Self Help Hypnosis

by Will Williams

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Understand how your mind works,
why your life is the way it is,
and how to program your own mind
for better living and more control

Contents

Preface

This book has been written to share knowledge and experience relating to your mind and how to make the most of it. Primarily, it's about subconscious dynamics and learning to have a greater appreciation for how your mind works. It is also about self-hypnosis, and using the most direct methods to program more positive beliefs for positive results. Basically, improving self-awareness, then making use of it.

The extent to which you could benefit from subconscious programming is literally down to your imagination. I have seen clients go through seemingly miraculous changes as a result of subconscious change work. I have seen people effortlessly lose a stone in weight in a month, free themselves of mysterious pathological illnesses, confidently make life changing decisions that bring about huge positive results, and overcome anxieties and phobias in minutes. My involvement was merely to direct thoughts, attention and awareness towards certain areas, the rest was down to basic principles of how the mind works.

Time and time again I am reminded of just how powerful and creative the subconscious mind is. The good news is that you have one too. But to really appreciate that, you might have to also realise the bad news of how it has accidentally, but equally powerfully, led you into some negative outcomes.

I hope that in reading this you embark on an inner journey of exploration. You may even wish to keep a pen and paper handy in case you have any sudden insights or ideas whilst reading. It's actually quite likely – the examples are quite varied and there are likely to a be a few that you relate to in some way yourself. Some of the patterns and dynamics are so universal that you are surely going to relate them back to your own life, this is after all the point. Keep a note of any significant thoughts – they may prove invaluable when it comes to writing your unique positive suggestions in Part 5.

I have tried to keep it succinct and efficient, to reward you as much as possible for your time invested in reading it. There may be times where you wish I'd gone into more detail on a subject, or clarified something. If so I can only apologise. Some areas could merit volumes of their own, however even a beginner's awareness can be useful enough to stimulate further ideas, realisations and awarenesses in your mind. At the very back are my contact details should you wish to feed back any ideas for future revisions – I welcome them wholeheartedly.

Will Williams
Exeter, Devon, 2008

An Introduction to Subconscious Psychology

You meet a new person, get talking, and for a moment you look at life through their eyes.

It feels different. It feels good.

You suddenly find yourself thinking slightly differently. Maybe you have momentarily let go of a few worries, maybe you suddenly give yourself permission to be happy. With this new mindset, you look forward to something, feel excited in a different way.

But then… you soon find yourself surrounded by normality… and the same old feelings and mindsets return.

Someone is talking about their past. Maybe a friend, or even someone on TV. You realise something about your own, it hits you how something that was actually out of your control influenced you in some way. At the time, you took it personally, but now you know better. You think about how things might be, if the past had been different.

But then… you soon find yourself surrounded by normality… and the same old feelings and mindsets return.

Yes, life is full of these opposing forces and ongoing conflicts. But what is really going on here? I would say it's an ongoing struggle between the positive and negative influences of everyday life, and that deep part of yourself that is aware, full of life and energy, that is mostly buried under all the nonsense. The conscious, and subconscious.

As you get older, the feeling of being in control and driving your own life can shift into something altogether scarier. The feeling of being driven, of being a passenger, and not really knowing why or how you ended up where you are.

In a sense, both are true. You are driving your life, and you are being driven. It just depends which aspect of *you* we are talking about. It's worth getting to know both.

Your subconscious mind is a storehouse of memories, emotions, attitudes, goals, expectations, beliefs, and associations. It constantly feeds your conscious awareness by directing your senses to whatever is worthy of attention, and providing thoughts, patterns, ideas. The subconscious is vastly powerful – it has a huge influence over everything you *think, do, feel, or perceive.* A vast majority of your life is directed by the subconscious machine. It's like a servo-mechanism – constantly processing the beliefs and expectations its programmed with and moving towards them. Among those goals are instinctive ones, such as avoiding perceived harm, threats, hurt and pain.

Your subconscious mind is programmed through various ways, intentionally and accidentally. Its makes no difference whether the beliefs and expectations are positive or negative, good or bad, right or wrong, the subconscious simply 'absorbs' and operates on what it learns.

The conscious mind is there to attend to new things, to experience, and to think and reason. Frequently, the conscious mind is simply rationalising everything the subconscious mind is doing – following behind like a loyal but fickle slave, making you feel *justified* and giving the illusion of *consistency*.

As an adult, your conscious mind allows you to critically consider what to accept and what to reject in terms of what ideas you allow to impress themselves on your subconscious mind. However, even then, negative ideas, beliefs or expectations can slip through. Repetitive insults from bad relationships. Implications can also be suggestive – such as being fired or being left by a partner (the implication pushing the idea inside "you're not good enough"). Ideas repetitively suggested through media, culture and advertising ("you won't be happy unless you have the latest…", or "you must be beautiful to be attractive or happy").

However, as subconsciously suggestive as *adult* life can be, it's the tip of the iceberg in terms of your overall learning about yourself, other people and the world.

The majority of your subconscious learning takes place during early childhood – before your conscious critical faculty has had a chance to develop. As an infant you don't know enough to know what is right, wrong, good, bad, useful, stupid, destructive, pointless, valuable – you simply learn as many associations and impressions as you can – absorbing the world. You were receiving and reacting to suggestions every minute of every day.

Once you can understand words, people around you made a deep impression on your subconscious with everything they said about you. If people close to you repeatedly gave negative opinions such as that you were bad, stupid, clumsy then you could not help but subconsciously accept their low opinion of you.

Suggestions don't even have to be said, they can be implied. For example, a father who came home late and didn't give enough attention was implying the suggestion "you're not worthy enough of my attention", despite whatever (if any) valid reasons he may have had. A mother who seemed to favour a sister was accidentally offering the suggestion "you're not as good as your sister" *even if the sister was much younger and needed extra attention.*

Bear in mind that these examples are simply to show the power of suggestion, and not to imply blame on those who brought you up – people do the best they can with what they know and the resource they have – just as you are doing now. As adults, we are all responsible for ourselves.

This kind of conditioning affects your whole outlook right through your adult life. Most adults are ignorant of the destructive influence of negative suggestion – their minds have adapted to cushion the negative impact, with beliefs such as "this is just the way it is", or "that's just who I am". Others find ways to cope with the anxiety, emptiness or low self-esteem by searching for external stimuli to thrill, escape into, or distract. Others still reach a level of self-awareness where the inner being shouts "I know there is more than this!" and reaches the all-important point of being ready for change.

Childhood programming is obviously not all negative, and indeed most of it is very positive. Perhaps you were fortunate enough to have people around who emphasized your good traits, suggested that you were bound to succeed, saying you had a marked ability, a lovable personality and other good qualities. If so then they suggestively built up in you a confident subconscious attitude which is such a valuable asset to expressing your true potential. If your parents did not give you enough positive suggestions, it is now up to you to give them to yourself.

Hypnosis and self-hypnosis are used to bypass the conscious, critical mind. Without the presence of doubt, analysis and conscious awareness, the subconscious becomes more open to exploration and installation of new, positive ideas.

Learning self-hypnosis will give you perfect confidence in yourself, whether you are standing in front of ten or ten thousand people. It gives you the ability to remain calm and relaxed regardless of the situation. Along with reading this book, learning self-hypnosis will give you a wonderful understanding of human nature and shows you how to relate to most of the people with whom you come into contact. Once you learn of the tremendous power – both negative and positive – that suggestion has, you will never again allow yourself to accept any negative suggestions.

In a nutshell then: successful achievement, health and happiness are the result and reward of constructive, powerful suggestion. Feelings of inferiority, failure, misery, sickness and even death can all result from destructive suggestions and fixed-ideas. Keep giving yourself suggestions of strength, power, accomplishment and achievement, radiant health, happiness, peace and serenity, love and friendliness.

Healthy and positive suggestions like these will set in motion creative forces and powers in you that you may not know you have, forces that can relieve you of fears and worries and lift you to a higher level of well being.

This book will show you just how robust and perfect your mind already is (perhaps much to your surprise). Yes – you're mind works wonderfully well or else you wouldn't be reading and understanding this. The human brain is an incredible learning resource – able to associate powerful and complex concepts and symbols in single experiences. Problems and barriers have developed because of the bad suggestions and

false ideas that you have absorbed – providing the 'blueprint' for your beliefs, thoughts and feelings – which can then lead to habits, addictions, and tendencies. The good news is that you can then learn how to use the same powerful directive technology of your subconscious in your favour – *for a change*.

A Warning

In this text there are lots of references to the influence of others, such as parents, teachers, friends etc. It's important to remember that self-improvement has nothing to do with *blame*. When reading and thinking, you may start wondering about things and come to the conclusion that it's all *so-and-so's* fault.

Remember this:

It's not the events themselves that influence you, but the meanings you give them.

No one is to blame. The mind simply learns in its own unique way. We are all in this together – all affected in one way or another, all trying to make sense of our lives, all trying to satisfy needs, protect against fears and insecurities. People only ever try the best they can with the resources they have at the time. This isn't about blaming – it's about taking responsibility for your own learnings, learning to take control for a change, and changing your self.

A Special Note

Some people (particularly in Britain) associate personal power or success with greed, believing that it is somehow selfish to feel good and powerful in yourself, or to want to be successful. Success doesn't have to be about money, and even if it were, there is nothing wrong with that. Financial security to look after yourself and your loved ones is obviously good (you might be surprised to learn that there is more than enough money in the world to provide abundantly for everyone, and that 5% of people hold 95% of the wealth). This idea is simply a rational reinforcement of existing (and negative) ideas about your self, and your self-worth.

It is common (again, particularly in Britain) to think that you somehow don't deserve to be *that* happy, or that you aren't quite good enough. You should be quiet! Humble! Play the game! Be the small person! This is exactly what the establishment wants you to believe – it's far less trouble if people don't get any big ideas, just work hard (undeserved guilt is always a good motive) and become emotionally empty consumers – believing that buying more stuff makes you happier and keeping the economy going. Keep the country powerful – not yourself!

You deserve *much more* than that – but again, success has nothing to do with money. Just having self-confidence to approve of, and accept yourself, so that you can express your true nature is to be *very* successful and highly enriched.

Similarly, thoughts of confidence are commonly associated with *over-confidence* or even *arrogance*. Sometimes in sessions I have asked people "would you like to be more confident?" to which they've answered "well yes, but not *too* confident". Nonsense! There is no such thing as 'too confident'. Once it becomes 'too' it is no longer confidence – it is something else (arrogance or cockiness). Confidence is simply holding a positive belief about something, but preferably yourself. You have just as much confidence as you'll ever have – but most people become confident about negative things (such as "I'm not good enough"). This negative belief largely stems from over-powering adults (parents, relatives or teachers) who were careful to 'put you down' if you became confident (*too* confident for *them*). Feelings of inferiority are a vicious cycle – adults may become uncomfortable seeing a child being more confident than they are – therefore threatening their view of the world and 'how things should be'. The idea of potential criticism is too associated and painful – so they quieten the child down or say something critical themselves. And so the cycle continues… But this isn't to say it's ok to let your kids run around like noisy brats! It's obviously possible to learn to be self-confident and respectful at the same time.

