

# Hypnotherapy as Energy Work

Peter Blum

History, it is often said, repeats itself.

In the early days of hypnosis, when Mesmer and Charcot were first introducing this modality in 18th century Europe, the phenomenon was often referred to as "animal magnetism." In terms of the existing paradigm, in the scientific world, this was the time of the discovery of invisible forces that affected people and objects at a distance: electricity, gravity, magnetism. It was only natural that these early pioneers should think to categorize hypnosis as such a force. As the age of enlightenment spread, this way of understanding hypnosis was discouraged. As Bertrand Russell said of electricity, "It is not a thing, like St. Peter's Cathedral, it is a way in which things act."

And it seems that this is still true, hypnosis is not a thing. It is, to paraphrase Dr. Milton Erickson, a special type of communication. Communication can also be regarded as an exchange of information, using energy. Using the model of co-trance, as advanced by Gilligan, Wolinsky and other neo-Ericksonians, a hypnotherapeutic interaction between therapist and client can usefully be described and experienced as energy work.

Human beings are beings of energy. There are primary and secondary fields of energy both within and surrounding each human being. These have been described historically in esoteric literature as the aura, or subtle bodies. In the process of training, a hypnotherapist learns to develop sensory acuity, to quiet down in order to attune herself to the energy field(s) of her client. How these are experienced is subjective, and differs from one person to another. As in physics, the fields have dimension, density, and vibration. From the "super"-sensory perceptions of kinesthetic, visual, and auditory, they also can be experienced as having feelings, colors and sounds.

In the time that I have been immersed in the field of hypnosis and the study of trance states, a growing number of people in the healing/therapeutic communities are doing what is called "energy work." The more I consider my own evolving understanding of the induction and use of hypnotic states, the more it seems clear that this, too, is a form of energy work. Perhaps, to put it in that framework—to examine hypnosis from the perspective of energy work—might enhance an increasingly interdisciplinary approach.

We human beings are, after all, matter and movement - that is to say, potential and active energy. Our bodies and thoughts can be described and understood in terms of fields, vibration, frequency, cycles, etc. "Classic" older hypnotic inductions often utilized "passes" of the hypnotist's hands around the head and body of the subject. Besides attracting and fixing the client's attention, is it possible that these movements actually alter or re-align the energy in the client's subtle body?

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Most subjects who come for help in gaining balance in their life and health through the use of hypnosis are, on some level, seeking to change their vibration. A depressed client, for instance, can be experienced as having too low a vibration... not enough energy; whereas an anxious patient may present as someone whose vibrational level is too high for comfort - or too chaotic.

The key to understanding and changing "locked" vibrational patterns; i.e. stuck states (habitual neurotic cycles of thought, feeling, and behavior), lies in accessing the unconscious. In order to manipulate these templates, it is helpful, if not necessary, to enter into a co-trance with the client. This can also be described as matching frequencies.

Ericksonian and neo-Ericksonian inductions utilize the concepts of pacing and leading to establish rapport and to introduce an altered state. Various techniques of pacing and leading involve matching posture, facial expressions, hand movements, breathing patterns (location and rate), and verbal expressions - tone, pitch, rate of speech, and key words and expressions. Subtler behaviors that can be matched include blinking, swallowing, heartbeat, and muscular micro-movements.

Rosalyn Bruyere and others working with the aura claim that it is a useful point of view to understand that mind is synonymous with aura - or energy field permeating and surrounding the dense physical body. Shamanic healing traditionally was performed by those who had been born with, or developed super-sensory perceptions. Perhaps future generations of hypnotherapists will recognize and work with consciously pacing the auric pulsations. If it is perceivable, then it can be paced and then led.

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