of whether the improvement should be in terms of the hypnotist's ability to communicate with their patient or with the patient's own ability to communicate effectively with themselves.

The final observation, which is also important for hypnotherapy, is that induction is often thought of as a passive process. This is not in fact the case. This implies that the communication is in the form of instruction: a typical outer world form of communication. Image work, however, is emotional and is very much an active form of inner-world communication. It is this active element which will ensure that the rapport established between the hypnotist and the subject is maintained and enhanced throughout the session.