So where do problems start?

Faulty programming
- Erroneous beliefs (particularly negative self-beliefs such as "I'm not good

enough" or "I don't deserve to be happy")
- Erroneous associations (spiders are dangerous)
- Negative expectations ("I'll never amount to much")

Conflicts
- Conscious ideals differing from subconscious goals

How do problems get resolved?

Re-education of the subconscious mind
- Replacing negative ideas, beliefs and expectations with positive ones
- Installing positive suggestions and new associations
- Installing positive vivid goals to work towards
- Releasing bottled up emotions (anger, guilt, fear)

Resolution of conflicts
- Reframing perceptions to see in different ways
- Fulfilling goals in more useful ways
- Becoming more self-aware and directive

Learning self-hypnosis

Part 1:

Learning How
The Mind Works

The conscious and subconscious mind

The conscious mind is basically your conscious awareness, the part that thinks logically and rationally, that justifies its actions and reasons through situations.

The subconscious mind is all the rest of your mind that sits below the level of awareness. It is a storehouse of emotions, memories, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. The subconscious is the 'feeling' mind. Whereas conscious thought is very rational, reasonable and logical, the subconscious is a lot more irrational, illogical and emotional. It is the primal mind, there to guide you away from pain and towards pleasure, so it operates on raw experience and emotion.

The subconscious mind doesn't reason or rationalise. It just *does*. Whatever is programmed in the subconscious by way of images, feelings goals etc is exactly what the subconscious moves towards. For example if you developed a phobia to spiders because you were once frightened as one ran over your leg, then your brain will give you that same fear response every time you see one. It doesn't reason that the spider is actually harmless, it just gives you the emotion, *until the underlying subconscious belief*

"spiders are to be feared" is replaced with something more useful.

The subconscious drive towards certain goals, beliefs and expectations *regardless of any rational thoughts*, is a very powerful mechanism and one we'll be returning to many times. For now, we need to patiently wade through a few concepts.

Paying attention

You can't pay conscious attention to everything that comes in through your five senses, all of the time. It would be a huge overload! You're only really consciously aware of a tiny part of it at any one time. The rest is being processed and stored *subconsciously*. At any one time, something that you are processing subconsciously could become conscious if it grabs your attention.

For example, if you were at a party, there might be lots of conversations going on around you at any one time. There's also lots of visual information. But you're only going to be consciously aware of a few select things – perhaps what you are thinking, what the person in front of you is talking about, who they remind you of, and the feeling of the glass

between your fingers. You aren't paying any attention to the feeling of your feet on the floor, the colour of the ceiling, what day of the week it is, or the emotional state of the person talking to you.

But then someone else in the room mentions your name – not you directly, but someone else with the same name. You momentarily flinch towards the other conversation, but the person talking to you doesn't notice because they are only consciously aware of what they are going to say next and perhaps also that they need the bathroom. You have been consciously drawn to the sound of your name, and have now stopped paying conscious attention to the person talking to you, and are instead focussing on another conversation, a bit like switching channels on a radio. You also now pay conscious attention to the feeling of your own nervousness at whether the person is going to notice that you aren't listening, so you start to blush slightly. You are now also not paying attention to your drink. You hold it out slightly too far, and someone knocks it – distracting at least three channels of conscious attention from both you and the person. In the confusion they now focuses their conscious attention inwards, and decide to deal with their need for the bathroom, so politely make an exit whilst you clean up your spilled drink.

This is just an example of how conscious awareness works – it truly is in a state of total flux, ever changing and wondering from one thing to another. The stimuli that compete for conscious attention are not just things on the outside, but things on the inside.

External Stimuli – everything on the outside
Vision, depth, colour, writing, facial expressions, texture, movement, identification of objects, places or people
Sound, tone, speech, words, stereo location of sound, identification of voice
Touch, texture, weight, pressure, temperature, moisture, pain
Smells, perfumes, pheromones, scents
Taste

Internal stimuli
Memories, experiences, traumas, visualisations, imaginings, anticipation
Thoughts, reasonings, predictions, wonderings, confusion, attitudes, beliefs
Emotions, anxieties, nerves, yearnings

Balance, pain, hunger, thirst.

These are really only a minority of the available stimuli, but it's just to give an idea of the vast spectrum of things that are competing for your conscious awareness at any one time. For example, the simple act of looking at a human face could easily occupy all of your conscious attention – the emotional expression, the skin tone, trying to age the person, recognising the person, remembering someone who looks like the person, remembering any experience you have previously had with the person, to name but a few.

Using your imagination, try to visualise for a moment what it would look like if whatever you were consciously attending to was like a little green light coming out of your head. Little green pools of light would be dancing around everywhere, different objects, people, sounds. If someone walked by, one of the green lights might move towards their eyes as you try to recognise them. Sometimes the lights would go to your own head as you focussed on something internally. For example, when daydreaming.

In situations you can start to become more aware of where people are, and are not, paying attention. In fact you may realise how much you do this already. Magicians are experts at it, using the attention blindspots to perform sleight of hand trickery. Politicians also use it on a bigger scale, drawing your attention to one statistical success whilst a failure is overlooked.

The distraction, and manipulation, of attention can have some interesting effects. Imagine a person trying to think of a place name. He has to follow a train of thought… remembering his holiday last year… then the first place they went to where they learned about the second place… just about to get it on the tip of the tongue – "HEY! Are those new shoes?!?" you ask. His attention is suddenly distracted – you have derailed the train of thought – and he has a hard time getting back to where he was. Similarly its likely you have had experiences in conversations where you have something you want to say – something interesting you remembered, or a good question to ask. You are holding onto it with a conscious strand of attention (a little green light somewhere in your mind). Be careful… it doesn't take much for something to compete for that strand of attention and then you find yourself saying "there was something I

wanted to say… what was it now…give me a minute". You may backtrack through the conversation, looking for those associational cues of recognition – until your subconscious repeats its initial associational thought and it pops right back into conscious awareness.

The mind has sometimes been described as an iceberg – the conscious mind sits on top, whilst the majority lingers below the surface. But it's not a useful metaphor. Icebergs are solid masses, whereas the mind is constantly changing its foci of attention.

A better analogy is to think of your mind as being like a dark room, full of stuff. The conscious mind is like a torch, being shone around the room. So most of the room is in darkness, but it could fall under the torchlight if you directed it there. Taking this one step further, its actually more like having about 7 penlights, all shining around at various things. And one step further again, those penlights could also be shining on things outside of the room, in the external world.

Why *seven* penlights? Well this is just how many conscious attention channels we have, plus or minus two. A classic example of this is in remembering phone numbers. If you try to remember a six digit number, you can probably just about do it if you keep repeating it over and over to yourself, keeping the number in your short term memory. Whilst doing this though, you're going to be pretty oblivious to everything else that is going on, paying attention only subconsciously. However, if you 'chunk' the numbers in to groups of three, then you'll free up some channels of attention. If the number is distinctive enough to chunk into 1, then it'll be much easier.

3   4   9   2   7   8
      = six channels of attention
34   92   78   = three channels of attention
349   278   = two channels of attention
444444 = one channel of attention (for a memorable number)

The first example is quite unrealistic, because our brains automatically chunk down where possible. Mobile phone numbers are proving more challenging to remember, as we now don't have an area code to instantly chunk down into one.

I like to use visual analogies because the subconscious is very visual, and by visualising various metaphors you're able to learn faster. So another way of looking at your attention is by visualising an octopus, the octopus of attention. The eight legs are wailing around grabbing onto various things. Throw something interesting at the octopus and he'll drop something else to grab onto it.

Another metaphor: think of your mind as being like a business. A big blue chip company. Most of the staff are working away on the various processes to keep the company prosperous, looking after client accounts, taking care of other staff, sorting out finances, working on new developments, etc. The desk of the managing director is relatively clean – he is only working on the top priority tasks that need attention that day. If something big pops up such as some negative publicity in the media which could threaten sales, then the attention will get given to that issue. The managing director doesn't need to know everything that is going on in the company, because most of it is irrelevant. He relies upon reports from his other managers and directors to bring him up to date, relevant news. All of the details are outside of his awareness, in the subconscious of the company, *until they become important enough to warrant attention*.

With all these green lights, torches, octopuses corporate shenanigans are you getting the idea of how attention works? I hope so – and that you weren't devoting some of those octopus legs to what you're going to have for dinner! Sure, it's a lot more complicated in a neurological sense and involves far more cognitive 'ifs' 'buts' swings and roundabouts, but you get the idea, and for the purposes of *subconscious suggestion* that's all you really need to know. As far as I'm concerned, keeping it simple is the best way to learn anything.

Before we get onto how problems and tendencies can develop, I just want to explain a bit more about how the subconscious works:

Rules of the Mind

1. What is expected, tends to be realized (or…The subconscious acts towards its goals)

The brain and the nervous system respond only to mental images – which can be internal or external. The images become the expectation, goal, belief, that the subconscious then moves towards. Worrying is a form of programming a picture we don't want – the mind and body then respond to that image.

The subconscious is like a computer – it operates on specific goals, 'scripts', or 'programs' and simply carries them out. It doesn't think, reason, doubt or second-guess those goals – it simply does its job. When you were a baby and toddler, the 'programs' are pretty simple – get fed, get shelter, get attention, get looked after, stay warm, avoid heights, associate as many things as possible (i.e. learn). As you get older you start running new programs as you begin to learn them. New associations form, for example if you see a spider and mum goes 'ooooh a spider!' and pulls a face, you learn that spiders are to be feared. So you might run a little program that says 'spiders = fear'. That program will stay operational until you replace it with a counteractive program, e.g. 'some spiders are scary, but not all' or 'spiders are harmless'. We will see later why some, even simple programs are difficult to replace.

The subconscious is a powerful, *hugely powerful,* piece of technology. *It really does act towards its goals, with no ifs or buts.* The word 'goal' is really an umbrella term that encapsulates "expectations", "fixed ideas" and "associations". Fixed ideas might be the most appropriate, so think of it as *the subconscious acts towards its fixed ideas.*

All mentally able people are successful at realising their subconscious fixed ideas. It's true. The subconscious moves toward what it expects, or perceives the world to be. So if someone just *knows* that they are going to be rich, with no exceptions, they probably will be (if random acts of nature don't intervene). Their subconscious screens out any attention to ideas such as doubt, or failure. And that is completely different from *wanting* to be rich. Most people wonder why they don't achieve what they want to, when they are *really wanting* certain things. The problem, which we'll cover in more detail in just a moment, is that *wanting is a conscious process.* The subconscious doesn't want – it expects, it does. Another difference between wanting and expecting is this – if you want

something and it doesn't happen, you're disappointed. If you expect something and it doesn't happen, you're *surprised.* It has violated your map of the world, and you feel genuinely confused. Your subconscious works very hard to prevent you from feeling this confusion. Disappointment? Not a problem! We're all used to that! Because somewhere beneath the disappointment is a sense of preparedness, i.e. we were imagining failure (and the subconscious was responding to that imagination).

