

The Power of Verbal Influence

By: Robert F. Otto, C.Ht.

While reading Dr. Richard Harte's story entitled Self Talk in the last issue of The Journal of Hypnotism, I was reminded once again of how easy it is for us to effect change in our clients by simply accentuating the positive. While there are many ways to maintain a healthy, positive result for behavioral change, the easiest way I have found to solidify the beneficial suggestions given in my therapeutic sessions is to re-enforce the desired result through the use of our auditory receptors in bed at night for at least 28-30 consecutive nights.

Evidence of the effectiveness of this ritual has been shown to me many times over in my twenty-five year career and the story below will reveal just how easy this process can be.

Through my experiences of leading group seminars for weight loss, I have been able to identify many similarities in the mannerisms of the participants that are congruent with the overall perception the general public has regarding any hypnosis-related ideals. Of course, as we all know, some perceptions are downright frightening, while others are simply delightful. Because the majority of my attendees for weight loss are of the feminine gender, I found it amusing to overhear the various stories whispered among them as to how they diabolically planned to 'sneak away' from their husbands in order to attend my session 'incognito'. While their reasoning for being evasive while attending a group hypnosis session for weight loss is understandable, it is at the same time humorous to witness the steps one takes in order for their participation to remain anonymous. I have often found hypnosis to be the last resort in their quest for thinness and that they've tried everything that's come down the road short of a surgical procedure to staple their mouths closed! Of course you and I both know that these are extreme measures and are not the norm. But then again, how many of us know someone who has taken the route of gastric bypass surgery in order to achieve desired thinness? I'm certain if we investigated the statistical information on this subject, we would find these procedures becoming more and more commonplace and no doubt frighteningly on the rise. It makes me wonder how many people *without medical justification* are desperate enough to take extreme measures in order to produce results, when the answer to their challenge *always* lies within.

When Mrs. Smith (*not her real name*) initially attended her first session for the benefit of shedding some unwanted weight, she was a typical hypnosis client. You know the type... nervous, skeptical and a little embarrassed at her last ditch effort to get results. I recognized these characteristics in Mrs. Smith and immediately set out to alleviate her concerns by facilitating a thorough pre-talk. I believe a good pre-talk is of paramount importance, and because of this, I use whatever means are necessary in order to elicit a spark of acceptance from my participants. And for this reason, learning metaphors and stories are almost always included in the first segment of my seminars. I make sure I share success stories and testimonials of past participants so that the present class can conceive the idea, associate with and become inspired by, the success stories of ordinary people just like themselves.

That evening, the remainder of the seminar was executed without incident. Once I knew I had the audience acceptance, I went directly from the pre-talk patter into the hypnotic segment of the class and followed through after the session by a recount of what had transpired. I had a very close friend and colleague once sum it up in this way. "Tell them what your going to do, do it, and then tell them what you did." That's exactly what I did with each and every seminar I conducted and it worked like a charm! Anyway, let's get back to Mrs. Smith's story. Like I said, I dismissed the class that evening without incident and never gave a second thought to the depth or impact of my words.

As the crowd left the seminar that evening, my final instruction to them was on the correct usage of the mantra card I provided when they registered at the door. All they needed to do was simply repeat the information off of the card in bed at night for the next 28-30 nights. Why? Because anything repeated consciously in bed at night for 28-30 consecutive nights as you lose consciousness must become a subconscious acting, habit, concept or pattern without your approval or acknowledgement. The theory here is that the repetition 'seals the deal' we just made between the conscious and subconscious mind during our hypnosis session.

It wasn't until eight weeks later that I was to again meet up with Mrs. Smith. When I arrived at the hotel that evening, Mrs. Smith was eagerly awaiting my arrival so that she could share with me the remarkable results she achieved using hypnosis. Her verbal testimony went something like this.

"Mr. Otto, I have wonderful news for you. I'm not sure that you remember me, however I participated in the last seminar you gave here approximately eight weeks ago. Not only did I thoroughly enjoy your presentation on hypnosis, I couldn't believe my ears when you told us forty minutes had passed between the time you told us to pick out a spot on the ceiling, until you had us open our eyes. Your explanation of mental reinforcement was very similar to what I've read and heard in the past about learning a foreign language while we sleep. I certainly can't explain hypnosis and sleep-learning to family and friends as easily as you explained it to us. I only know that what you told us that night made perfect sense and that it worked! I'm sure you hear this kind of good news all the time. But, that's not the reason I'm here. You see, I now have a problem. Having no formal explanation of hypnosis prior to the evening I attended, I was ashamed to reveal to anyone what I was about to partake in. I didn't want anyone to know that I had resorted to hypnosis as one final attempt at losing weight. You inspired me so much that night I bought a taped version of your session. The problem manifested when I began to secretly play the tape in bed at night without my husband's acknowledgement. Because I neglected to tell him about my experience with hypnosis, I decided to wait until he was asleep before playing the tape. I faithfully played the tape every night and continue to do so now. In less than two months I lost twenty-one pounds with no effort at all. And my husband, who never attended your session, unknowingly listened to the tape with me in bed each night and lost 25 pounds! The problem here is that he has no knowledge of listening to the sleep learning reinforcement tape and now thinks he may have a medical challenge because he is losing weight and has no idea why! I know I have to tell him soon and was hoping you could help. You see, initially we had a discussion about both of us attending your session. He scoffed at the idea and told me 'it' wouldn't work. I just know when he finds out what I've been up to I'll have a lot of explaining to do!"

I laughed lightheartedly at her confession and humorously recommended a simple plan of *weight gain* for her husband using the power of verbal influence by creating an audiocassette of the same. At that she looked at me with a serious and puzzled expression and asked if I thought it would work in reversal. And my immediate response was “You betcha!”