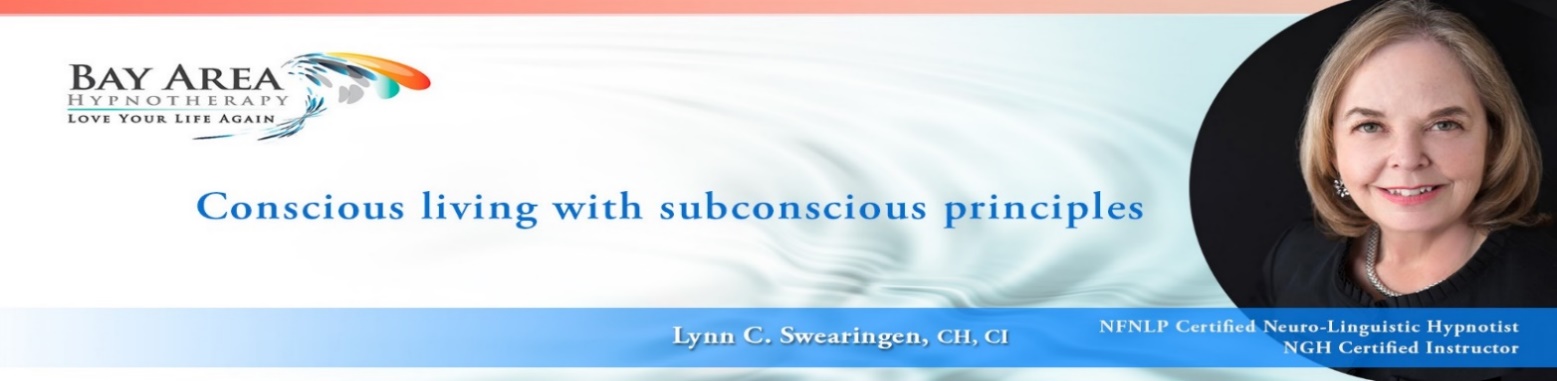
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From <http://www.abouthypnosis.com/hypnotic-language.html>

Hypnotic Language Patterns

Sometimes seen as a dark and sinister art, a magical power, or as something only heavyweight linguists can get to grips with, hypnotic language is actually very straightforward.  By definition, hypnotic language is designed to produce a hypnotic trance. Since trance is simply a highly focused state of attention, **hypnotic language is language which focuses the attention and turns it inwards.**

Interest in hypnotic language patterns has grown alongside interest in the work of Milton H. Erickson, who pioneered the "indirect" approach to hypnosis.  Before Erickson, subjects were basically told what to do - "you are feeling sleepy".  Whilst this works for some people, Erickson realized that the majority of us dislike being told what to do, and will tend to resist any suggestions that are made to us in this way.

In addition, **the internal, imaginative reality of the listener is unlikely to match what is being said to them if the suggestions are too specific**. A hypnotist might tell you that you're relaxing on a beautiful beach with golden sand, but perhaps the beach in your imagination is a shingle beach, or perhaps you got lost on a beach as a child and have hated beaches ever since. In which case, the discrepancy between what's being said and what's going on inside your head will disrupt the hypnotic trance and any useful suggestions the hypnotist might make will be lost, ignored or refused.

Indirect language patterns get round this in two ways. First, by structuring language in such a way that your attention is focused and turned inwards, where it will search for meaning. **The Ericksonian equivalent of "you are feeling sleepy"** would be something like **"and perhaps as you sit there, listening to me here, you might begin to notice a pleasant feeling of drowsiness."**

Nobody can argue with a statement like that!  At no point are you told that you're experiencing something or commanded to do something - you might notice something, or you might not.  **The only way to find out is to turn your attention inwards to see what feelings you do notice - which, of course, is inherently trance inducing.**

Secondly, **indirect hypnotic language is permissive, which means that you are given maximum freedom to interpret what is being said to you in a way that makes sense to you personally.** So the Ericksonian equivalent of "you can imagine relaxing on a beautiful golden beach" might be "**now there will have been a time and a place in your life, where you've felt perfectly relaxed, and perfectly at ease. And I wonder if you're able to get a sense of that right now?**"

As before, at no point are you directly instructed to experience something specific inside your imagination.  **The speaker has now made a safe assumption** - you will have felt perfectly relaxed at some point in your life, even if it was only for five minutes fifteen years ago.  By setting up a general outline of a "time and a place" when this has happened, you're left to fill in the details by yourself.  **A**ttention is focused inwards as you sort through your experience to find a memory of a time when you did feel perfectly relaxed.  By remembering that time, of course, you also relive the feelings you had at that time, reproducing that sense of relaxation in the present moment.

There are any number of "tools of the trade" that hypnotists use to produce this permissive, attention-focusing effect, together with specific language patterns.  Examples include the **"yes set",** a series of statements which you can't help but agree with, since they're self-evidently true, so that you're more likely to agree with whatever comes next.  An example might be - "so you've come here this morning, and you're sitting in that chair now, listening to the sound of my voice, and already beginning to get a sense of how deeply you can relax here today."

Closely related to that are the use of **truisms**, aspects of behavior or experience which cannot reasonably be denied - **"you already know how to relax, don't you?"**  **That "don't you?" at the end is another favorite hypnotic language pattern, a "tag question" which tends to make any statement before it less direct and easier to accept**.  And it does, doesn't it?

Similarly, **suggestions are more likely to be accepted if they're added to a truism**, even if the two things don't necessarily follow - "**and because you already know how to relax, you can relax even deeper here today as you listen to the sound of my voice**."

Hypnotists also offer **illusory choice** or use **double binds** to achieve desired outcomes.  **"Will you relax now or in a minute?"** **presupposes that you *will* relax, the only question being one of time.**  They also use ***nominalisations***, **words that have no intrinsic meaning in themselves** **and which are open to individual interpretation - relaxation, calm, tranquility, safe, secure, pleasant** and so on mean different things to different people.  Again, the mind naturally turns inwards when it hears words like these to attach individual meaning to them, which produces a trance.

These techniques, and others like them, are designed to create the trance state, which makes the unconscious mind more readily available to receive new information.  **Hypnotic language also involves delivering that information in a form which the unconscious mind is more likely to accept.**  **Deliberate confusion and ambiguity, metaphors, puns, analogies, stories and so on are all ways of smuggling the message in past the conscious mind, which tends to be more critical and analytical.**

Finally, it's worth bearing in mind that politicians, advertisers and salespeople are all well aware of hypnotic language patterns.  As such, a basic familiarity with those patterns can help you to defend yourself against those who don't necessarily have your best interests at heart.