The problem is that expectations and fixed ideas can be positive or negative – remember that the subconscious doesn't think or reason, it just *acts out fixed ideas.* So if you have an expectation to fail, you will. If you have a subconscious image in your mind of being miserable and things not working out – your subconscious will actually act out towards that realisation and mental image, eventually becoming a reality.

2. Every thought or idea causes a physical reaction

Thoughts are not ethereal things have happen in a place projected on the inside of your mind – they are very real. They are the product of minute variations and fluctuations in neurotransmitters between neurons, creating electrical impulses that zap around the staggeringly large city that is your brain. They are real and physical, and are associated with areas of your brain that mediate and influence many autonomic functions of your body. This could be direct, in terms of increasing your heart rate via nerves, or indirect such as releasing hormones which lead to other hormones which leads to a consequence anywhere else in the body.

For example worry and stress thoughts lead to changes in the stomach that can then lead to ulcers, as well as other areas of the digestive system (irritable bowel syndrome is positively correlated with stress). Anger thoughts stimulate adrenal glands which cause all sorts of bodily changes. Anxiety and fear affect pulse rate, blood pressure, digestion, and even blood flow (the capillaries constrict on the surface to send blood to where it is needed – the muscles – freeing up more energy and tightening the muscles as an extra form of physical protection).

Ideas with emotional content always reach the subconscious mind, as it is the feeling mind. Once accepted, these ideas then continue to produce the same body reaction again and again. Over time, all sorts of physical symptoms can develop such as obesity, acne, psoriasis, eczema, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, aches and pains. Even peoples faces grow to reflect their prevalent emotional states.

Negative body reactions can sometimes be stopped or even reversed by changing the subconscious fixed idea or impression. This can be achieved with hypnotherapy or self-hypnosis.

I had a client who was a highly successful surgeon, who had been battling with Crohn's disease for a four years. His digestive system was painful, his bowel movements irregular and his joints painful. He'd undergone many courses of drugs and surgical treatments and doctors simply didn't know what to do. In just four sessions of hypnoanalysis, a wealth of emotionally repressed anger, resentment and guilt was released, and worked through with visualisations. It had been locked away since childhood, and triggered with a visit home at Christmas a few years ago, just before the symptoms developed.

Organ language reflects the way that our bodies can be very literally affected by thoughts or ideas. For example, when resolving a 'weighty' emotional issue, clients have often remarked "that feels like a weight off my shoulders" or "I feel so much lighter". It's true in the literal sense – heavy emotional issues are carried around like heavy burdens, weighing down the shoulders and affecting posture. The muscles and nerves around the back, shoulders and neck can become tight and knotted.

"I can't stomach it any longer". "This relationship is becoming a real pain in the neck". "You've got a real acid tongue". "You're spineless!". "I'm carrying a real weight on my shoulders". "Father said I couldn't stand on my own two feet – I can't stand up for myself". (You might be able to think of more yourself).

   3.   Where the Will is put against the Imagination, the Imagination always wins

Will is a form of conscious desire, wanting something. Imagination is a construct of the subconscious, being rich in emotion, association and visual imagery. The Will is often in conflict with the Imagination and you can see this in everyday life – the person who *wants* to do well but *imagines* that they won't, the person who imagines that they won't be liked, the person who imagines themselves as a smoker whilst trying to quit, and so on.

The imagination is powerful. Think about a time when you were alone in a house and a noise got your imagination going. Have you ever experienced a time when you became so terrified you were afraid to look downstairs – your imagination was doing a great job of painting a pretty frightening picture, and you might not have even been conscious of everything you were imagining. But your body sure felt the response – nerves, shivering, rooted to the spot etc. You couldn't have got this response from just wanting it consciously!

Imagine there was a plank of wood stretched out across the floor, and I asked you to walk across it without touching the floor itself. You'd probably do it just fine. However, if I took that same plank way up high between two very tall buildings, and asked you to walk across, you might be as successful. Your will is the same as it was on the ground – to cross the plank. But something has changed – the suggestion of being high up has triggered your imagination – it has absorbed the *suggestion* that you could fall. Your legs lock up, the body wobbles, you go into a panic, the *visual image of falling* is so powerful in the imagination that the body responds.

Reason is easily overruled by imagination, which is why some people blindly rush into unreasonable acts or situations. Violent crimes based on sexual jealousy are almost always caused by an over-active imagination. It can be futile trying to talk to someone logically and rationally when their imagination is excited. The lure of gambling for some takes advantage of this weakness – imagining what they could win overriding the rational need for the money-in-hand.

Any idea with a strong emotion such as anger, hatred, love or political or religious beliefs usually cannot be changed through reason alone. In using self-hypnosis you can form

images in the subconscious mind, the feeling mind. This uses the same imaginative power to lend fuel to your true goals and desires for living.

4. Opposing ideas cannot be held at the same time

Where the subconscious is torn between two competing expectations or goals, either one will outride the other, or the person will feel anxiety, discomfort and confusion. This is often the case where we have goals and ideals of our own, but then also absorb those given by society and popular culture. The person who really wants to be an artist, but also expects to be a doctor. The father who tells his children to be honest, and believes in honesty, yet engages in dishonest business practices. The conscious mind will step in to rationalise of course, with "I give enough money to the Government, why not" or "everyone else does it". However he can't escape his conflict and its effect upon the nervous system.

The anxiety is like a ticking time-bomb ready to explode. Sooner or later, something's got to give so that mental harmony can be restored.

5. The longer an idea remains in the subconscious, the stronger it becomes

Because the subconscious acts towards its fixed ideas, it tends to reinforce them by filtering out everything to the contrary. Behaviours, thoughts and feelings will arise that support the fixed idea (whether "I'm not good enough" or "I expect to be successful") which will then habitually reinforce the idea.

The person who believes they aren't good enough for example, may avoid situations where they could meet new people. The resulting loneliness then reinforces the idea, "well, I'm obviously not good enough" and so on.

Because ideas become reinforced, opposition to those ideas becomes stronger, because the mind has tended towards believing it. Someone saying "you're as valuable as anyone else!" sounds fine and is encouraging, but the subconscious easily imagines it might not be true, based on so much experience of feeling otherwise, and so rejects it.

Hypnotherapy can start to shake the foundations of fixed ideas, by unsettling them through careful exploration and release of blocked emotions. Self hypnosis can also allow the changing of fixed ideas, through gradually increasing confidence and belief in good, positive ideas until they form permanent impressions on the subconscious mind.

How subconscious ideas are reinforced is explored in more detail in Part 3.

15

Part 2:

How Fixed Ideas are Formed in the Subconscious Mind

The subconscious mind does not choose what to accept and what not to – that is the job of the conscious critical faculty, something that develops with self-awareness and increased consciousness around 5-6. Think of the conscious critical faculty as being like a 'bouncer' between the outside world and your inner, subconscious world. It tries to assess as much as possible, reasoning, comparing to past experiences, judging, choosing whether to believe something or not. The subconscious simply absorbs any suggestions that filter though. There are different sorts of suggestion, and there are different methods and routes by which suggestions can be accepted.

The nature of suggestion

Suggestibility is a measurement of the intensity with which the brain and nervous system respond to incoming ideas.

It describes the process by which impressions are made on the subconscious mind. Suggestions can be verbal, mental (implied), or environmental. Suggestions can be spoken by people "you should close the door", "you can't spell". They can also be implied, through not saying certain things, doing or not doing certain things. For example, the person who doesn't respond to their friends successes is suggesting "I don't want you to be successful". The teacher who patronisingly shakes his head at a pupil's wrong answer is offering the suggestion "you're stupid, and will always be that way". Parents who row and then take it out on their children are offering the suggestion "this is your fault". Environmental suggestions describe the accumulated effects of many smaller suggestions – such as the atmosphere of a library suggesting "be quiet". Environments create contexts that are loaded with suggestions – suggesting the right way to behave, offering expectations of you, and creating a very powerful influence to conform to.

Suggestions are everywhere – your mind is constantly being hit by torrents of suggestion. Some are accepted, some are responded to immediately, some are rejected, some have an accumulative effect, ready to be responded to a

later date, some have large affects, others have small affects that compound into larger ones. Some excite the imagination, some go unnoticed.

As an example, consider a person who is trying to quit smoking. Many such quitters use the patch, as its all the UK National Health Service has to rely on despite very weak success rates, and very high relapse figures. The suggestion offered by the marketing is "increase your chances of quitting by up to four times" (this is actually a statistical error – as they are equating the placebo condition with cold turkey, which is a false association to make). However, it offers far more destructive suggestions. By saying 'increases your chances' the suggestion is also being offered that "quitting relies on luck" or "smoking and quitting has nothing to do with your own mind" (which of course, it does). Wearing a patch is offering the suggestion "you need this to be able to quit" which also carries the suggestion "you can't rely on your own psychology or motivation". Taking the patch off again is offering the suggestion "now you are exposed to your temptations again – you might start smoking". Because the patch doesn't do a single thing to alter a smokers perceptions, attitudes, beliefs or fears around smoking and quitting, the moment they feel like smoking whilst wearing the patch is likely to create the suggestion "this isn't working!". That suggestion is then compounded by an increasing lack of confidence in the patch which then creates the suggestion "you are going to start smoking again".

What I am trying to illustrate with this example is just how subtle and *implied* suggestions can be. Also – rather than being a case of whether or not you accept or respond to a suggestion – it's more a case of *which suggestions are you responding to at any one time*. In rejecting a suggestion, you are actually responding to another accepted suggestion of your own – such as "that isn't true" or "I don't want that".

As you have probably already realised, the nature of responding to suggestion is not a conscious process. It is automatic, and subconscious. The degree to which a suggestion is accepted by the subconscious mind depends on many different factors. There are two ways in which a suggestion can reach the subconscious mind – by *switching off* the conscious critical faculty – or by going *through*

the conscious critical faculty. For the sake of simplicity, we'll call this *direct* and *indirect*.

Direct suggestion is what you are exposed to during infancy – because your conscious critical faculty has not yet developed. There are other times where direct suggestion can occur – hypnosis being one of them. During adult life however, most of the suggestions you accept are indirect, in that they pass through your consciousness first.

Methods of direct suggestion

As explained, direct suggestion is suggestions that bypasses your conscious critical faculty. This could be because it hasn't developed yet, or because it's been temporarily switched off or distracted.

To appreciate the power of direct suggestion, its worth mentioning hypnosis. You may have seen stage hypnosis, or witnessed the effects of a hypnotic suggestion which has been accepted by a person's subconscious mind. The hypnotic process reduces a person's critical faculty, resulting in increased suggestibility. If a suggestion is then readily accepted by the open subconscious, it will be carried out. For example, a suggestion to forget the number 5, to hallucinate, to feel hot or cold, to not be able to move a part (or the whole) of the body. It can be very powerful. In the early days, I would stand in a room with someone who was unable to see me as a result of suggestion. I was perfectly invisible, and able to lift objects as if being a poltergeist. Such effects are obviously unnecessary in a therapeutic setting, although it is useful for clients to witness the power of hypnosis as a convincer for the nature of the mind and the work that follows.

There are four main examples of direct suggestion, all as powerful as hypnosis (they *are* hypnosis).

Childhood programming

In a very true sense, infants between birth and about the age of 5-6 are in a constant trance – accepting and responding to suggestions, learning, imitating. The subconscious is an absorptive learning sponge. Think about Santa Claus – despite being a totally bonkers story,

almost every young child (in the Western world) fully accepts the idea. It isn't until the conscious critical faculty starts to develop that children start thinking *"hang on – how can he get round every single house in one night?"*

Whatever is *said* to us, or *implied* to us, and whatever *happens* to us, gives the initial programming to the subconscious. Positive input leads to positive programming, negative to negative.

Imagine, the negative programming that we hear children receiving all the time: "You stupid thing. Can't you ever learn? Won't you ever get anything right?". "I could kill you!". "You be quiet. *Nobody wants to listen to you*". "Shame on you. That's dirty, filthy, nasty and you ought to *be ashamed* of yourself!"

It's no wonder that many, many people have feelings of inferiority, a lack of self-confidence, and are plagued with self doubt. Their lives have become habitual, reinforcing patterns of that *initial negative programming* received as a *defenceless, suggestible child.*

Negative programming gives us learned limitations, which develop into mental blocks and defeatist attitudes. "I'm no good at that". "I won't be able to do that". Learned limitations can be about absolutely anything, from cooking to sports, science to spelling, being valuable or *being lovable.* As we'll see later, learned limitations are self-reinforcing, so an initial accepted suggestion about a particular thing can be compounded into a much larger limiting belief.

A son says to his father "Dad, I want to be an astronaut". The father doesn't know yet what his child is capable of, but fears of his own inadequacy take over and he replies "You couldn't be an astronaut if you tried". The child later learns in school that astronauts have to know about maths and science, so the child immediately believes he can't learn maths or science. The teacher says "why don't you just try?" and the child is thinking "I couldn't even do it if I tried". The teacher then puts the child in the lower class, which carries the suggestion "you can't learn maths or science". The suggestion becomes self-reinforcing through compounding itself with further suggestions.

It is also quite common to feel residual, long-lasting feelings of guilt. Having accepted suggestions about *feeling ashamed* or by *absorbing blame*, even for things that weren't your fault. Parents who argue and/or eventually separate may unwittingly suggest guilt to their children. *"This wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for you".* Parents who make their children feel responsible for the effort and expense of looking after them: *"Sometimes I wish I had more time alone by myself. I wish I didn't have to look after you all the time. I'm sick of you crying. I wish I never had you".*

The learned limitations and self doubt that can be acquired through negative programming can prevent a person from fulfilling their true potential. *They know deep down that they are capable of more, that more is expected of them, but they just can't seem to believe in themselves enough.* This also leads to a feeling of guilt, of letting people down, letting parents down, not feeling good enough. The guilt becomes inhibitory on being successful, because of the vicious circle. *I don't deserve to be successful.*

Feelings of self-doubt and not feeling good enough can lead to feelings of guilt just by *being.* The belief can arise – *"I don't deserve to be happy".* Similarly, where loved ones are suffering with their own limitations, inadequacies, inferiorities, anxieties, disabilities or *simple misfortune,* the belief can arise *"they aren't happy, so how could I be happy, for if I were, I would have to feel guilty about it".*

It's common for feelings of happiness or success to be associated with feelings of guilt. If your parents weren't or aren't as successful as you, you might feel guilty about it. If you've been programmed with suggestions like *"you won't amount to much"* the idea of success threatens your internal view of what's normal. It's a common thing (again, perhaps more so in Britain with our destructively stubborn stiff upper lips and negative view of success) to hear the words "it's alright for some". *It's alright for some.* What a dampener to any positive mood! "I'm looking forward to my holiday!" *"yeah well, its alright for some".* "Oh". Even if it's meant in jest, as part of cringingly clichéd British office culture, how selfish and miserable!

Where a person expects to fail, or feel guilty, self-sabotage can slowly infiltrate any successes or happiness. An attempt to have life reflect your subconscious expectations more accurately. It's a common story – the rich businessman who blows it all away on drugs or

gambling. The family man who doesn't feel he deserves to be loved, has an affair and throws his family away. The rock star who ends up in jail. The young actress or pop star who turns to drugs and self-destruction. *"I don't deserve it"*.

As an adult, these low-level emotions can lead to *rationalisation*, justifying the guilt by *suffering punishment*. Self destruction. Putting on weight: *"I don't deserve to be attractive"*. Getting into destructive arguments. Smoking, drinking, spending disposable income on pointless rubbish. *"I don't deserve it"*.

By now, you might be beginning to appreciate just how permeating and influential childhood programming can be. You may even be resonating with some of what you have read – as these are common truths – *feelings that most of us feel, but we hide it away and put on a brave face for the world.* If you feel like you might have negative childhood programming that has led to limitations in your adult life, there are two important points to consider.

Your parents aren't to blame.

This isn't about blaming, or resolving yourself of any responsibility. Your parents did the best they could with the resources they had and what they knew at the time. Remember that your parents were only human, and had their own insecurities, inadequacies, fears, guilts, and learned limitations from their own programming. If physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect occurred, then remember that it's not the events themselves that shape who you are, but the *meanings and beliefs* that you accepted from them – and you can gain control of these through self awareness and self-hypnosis. Which leads me onto the next very important point:

> These negative beliefs, learned limitations and self-doubts –
> **they aren't the truth about you!**

They are *not* the truth about your divine and creative nature as a human being. You weren't thrown into the world to suffer, to feel guilty for things you had no choice over, to believe that you aren't deserving of your life or your positive feelings. You were born with all the confidence you'll ever have and ever need – pure positive belief which other people and events conspired to misdirect into doubts and fears. You deserve

to fulfil your true potential and to allow life to express itself through you in its own unique, creative and fulfilling way.

Trauma

The second method by which suggestions can reach the subconscious mind is traumatic experiences – disordered states resulting from emotional stress or physical injury. Whereas physical trauma can render a person highly suggestible (states in which doctors suggestions and expectations can be particularly influential either way), here I am referring more to *psychological trauma*.

These are times where emotions run so high that conscious awareness is temporarily switched off. Extreme situations of fear, confusion, or anger. When you are overcome by a seeming auto-pilot that carries out certain actions, only to calm down and later review the situation through a blurry memory of events. "I don't know what came over me". "I only remember bits and pieces, it's vague and hazy". The degree to which consciousness can be switched off, and attention narrowed right down, is staggering, almost bordering on autism in certain situations.

A study of police shootings (David Klinger, Into the Kill Zone: A Cops Eye View of Deadly Force, 2004) showed the traumatic effects of officers forced to shoot a suspect for self-defence. The strong affects of fearful emotional trauma are apparent:

> "It was almost like it was in slow motion and everything went into tight focus. When he made his move my whole body just tensed up. I don't remember having any feeling from my chest down. Everything was focussed forward to watch and react to my target. Everything tightened up. My vision was focussed on his torso and the gun. The gun was coming down in front of his chest area, and that's when I did my first shots. I didn't hear a thing, not one thing. Alan fired one round when I shot my first pair, but I didn't hear him shoot. He shot two more rounds when I fired the second time, but I didn't hear any of those rounds either… Time also returned to

19

normal by then because it had slowed down during the shooting".

When you are paralysed with fear, confusion or stress, you are similarly operating from a more primal resource of subconscious response. Also, if you are so bereaved and grief stricken that you can only sit feeling totally deprived and numb, you are also 'subconscious'.

In such states, anything you hear, said to you, implied, anything you read, or any idea that spontaneously pops into mind will be like a hypnotic suggestion going straight to your subconscious.

Traumatic events can also be events of change (being very stressful) such as moving house, moving to a new area, moving to a new country, changing job, breaking up from a long term relationship. They can also be events which threaten safety of yourself or loved ones, such as being in the throes of a destructive and violent row. Nasty insults and put-downs during such times are all the more powerful in reaching your subconscious, which is why repetitively destructive and fearful relationships can have such a negative impact on those involved.

Sheer confusion can also lead to a trauma state of subconscious acceptance. Religious cults rely on this process of toppling a person's perception of reality – suddenly everything is questioned, from morality, to parents, to authority, to their lives up until this point, until the whole context in which they live is cast in doubt and suffering. With the subconscious then grappling for normality and something to respond to, the cult-leader's subsequent suggestions of what is *really* true, and what the person *should* be doing, are all the more powerful. A similar, less aggressive (although it can also be as aggressive) form of conscious-bypassing is performed in corporate training seminars, and even company cultures. Where people go away for weeks, stripped of their usual context, family and friends, the subconscious becomes confused and far more responsive and open to suggestion.

Again, with traumatic situations, it's not the events themselves that are powerful but the *beliefs* and *meanings* that the subconscious mind accepts.

There are examples of people who have been prisoners of war, witnessing terrible events and atrocities, all very traumatic experiences. But they may come home and say "I'm glad to be back, I'm lucky to be back" and they are fully functioning, doing quite well – psychologically and emotionally intact. They understood the context they were in and were able to reject any negative suggestions about themselves – to the contrary they may have accepted positive suggestions about themselves via the camaraderie or acts of protection and kindness to fellow prisoners. Victor Frankl's classic book 'Mans Search for Meaning' offers an enlightening insight into such contexts, and staying sane. It certainly is the all important *meaning* that makes the difference.

In contrast, a relationship break-up can affect a person in one context more than a leg being blown off someone else in another – because of the meaning applied to it. "I can't live without him! I'll never find someone else!"

Whenever you are under the influence of strong emotion, you become 'off-conscious' or subconsciously open, exposing your deeper mind to random impressions which take on a hypnotic force.

Auto-suggestion

Auto-suggestion is similar to self hypnosis, but different with regards to its intention. Self hypnosis is a process of purposefully programming your own subconscious with positive ideas, an area we'll usefully explore in depth in a later section. In the present context, auto-suggestion describes the process of suggestions being unwittingly delivered by yourself to your subconscious mind.

An example is the self talk that we are all well practised in. The person nervous about a public speaking event, telling himself over and over "I'm going to screw up, they're going to destroy me, I'm going to go to pieces!"

Auto-suggestion is how we habitually think. When you think, you talk to yourself mentally – you cannot think without doing so.

When you are just thinking words to yourself (which are suggestions) they have a certain 'weight' of influence depending on what they

are. When you actually *say* words to yourself, you increase that power. This is because you are now thinking the words, hearing the words, and speaking the words.

Auto-suggestion is also relatively powerful because *you tend to believe yourself*, especially more so than other people. Think about times where you *talk yourself into the dumps*. It can start with just a silly, off-hand thought: "no one's called me today". It then leads to associations: "come to think of it, the phone hasn't rang for a few days. Actually… when I think about it I hardly get personal phone calls at all these days… and I feel lonely… and so-and-so didn't respond to my email… and a couple of weeks ago Catherine and Claire were talking about something when I came back from the loo and it might have been about me… and…" and so on. It could then lead to "I'm no good! I'm rubbish! No one likes me!" and then such ideas start to reinforce a negative self-image.

Which naturally leads to the idea of positive thinking as a way of counteracting any negative suggestion. You are probably expecting me to say at this point that you should wake each day saying to yourself *"everyday, I'm getting better and better!"* but I won't. Instead I'm going to share an insight into positive thinking that you probably won't find in any other book.

When you think or talk to yourself in a conscious positive way, *because a book has told you to,* it isn't really coming from the heart. You are probably wanting to talk to yourself in a positive way because you believe deep down something negative. When you then talk consciously in a positive way, although you are saying positive things, you might be imagining negative ones. If you remember from the section on the rules of the mind, *whenever the will is against the imagination, the imagination always wins.*

So if you say to yourself "I'm, brilliant, people love me" then you are in danger of actually imagining to yourself the opposite. The subconscious negative belief that you are attempting to counteract leaps up and imagines *"no you're not. No they don't".* Also, like I mentioned with smokers and the patch, the very practice of conscious positive self talk *implies that you need to do such a thing to yourself, therefore the opposite of whatever you are saying must be true.*

The difference is where you appreciate things you have done in the present. "That was good, I am good at this". "That was a kind thing to do, I am a kind person". Reinforcing the positive things, rather than trying to falsely, verbally inject them against your imagination.

Positive self talk is more powerful when it is accompanied by genuine positive emotion and by vivid, positive imagery. Remember that the subconscious mind is primarily a visual, feeling mind. It responds to emotions and images.

The person who habitually thinks positively and optimistically is constantly programming his subconscious mind in a positive way. All too often, people always expect somebody else to do the work that they can do with their own minds. They want a doctor to *make* them well, pills to *make it go away*, a teacher to *make* them clever, home wares to *make* them happy, a nice car to *make* them feel big, church to *make* them feel forgiven. It doesn't work that way – people have to help themselves, and unless a persons own thinking becomes habitually changed, there is not going to be any lasting change – just a life-long wild goose chase.

Sometimes with clinical hypnotherapy, clients begin to undo their new patterns with defeatist attitudes. Subconscious weight loss patterns have been working effortlessly for weeks, and the weight dropping off (often clients lose 5lbs in just two weeks, without even having to *think* about it). Then, friends come round for dinner, and they end up over-eating and indulging. *"Oh no! Its all gone wrong! I'm back to square one! I've failed!"* Of course they haven't, the problem is in the *thinking*, and allowing it to become so defeatist. This is why I spend time explaining to clients that they are still in control, and to remember that they are!

Similarly, smokers may be towards the end of a fantasticly productive session, and then say "well, lets see if it works!" or "we'll have to see what happens when I get home!". This is immediately switching off conscious thought control, and basically saying *"I'm not in control of anything, I just watch my life from a distance, whatever happens, happens".* Which again, is why I train people regardless of their situation or goal, to become more self-aware and directing of their thoughts and beliefs (on this note, I'll add that the 'whatever happens, happens' attitude is frequently tied to what I was saying just now

about people wanting everyone and everything else to *tell* them what to do and how to be, and to *make* them feel a certain way. In our Western culture we seem to forget just how powerful our minds our, and prefer to accept the suggestions surrounding us that say we aren't worth much, and don't matter much. Part of hypnotherapy, and self-hypnosis, is about learning that you are, indeed, totally in control, and always have been, its just about building the confidence to take that responsibility and run with it).

Hypnosis

Hypnosis, the fourth direct method of suggestion, is the only one that is directly setting out to achieve its results. It's therefore different in that it allows you to choose the place, the time, the person, the suggestions, the goal of change. Suddenly, it may seem ironic how fearful or apprehensive people can be about the idea of hypnosis – when they have already experienced subconscious suggestion but in far more accidental, harmful, destructive and pointless ways!

There are many different ways to experience hypnosis. Commonly, clinical hypnotherapy utilises relaxation as a way of quieting the conscious mind, and feeling comfortable. The subconscious mind then becomes more open to small suggestions for further relaxation, which creates a sort of positive feedback loop leading to a hypnotic trance. It is here that positive suggestions can be received by the subconscious mind. Relaxation is not the same as sleep, it is more a narrowing of attention and awareness whereby the resistance of the *conscious critical faculty* is (in a sense) 'put to sleep'. It is a profound sense of physical, mental and emotional relaxation. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, hypnosis is also a state of concentration. True concentration is mental, not physical, so I don't mean the person is frowning, exerting effort into the idea of concentrating on something. It is a form of effortless concentration, narrowing the conscious awareness down to single ideas or images that take hold on the subconscious mind. If you remember towards the start I mentioned the idea of the 'attention octopus' shifting its arms of attention from one thing to another, hypnosis is a way of getting all of those channels focussed onto one thing – *effortless concentration*.

Sometimes, I also use more direct hypnosis, whereby strong direct suggestions are responded to subconsciously and rapidly. These faster routes to the hypnotic trance are often preferred by clients, as they seem more distinguishable from progressive-relaxation based hypnosis – although they can still be highly relaxing.

Recently I have been pioneering a form of emotional hypnosis. This is a highly intuitive process whereby certain emotions are explored. Because the subconscious mind is the feeling mind, it becomes more receptive during this exploration to re-education of fixed ideas. It can feel emotional for the client, but in a cleansing and liberating way, whilst allowing the acceptance of new, positive beliefs and feelings. I will add that this is a highly skilled and sensitive endeavour (I don't mind admitting that) and one which is rare in the field of ordinary hypnotherapy.

People sometimes wonder "what if I can't be hypnotised" but hopefully by now you realise that the notion of not being hypnotisable is ridiculous. As long as you have a mind, an imagination (i.e. a subconscious mind) and a goal to experience it, then you can. Of course, sometimes people respond more to their own fears, imaginations and *auto-suggestions* along the lines of "this wont work on me!" or "I won't let myself by hypnotised!". Of course, the same suggestive process is at work, except the person is getting a different result (certainly a more boring, pointless one!) This is why as part of my work, I put my clients through a form of hypnotic training, building responsiveness so they can take part actively in the learning experience.

Methods of Indirect Suggestion

I'm using the term indirect suggestion to mean suggestion which goes *through the conscious critical faculty* rather than around it. In other books you may come across the term indirect suggestion to mean something else – covert forms of subtle influence, such as metaphor, subtle implication, and subliminal suggestion (the power of which is mostly exaggerated anyway, giving rise to the belief in 'Jedi' mind tricks and people who have complete power over others. In Britain the belief in such things has arisen via popular TV

illusionist Derren Brown, who is a *magician* and achieves his illusions often on the back of a *dirty trick*, whilst making it *look like* something psychological is taking place).

Repetition

Where an idea is repeated over and over, consciousness begins to close its attention off – the idea has become familiar and no longer warrants attention. However it's at this point that the idea starts reaching through and impressing itself on the subconscious.

Advertising is the obvious example. Slogans, logos, jingles, colour schemes etc are rampantly and repetitively exposed through visuals, sounds and sometimes emotions. In front of you on the TV, at the cinema, in the corner of your eye on the billboards, in the supermarkets, being used excitedly or confidently by people we look up to in films or on TV, on the radio in your car or whilst you're working – advertisers are experts of indirect suggestion.

A song that comes on the radio and you start singing along to – but have no idea how or when you learned it – it's the accumulation of repetitive subconscious exposure.

So what about the more important side of life. The partner who constantly says "you're fat". The father who often remarks "you're stupid". The boss who implies "you're not worthy of promotion". The so-called friend who says "you won't give up smoking". Such scenarios all push their ideas gradually into the mind until they're accepted.

American prisoners of war in the Korean war were exposed to suggestion-based psychological tactics of attitude change. They were asked to consider the slightest things they disagreed with about their government. Gradually, the repetition of the auto-suggestion strengthened the belief, and compounded further, stronger disagreements and opinions as the prisoners heard each others remarks. In a context of confusion, emotional trauma, fear and sleep deprivation, such manipulation is incredibly powerful.

Everyday auto-suggestion, as explained previously, is also compounded by repetition. "I hate going into work". "I can't stand Brian".

Such ideas take hold – even if circumstances would have ordinarily changed (work becomes more interesting and rewarding, Brian cuts out the clichéd humour and garish Simpsons ties) it's likely that the mind will cling to its fixed ideas – *work is to be hated, as is Brian*.

Emotional strength

As the subconscious is the feeling mind, emotions gain automatic entry. Fears, desires, hopes, jealousies, and whatever they associate themselves to have suggestive influence.

Again, advertisers take advantage of this. The scantily clad girl suggesting that this brand of deodorant will have you beating the women off. The glistening smooth car dodging meteorites and suggesting power, strength or status.

You may remember times when you've really wanted something – and felt an emotional urge – and then surprised yourself with an accomplishment. For example, a person who tries and tries to quit smoking – then sees a relative dying in hospital from lung cancer and auto-suggests *"that's it – I am never smoking another puff"*. The emotional energy was so high that the suggestion reached right down to the subconscious.

The courting period of a relationship can be powerfully suggestive – whilst emotions are running high at having found someone to relieve the loneliness and allow you to feel loved, auto-suggestions reach deep inside – *"He's the one! I'm going to be with him forever! He loves me! I love him!"*. These beliefs may then become powerful enough to hide incompatibilities, signals or issues that things might not actually be so great. He may actually be selfish, using women to boost his ego and projecting all his insecurities on his partner. Her friends say "why do you stay with him if he's mean to you and says such awful things?" *"Because I love him, and he really loves me underneath it all"*. Of course, negative emotions soon start running high, and the woman has a chance to auto-suggest something equally powerful such as *"I have to get out of here"*.

On the subject of goal setting, popular psychology books frequently teach that one should make vivid visual images of everything that is wanted in the goal, and even to write it

down. "*I want a big house, with a pretty garden, a nice garage, a gate, an ornate bird bath just outside the kitchen window*" etc. Best sellers like 'The Secret' go on and on about 'the law of attraction', teaching that whatever you think about, you attract for yourself. There is truth in this, but as explained in the *Rules of the Mind* section, this is more of a *tendency* than a law. But here's the mistake that the vast, vast majority of such books make. Whilst you are sitting there thinking about what you really, really want for yourself, and perhaps even writing it all down in the most vivid detail, it's possible that your subconscious mind is *imagining that you won't get it.* Somewhere deep down you think to yourself *"might as well give it a try…"* or *"I wonder if this will work…"* whilst imagining it won't. This is why emotion has such power – you can't really feel strong emotion towards something whilst imagining the opposite. Emotions come from the subconscious mind. So when goal setting, or taking advantage of the *tendency* of attraction, remember to get your emotions running high because emotional strength increases the strength and likelihood of a suggestion being accepted by the subconscious mind. A useful way of doing this is by remembering a particular event that created the wanted emotion, allowing it to emerge, and then using the emotion to piggy-back auto-suggestion on.

Emotional strength also figures heavily in childhood programming of course – with fear and excitement being quite common for the average infant. The father who shouts *"WHY ARE YOU SO STUPID!"* is driving a suggestion home pretty powerfully by using fear (perhaps even mild trauma), his authority status, and the child's suggestible learning mind.

Multiple Sources

Where a suggestion is received from a number of sources whether they are people, organisations, modalities, senses or a mixture of all then the suggestion has more likelihood of being accepted. This is common sense, if you read something in a newspaper, see it on the news, are told by a friend and then a relative you are more than likely going to accept it. If you heard the same thing from a 12 year old you didn't know, then it's less likely.

The principle also uses *repetition* and lies behind verbal auto-suggestion (thinking it, hearing it, speaking it).

Authority Figures

You may recall the experiments of Stanley Milgram, where people administered what they believed to be lethal electric shocks to innocent participants in an experiment, simply because the 'man in a white coat' told them to. The percentage of people who obediently followed his orders leading to potential murder was a staggering 60%. This study has been replicated in many different countries and eras.

Experiments have shown how a person wearing an anonymous uniform can successfully instruct bystanders to pick someone else's litter of the street.

There is also Nazi Germany, where *ordinary family men* were influenced by Hitler to commit gross atrocities as part of their *everyday work*.

The countless vulnerable and elderly folk who are scammed out of money by fake charities appearing on their doorsteps *wearing black suits.*

Suggestions given by a person of authority have more chance of being subconsciously accepted. The sense of *command*, and *confidence* always strengthens a suggestion anyway, but authority figures have added power. Authority figures encompass environmental suggestion in that there are clusters of smaller suggestions that accumulate and compound each other. The presence of a uniform suggesting power, the suggestion of prestige, the suggestion of expertise, the suggestion of threat, the suggestion of conformity. Government, especially military, cults, education, religions, companies, fields of knowledge all utilise the influence of authority to varying levels of strength and expertise.

Evolutionally, it makes sense that certain leaders of the pack were more influential, leading people out of danger or to more resources where the genes could be successfully carried on. This is perhaps why the mechanism of confidence *is* so influential. If one person is offering a suggestion to another, often the sheer mathematics of who is more confident will be enough to predict whether the suggestion is

accepted. As Austin Stoker said in an old John Carpenter movie, "you can't argue with a confident man".

Historically, the power of authority influenced hypnotism, leading to what is even called an *authoritarian style*. Stage hypnotists also utilise this principle, offering themselves as confident, expert, authoritarian, powerful.

Childhood programming again illustrates the power of authoritarian influence. Parents and teachers form a child's authority figures, and so have enormous power to install suggestions that become accepted by the subconscious mind. The degree to which such authority figures are powerful is such that even in later adult life, the idea of going to see the *boss at work*, or going to an *interview* instantly anchors the mind back to that fearful, suggestible state. The boss, the interview panel, the policeman asking questions about a local crime, are no longer just human beings, they are subconscious reflections of all the authority figures you had as a child. "I can't wait until my one-to-one with the boss, I'm going tell him exactly what I think about this useless department!" Boss – "so, how are things going Tim?" "Er, yes, good thanks, really well".

Whilst at University, I remember a senior psychology lecturer candidly telling of an incident whereby he was asked to go and see the chancellor about a bureaucratic departmental issue. On his way across the campus, he regressed to a childlike state of anxiety, sweating, nervous energy pouring out, imagining he was being sent to the headmaster.

It's important to remember that as an adult there are no authority figures. You are *your own* authority.

Part 3:

The Psychological Immune System: How accepted suggestions reinforce themselves

The subconscious begins to learn, and continues to learn, by accepting suggestions, beliefs and associations from the outside.

Gradually, an 'idea about the world' develops, based on all these expectations and beliefs about the world, yourself, and other people. Collectively they form a blueprint of your world and your role within it, what you expect of yourself, how things work, what is possible and what isn't.

A person who is bullied may form the belief "people are dangerous". "People are threatening". He also accepts the implied suggestion "I am weak. I am not good enough". He forms the association being alone = being vulnerable. Being away from home = being unsafe. This then forms part of his subconscious blueprint, with expectations about other people, himself and his limitations. It is not THE world, it is HIS world.

The Psychological Immune System (PIS)

The psychological immune system is the collective term for a number of tendencies and mechanisms of the mind that work to make you feel *more comfortable*.

To have expectations fulfilled. To minimise surprises and challenges. To make things appear *consistent* and *normal*. To give the illusion that the world is the way you perceive it to be. To allow you to feel *right*.

The psychological immune system provides you with all the *irrationality* you need to ignore things that you'd rather not admit, attend to things that make you feel good, bend the truth to suit your needs, filter the world to suit your expectations *good or bad*.

The PIS is responsible for these common attribution errors: if you succeed – it's because of the great things you've done. If you fail – it's because of everyone else! If you make a mistake

– anyone could have done it! If someone else makes a mistake – how stupid!

The PIS is responsible for creating the illusion that *everything is OK* and that *you are OK*. The way you look at the world is *right*. It balances your neurochemistry to adapt to your environment and life, which is why money doesn't always bring happiness, and some incredibly challenging lifestyles can bring plenty of happiness. For example, most people would say that to be a Siamese twin would be totally depressing. Yet, most Siamese twins report feeling fine with their circumstances, and actually *being happy*. A person worries and worries about something going wrong – yet when it does – it turns out its not as bad as he thought and he's *able to cope*. The PIS allows people to cope and adapt to extreme situations, in ways they never would have thought possible. It's necessary for genetic survival, because times are likely to be hard. You can no doubt think of countless examples of your own.

It has to be said that the PIS does create an illusion. The illusion that life is the way you perceive it to be. Sometimes, problems can develop with the PIS and one of the causes is *rational thinking*. People often say that one should always think as rationally as possible and that irrationality is awful and to be avoided, but the opposite is really true. Where people become too rational and the PIS starts to become ineffective, it can be *very depressing*. Tests show that clinically depressed people have a higher-than-average view of reality. We rely on irrational thinking and distorted perception to forget about the awful things and to focus on the things we enjoy and make us feel good about ourselves. We spend time with and feel attracted to like-minded people, to *make ourselves feel good*.

The PIS is incredibly powerful, useful and vital to healthy psychological functioning. However, it is also the loophole through which destructive and negative fixed-ideas can hide and be reinforced.

The human mind is a very bad scientist!

The Unconscious Blueprint

No one is able to see the world in a truthful, complete version of reality. It is simply not possible – there are vast amounts of information at any one time, and to absorb it all would lead to complete confusion and exhaustion.

This is why we have conscious attention – we're able to selectively pay attention to the important bits. Generally speaking, we consciously attend to *novel* things, things which are new, different, attractive or strange.

When you experience something enough, it becomes subconscious. There is nothing new to attend to, so it's handled pretty much subconsciously without you even needing to pay attention. This is an important mechanism of the mind because it allows for greater *efficiency* by becoming more *automatic*.

When you are learning a foreign language, you have to think incredibly consciously to string a sentence together, word by word. Contrast this with having a conversation in your native language – it's purely subconscious and you only have to really pay attention in certain situations (or finding the right word that you might not use much). Similarly, when learning to drive you're very conscious, looking in the mirrors, remembering little mnemonics (simplified learning strategies like ABC – accelerate, break, clutch), trying to pay attention to as much as you can. It's no wonder you make lots of little mistakes, the conscious mind is no where near as efficient or 'slick' as the subconscious mind. When you pass your test, driving becomes a completely different process – it becomes subconscious. You drive without really thinking about it, and your conscious attention is freed up to attend to other things. This is called *subconscious competence*, and is the ideal for any complex set of coordinated activities or reactions.

So subconscious competence allows for incredibly rapid, automatic and efficient processes. They are so taken for granted that we barely stop to even register their existence in many cases. If you think about the process of recognising a face – it's instantaneous, yet the neurological computations behind it are *extremely vast*. It would take volumes just to explain how complicated this really is, without even going into how such a system could work.

So the more you do something, the more subconscious it becomes. You learn to expect

what happens to happen, it becomes an automatic process. The more you become aware of a place, the more subconscious it becomes. You expect things to be where they are, and it becomes 'normal'. The more time you spend with a person, the more you build a subconscious expectation for who they are – you don't pay as much attention because *you expect them subconsciously to be who they are.*

The more time you spend in a job, the more automatic it becomes. *Your life seems to start going by fast because you no longer have to pay so much conscious attention.*

The more time you spend in your own life, the more your own expectations for it develop, *and so it becomes more subconscious.* This is why people can slip into a 'life trance' where it feels like everything is just stuck in a rut.

As another example for how things start to get taken for granted, think about when you once moved into a new house. At first, everything was new, and it all felt 'strange'. You probably slept reasonably well, because the brain had a lot of new learnings to process. Time probably also seemed to slow down in the first week – you may have even said "wow, its crazy to think it's only been a week since we moved in". However, after a couple of weeks, you've absorbed everything, and it becomes subconscious. You then don't really have to pay attention to things in the same way. You can experience this shift from having a *subconscious expectation for things to be the way they are,* and feeling new and novel again by moving furniture around. Even putting up a new shelf, or moving the chairs can shift you out of the subconscious trance of expectation. The effect can be so powerful, that it can affect other subconsciously 'rigid' expectations or perceptions of things. You might suddenly see other areas of your life from a new perspective, and have new ideas.

These moments where you feel yourself waking up from *a subconscious expectation for things to be as they are* can be amazingly refreshing and valuable. They can show you just how *numerous* those expectations, those things that are taken for granted, are.

If you think about it, considering just how powerful the effect is of shaking your subconscious blueprint for your *living quarters,* imagine just detailed and rigid the blueprint is

for your own *life.* It's far more vast and influential than you could possibly imagine, because it's *subconscious.* The only times you really get a glimpse of how powerful it is, is when it *changes.* You can then perceive the *difference.*

I remember experiences of meeting new people, getting to know them and gradually absorbing their worldview. I remember occasions vividly where when I got home, everything felt different – it even looked different. I had new ideas and valued things in a different way. For me, it was a great illustration of those *subconscious shifts* where your blueprint changes based on new learnings. I hope that you, too, can remember such a time where getting to know someone, and them getting to know you, has freed up some things that you took for granted so that your perspective changes.

It can also happen when you go away somewhere new, particularly to a different culture. Whilst there, when you look back at your own life, you can look at it in a totally different way. Certain things suddenly seem possible, you realise where you have been stuck, you look at it from different angles to how you normally would.

Another way to look at it is in terms of *filters.*

Filters

Filters describe the screen that exists between your awareness, and the world. Filters form a large part of the psychological immune system. You only allow certain information in. The mind generalises, distorts and ignores information at huge levels. How you do this is down to your individual filters, which are based on your individual beliefs and *blueprint* about the world.

Filters develop based on expectations about the world, to the extent that *expectations are fulfilled.* Hopefully, you recall the section about 'expectations have a powerful tendency to be realised' and filters are the reason why.

A person becomes addicted to nicotine, and develops the subconscious fear "I can't cope without cigarettes". This fear then protects itself with a protective belief, being along the lines of "cigarettes are OK". Filters (no pun intended)

then develop that screen out counter-information, and pay attention to everything that reinforces the belief: "Oh, that won't happen to me". "My granddad lived to 98, and he smoked every day". "I won't quit just because the government wants me too!" "Smoking is cool!" etc. It can be staggering just how far reaching filters can be – ignoring *overwhelming evidence* and paying attention to the most irrational, irrelevant little details that can be distorted to reinforce the belief.

Generalisations

The way we stereotype people is an example of a generalisation. There is an underlying expectation based on perhaps one-off experiences and accepted suggestions, so we tend to generalise to make things fit the expectation. "This hooded and dishevelled young man approaching is going to try and con me or ask for money – he might even threaten me" (adrenalin increases as the body responds to the imagination). "Do you know the way to the church?" expectations have been defied – but not enough to change the stereotype.

Distortions

Expectations for the world can be so strong that there is a tendency to *bend* reality to fit with it. There is plenty of ambiguity behind what we see – things could be one way or another, and situations abound where we are surprised to learn the truth (and at that point realise that we were imagining or expected something else). We distort possibilities to fit our expectations. We even distort *reality* to fit our expectations. *"He's going to the church so he can ask for money"*. The stereotype is no longer threatened – and instead reinforced by *something imagined.*

A woman was speaking to me of her son who had poor self esteem issues. He broke her heart by saying to her "you only say I'm good at things because you're trying to make me feel better". He was distorting the *meaning* of an event to suit his expectations, being "I'm not good at anything, I'm not good enough".

"You only say you love me to keep me happy". "He's only being nice because he wants something". "I don't know why you're bothering, you'll only fail".

"Sure he died of a heart attack because of smoking, but *who wants to live forever?"*

"I sit around bored all day because *there is nothing else to do"*.

Ignoring information

Another way we filter information is to simply not attend to it, again to reinforce existing fixed-ideas.

"I always get stuck behind awkward people in queues at supermarkets". It's likely that the same person is going to have many experiences where he just passes straight through the tills without any problems whatsoever, but they are mundane, don't fit with the expectation and will be instantly forgotten. He could have 5 experiences in a row of easy shopping, then gets caught behind someone who is charged twice for their fig rolls when it should be 'buy-one-get-one-free' and he thinks to himself "why oh why does this always happen to me?"

A woman who has poor self esteem and doesn't believe she's lovable. She's attracted harmful, self-esteem bashing boyfriends who have spoken down to her, disrespected her, and finally left for other women. She's attracted them subconsciously knowing that *they will reinforce the expectation* she has of herself. "This is all I deserve". The idea of finding someone who genuinely loves her is at once attractive and terrifying because it's simply *not believable.* Yet – a decent man is attracted to her, and they cautiously develop a relationship that gradually allows her self esteem to be boosted. "Maybe I'm not so bad after all". But there are underlying expectations that the boyfriend will eventually realise the 'terrifying truth' that she is unlovable, and leave her. All of his affections are ignored, counter-acted, shrugged off, "oh you're just saying that". His gifts are forgotten about "oh he probably got the idea from a friend or a magazine". Yet the one time he gets angry because she is so late getting ready to go out ("Nothing looks right! I'm so fat and horrible!") she immediately thinks "see, he hates me, I'm not good enough, he's going to get attracted to someone else". *Without realising it, the woman then starts to 'act as if' and stops being as affectionate herself. She doesn't realise that she is*

subconsciously pushing him away, or trying to start arguments to fulfil her expectation.

You may think to yourself "why would someone purposely cause harm to themselves, or lose a good thing?" but it makes perfect sense when you remember that the subconscious doesn't think in terms of *good* or *bad*, just expectations, beliefs and consistency.

"The things I have feared have come upon me".

This is how expectations and beliefs become *self fulfilling prophecies.* The subconscious works hard to minimise the anxiety which is caused when a fixed-idea is challenged or found to be wrong. It bends the truth, ignores, generalises, filters out reality to suit what it believes to be true.

Filters are reflected in the language that people use. In a sense, language itself is a similar process to perception, chunking down vast quantities of information into far simpler terms. We have to also generalise, distort and ignore things in language to *get the point across* with the minimum amount of information. Often though, vital information is missed out, or information that would otherwise weaken the argument. Newspaper articles are great at doing this, as are politicians.

Unfortunately, so are our minds when it comes to perception. We see what we *want* to see. We believe what we *want* to believe.

When you listen to the words that a person uses, particularly your own, you might be able to spot where the filters are. "I *always* get stuck behind people at supermarkets". *Always?* "You *only* say that because you are trying to be nice". Why *else* might he be saying it?

Rationalisation

Our subconscious beliefs and compulsions inevitably lead to behaviours (every thought or idea causes a physical reaction). Ordinarily, you might think "But surely we're able to see what we're doing, so we can iron out any behaviour that we don't want by being aware of them".

But that's assuming that your conscious awareness is somehow completely separate from your subconscious, which it isn't. Your conscious thoughts, awarenesses and attention is fuelled and directed by your subconscious mind.

Rationalisation describes the process by which we are very, very good at explaining ourselves. The mind is able to utilise incredible subconscious creativity to justify a behaviour or belief *with utter conviction*.

When a person is deeply hypnotised, they can be given subconscious suggestions to act a certain way. For example, the suggestion can be accepted that "when you hear the word *Monday* you'll feel the overwhelming urge to take your shoes off". When the person is then brought out of trance, they are to all intents and purposes perfectly awake, yet the subconscious suggestion is still held. The hypnotist says "What day is it today? Ah, yes, Monday". The person then looks slightly uncomfortable, shuffles around awkwardly, and finally takes their shoes off. The hypnotist then asks "Why have you just taken your shoes off?" Remember that the person has no conscious awareness of the accepted suggestion, so they cannot answer "because you gave me the suggestion to". Instead, they justify the behaviour in some other way, such as "well my shoes have felt quite tight all day, and I just got to the point where I couldn't tolerate it any longer so I took them off, I hope you don't mind". The interesting thing here is that *they absolutely believe what they are saying*.

A person is hypnotised to open an umbrella indoors: "Oh well I thought I saw something small fall off the ceiling, so I thought I might as well put up an umbrella". Or "Well I only recently bought this umbrella and I'm not sure if it works properly or not so I just thought I'd test it out".

This mechanism, of the conscious mind reasoning and justifying with thoughts that are creatively put together by the protective subconscious is not unique to intentional hypnosis. Whenever we have a subconscious compulsion to do *anything* the mind rationalises its actions. It's rare that a person will say "I have no idea why I'm doing this", there will always be a reason or explanation, however absurd.

A person who is subconsciously denying their irrational fear of using an elevator says "Oh I like using the stairs, its good for exercise and I like the view". One day they naturally overcome

their fear, and explain "oh I get enough exercise during the day anyway and the views nothing special". *They absolutely believe their own words.*

A person is afraid of getting a job, having been sacked before and believing he's not likeable. "Well I think I could make more money with this work-at-home marketing job, plus I have the comforts of being at home". You could ask all sorts of questions to try and challenge him, and corner him into realising the truth that he is afraid of going to work for a company – and he'll be very good at creatively wiggling out of it. If it ever gets too difficult – and belief starts to be challenged – the resultant anxiety will lead to abrupt defensiveness and the problem might be dealt with in another way – avoidance:
But doesn't it get boring being at home all day? "No, I get to watch TV and eat when I want!"
Don't you miss being with people? "No, people are rubbish, why would I need that?" (a clue as to the real reason, charged with emotional energy, fear)
Do you really think this is going to make you more money? "Hell yes, look at these figures, all I have to do is X, Y and Z and in three years I could have a six-figure salary!" (excitement, happily distracting from the fear)
If that's true, why isn't everyone doing it? "Because people are stupid!" (another clue as to the real fear)
Aren't you worried that your self confidence might erode, being alone most of the time? "Are you kidding? I hated working for the company, *they* screwed my self confidence up – now I'm getting it back!"
I just think you'd be happier by being around good people and not being so scared of the idea "What do you know? Who do you think you are telling me what I need? How much do you earn? You're just jealous! To hell with you!"

Going back to the example of hypnosis, another interesting thing happens when a person is unable to follow through a compulsion. Imagine if the subconscious suggestion had been accepted to open and walk through a door. When the person attempts to do so, the door is actually locked. What happens? The person becomes *incredibly anxious* and *uncomfortable*. They have to carry out the subconscious compulsion to feel *normal* and comfortable again.

The same thing happens in everyday life. Take away a smoker's cigarettes and watch how irrationally angry and uncomfortable they become (even if they have just rationalised that it's only a habit and they could quit whenever they liked). The person who subconsciously expects to be the centre of attention – watch how uncomfortable and miserable they become when at someone else's birthday or wedding.

In your everyday life, look at the times when you become anxious or uncomfortable. Are you being prevented from fulfilling a subconscious compulsion? Often, subconscious compulsions can come into conflict with conscious ideals. For example, you feel compelled to eat lots of junk in the evenings to feel comfortable, but consciously you also don't want to put on weight and become unattractive. So you fight to stay away from the fridge – but become anxious and uncomfortable instead. Through changing your subconscious expectations and beliefs with self-hypnosis, you can comfortably resolve this conflict of interests.

Self-Talk

Because your beliefs and expectations shape the way you see the world, you then reinforce them through *allowing in further suggestions.* They can become like vicious cycles.

Self talk is a habit that keeps those vicious cycles going. We all self-suggest things based on what we expect or believe, and those suggestions are then easily accepted to reinforce the expectation.

A man is about to do a presentation, and is terrified. He subconsciously accepted the suggestion when he was younger, *"be quiet! No one wants to listen to you!".* Once, he went to answer a question and was hesitant because of his negative self-belief – someone else then picked up on this and reinforced it by saying *"Oh no, now what? What stupid remark are you going to come out with now?"* So now, he is sat, about to go out onto the stage. He is saying to himself *"oh my god this is going to be horrible, this is going to be so embarrassing, I'm going to forget what I'm going to say and they're all going to laugh at me, I should never have done this, I should run away right now, I'll make myself sick, I can't do this".* Needless to say his body is responding pretty successfully to his suggestions, he is sweating, his capillaries are constricting leading to pale skin, his adrenalin fight-or-flight response is making him want to go to the toilet, he is shivering, his digestive

31

system is even contorting to give a stomach ache. *"I can't stomach it."*

A woman is walking from the tube stop to her place of work thinking to herself *"here we go again, another boring day in the office, will probably get given even more projects to manage, Sue will probably be off still, its probably going to rain, another boring day at work…"*

We auto-suggest to ourselves all the time, reinforcing our blueprints of the world. Becoming more aware of the self-talk that you do and changing it is a waking method of self-hypnosis that can give you greater control over your responses. Remember that it's no good talking to yourself positively whilst still *imagining* something negative, because that is what your mind and body responds to. It's the *imaginative* self talk that's the problem. The best way to begin imagining something more positive is to either *pretend* it's already true (pretending is very imaginative), or challenge your existing negative beliefs and expectations.

"Is every day at work boring? – No. Actually some days are good. Perhaps today could be one of them." *It's then easier to imagine* than simply saying "I will have a good day at the office… I will have a good day at the office…".

Because self talk is subconscious, it can be difficult to be aware of. You have to shine that conscious torch of awareness in the right place. Sometimes just speaking aloud and seeing what sounds right can find it quite fast. You know when you start saying what feels congruent because often there is an emotion that follows. Remember, the subconscious is the *feeling* mind, as well as being very visual.

Mental Movies

Mental movies are the visual equivalent of self talk. We're imagining all the time. If you think about it, one of the special things about human beings that sets us apart from all other animals is the ability to imagine the future. Rather than just flowing with the instinctive here-and-now, we spend a lot of our imaginative awareness in the past or in the future. The memory and experience of the past *influences* the anticipation of the future.

We are all expert mental-movie directors – but we aren't so good at writing the script. The person who is nervous about doing the presentation is not only giving herself negative self talk *"it's all going to go wrong"* but she is also visualising a negative outcome. Perhaps herself, small on the stage, lots of big intimidating figures watching her. Asking horribly questions, laughing. At a deep enough level perhaps she is imagining her critical father standing at the back shaking his head and looking ready to ridicule. Perhaps old competitive school friends are sat there looking smug and mocking. The subconscious memory starts to respond, with adrenalin, nerves, defensiveness.

A person is starting a business – what is she going to visualise? Perhaps lots of customers calling, smiling on her way to the bank, lots of letters of praise? Or "what could go wrong?" Maybe visualising her adverts, and no one paying attention. Maybe someone looking and laughing and saying "as if anyone would want that! Ha!" Maybe her old competitive bully school friends saying "Ah, I see Jane's doing interior design, ha, fat chance of her being successful". Perhaps she is visualising her sick mother, and suddenly feeling guilty about the idea of being happy.

Our bodies respond to imagination as if it was real. Mental movies are very influential on the mind and body. If you wanted to consciously speed up your heart rate, you'd find it very difficult. But, if you just started to imagine a scene of rich detail… perhaps being alone in a house… and the lights suddenly blinking off… being in darkness… and hearing a strange noise… and then a cold wind… and then hearing a strange ghostly sound… and then imagining what it could look like… maybe a cloaked figure… and if the cloak was pulled back… and then suddenly - and eventually your heart rate might increase as a response.

In therapy, a client is afraid of flying. She actually says "I can only see the plane, not the holiday". Remember, language is a direct reflection of what is going on subconsciously. She is *literally* seeing the plane, in her mind. At another level, she is seeing the plane with her on it, as if looking at herself, and then the plane shaking, and then falling from the sky. The disassociated viewpoint gives the body a response of *being out of control*.

Some people are frightened of driving out of their comfort zone, to other unfamiliar cities. Often, they are visualising from above their car, looking down on it, being small, and being out of control. They'll visualise the motorway signs whizzing by, and missing the right one, and then being in a panic about how to get off the motorway and get back on track. The other cars are whizzing by. There is some self-talk going on, *"oh no, I'm going to get lost, I can't do this"*.

When they are thinking about driving somewhere comfortably, for example to the supermarket, they are visualising through their own eyes again, at the inside of the car, *being in control*. Everything is moving slower. It is brighter and more colourful, not dark and smudgy. The subconscious imagery provides the stimuli to which the body responds, whether it's with relaxation, or fearful nerves.

If you are wondering what mental movies you might play with regards to certain situations, just close your eyes and think about the situation. Then try to lock onto what you are actually imagining. Then just start paying attention to the detail. You might miss the mental movie simply because it *feels so normal.* This is a bit like the unconscious blueprint we explored earlier. By changing something and feeling the difference, you can explore it much more effectively.

Mental movies form part of the overall vicious circle. If you have a particular experience that offers an implied suggestion ("because you got lost in Manchester, you will always get lost in cities and you'll be unsafe") your subconscious mind is trying to protect you. Next time something reminds you of the experience, your subconscious will play that mental movie, so that your body can remember responding with panic and fear. So you'll get the same response, in anticipation. So, perhaps you decide not to take a trip, or you do but you are in a state of fear. The experience is based purely on your imagination, but it reinforces the original belief *("You see? Driving IS scary!").* You don't give yourself the chance to reason that *actually it's not as bad as it seems.* You don't get the opportunity to respond to the same stimuli but with a natural relaxation, allowing the old fixed-idea to be corrected.

The subconscious doesn't see the world as IT is, it sees the world as YOU are. It sees it how YOU are based on *your* experiences of the world. Your experience of anything then becomes a reflection of your *previous* experiences of that thing. *Whether its relationships, family, work, living.*

The Double-Edged Sword of Experience

So as you get older and experience more and more, your personality, worldviews, attitudes and beliefs have a tendency to solidify and become 'fixed'.

This is why experience is not all it's cracked up to be. Experience offers opportunities for the psychologically astute to challenge their mindsets. To find new stimuli, to observe contradictory evidence, to learn new and useful associations and patterns.

However, experience can also serve to reinforce a person's existing mindsets that are *wrong* or destructive.

This is why British employment culture is so flawed. Recruiters are so terrified of employing the wrong person that they erroneously equate experience with quality. A typical office admin job will even require 'at least a years experience of a busy office environment'. Note that they rarely ask for *good* experience. It could easily work the other way round – a manager who has destructive and irrational views or attitudes about people, power and management is going to be all the more *worse* with 10 years of experience.

With self-awareness you can forge a far more useful path through your experiences – being aware of when your irrational beliefs are at play, throwing yourself in to useful situations, and knowing the difference between useful and un-useful experience.

Some people bury their issues with the belief "it will go away in time". "Time heals all". "This time next year it will all be different". What special quality does time have? It can certainly allow acute perceptions to settle down into your overall myriad of experiences. E.g. grief, or disappointments. But when it comes to subconscious beliefs and attitudes, experience and time may only serve to *make them stronger.*

Frequently in therapy sessions I work with clients who have spent *years and years* 'putting a lid on' their emotions or negative beliefs. I remind them 'the more you try to ignore something, the more powerful it becomes' (don't think of a black cat). You have to invest a lot of *energy* into burying emotions and inner conflicts. It's no wonder that the skin might break out in blemishes, or the shoulders feel achy and tired. *It takes a lot of energy.*

People even *build their whole lives* around protecting their fears. Career choices that are based on avoiding the opposite. Relationship choices that are based on a fear of 'being found out'. Entire behavioural patterns that are based on avoidance, distraction or overcompensation for a buried fear or negative self-belief.

The effect of this is so strong, that many *strong directions* a person may take in life can be a result of over-compensation for an *opposite* energy. This is like an emotional equivalent of physical compensations – such as a visually impaired person developing more acute hearing, or an obese person developing stronger bones to compensate for the increased weight.

Emotional examples could include a person who appears very confident but who actually feels inferior (the extreme of which is a person who is very violent, dominant and aggressive fearing they are actually weak, insignificant and unworthy). A person who fears they are very selfish, being particularly charitable. A person who craves attention and feels guilty about it, behaving shy and timid.

The key to identifying such patterns is the same as that of identifying unconscious body language signals – it's all about the *clusters*. How does the behaviour pattern fit with the person overall personality and behaviours? Is it congruent – is it consistent? If not, then an overcompensation could be at play. E.g. the 'confident' person who is easily intimidated.

Experience and the psychological immune system certainly conspire to keep you the way you are. This is fantastic where positive traits are concerned – you build upon positive behaviours and expectations with continual compounding experience, further taking you towards your goals. However it is also a loophole for any negative beliefs or traits to become buried and solidified as part of that process. This is why it's

so important to make efforts to become more self-aware, and to start taking steps back from the tendency to believe 'everything is just the way it is'.

Part 4:

How Conflicts Happen

By now you have learned how the subconscious works, how the subconscious mind learns, and how those learnings influence your behaviour and reinforce themselves throughout life.

Along the way we've looked at how a few issues can develop here and there, now we're going to delve more deeply into how that happens.

Issues develop because of *conflicts*. There are three main areas of conflict, within the mind, between the mind and another mind, and between the mind and the external world.

Conflicts within the mind

The Pain and Pleasure principle

In life, every action you take is towards one of two over-all goals – towards pleasure, or away from pain. It's mostly away from pain – this is just an evolutional caveat from dangerous days of escaping predators, competing tribes, and struggling to survive. A person will invest far more energy into protecting what he has, than gaining something new.

The pleasure instinct evolved through the positive brain chemistry boosts we'd have when doing something productive to carry on the genes – eating, building, exploring, having sex.

Evolution decided to reward us to keep us motivated.

The subconscious works hard to avoid pain. This isn't so much physical pain but emotional pain. It can vary for different people, but usually contains some of the following:

The fear of not being approved of
The fear of not being lovable
The fear of being alone

These really are incredibly powerful fears and therefore motivators, and you will find that most if not all behaviours could eventually be chased back to one of these. So the subconscious gets to work on creatively directing you through life to protect from those fears. Making friendships, relationships, families, achieving, producing, being distracted enough.

Once those fears have been dealt with, whatever it is that is burying them will be protected with quite a force, even if it means suffering in another way (e.g. physical harm, toleration, endurance).

It's unfortunately common to hear of people who tolerate destructive relationships, and friends who say *"I don't know why you put up with it"*. At a certain level, it could be that the subconscious mind prefers the suffering to the

loneliness or lack of approval that would be implied by breaking up.

This takes us into the realm of subconscious emotional dynamics, the engineering of which lies at the heart of successful therapy.

The Power of Emotions

You *are* what you feel. So much more than what you think, how you behave, what job you have, how many friends you have, the things you own, the places you've been. It's your *feelings* that make you unique, human and *you*.

Conflicts of emotions develop all the time, because as we learn and accept suggestions, various things become associated to those emotions. They become the *triggers*. For example, the situation where a person is afraid to drive to a large unknown city – the thought of going there triggers the emotional response of fear. The emotion is fear and the cause is something like a fear of being *unsafe* or even a fear of *being alone* (the idea of being in a strange place reminding the subconscious of what it was like as an infant).

The person may have to travel there because of a work commitment. This may be the pleasure principle (wanting to enjoy the event, or promotion at work) or ultimately another protection from fear (the immediate thought would be hunger, lack of shelter etc as a result of not earning, but this isn't as powerful as you might think. It's more likely to be a fear of not having approval – i.e. being sacked, the expectations of others).

The person's subconscious mind may creatively solve the problem by throwing up the obvious thought *"get the train instead"*. If though, for whatever reason, an obvious resolution wasn't available then anxiety will be felt instead.

Emotional conflicts like this occur all the time, usually resulting in moments of anxiety, fear, panic or confusion. However, larger more weightier emotional conflicts can take place over longer periods of time.

I want to share a fascinating real-world case-example of intricate emotional dynamics can be.

A woman is married with a family. She enjoys feeling loved, approved of, and having companionship. She enjoys the social approval of being part of a family.

But the approval isn't enough. Having had a father who didn't pay much attention, she always felt the need for approval especially from male figures. Her boss at work, being powerful and having an influence over her working life, was a perfect example of someone she sought approval from. So naturally, she began to find him attractive, and engaged in flirtatious behaviour. Consciously, she denied awareness of it, and thought it was all just harmless office fun.

So let's look at it subconsciously. The subconscious thinks "I want the approval of my family, and the companionship and safety it provides" but also it's running the goal of "I want male approval" which ties into the sex drive. The subconscious mind realises it can't have both – if she pursues a sexual encounter with the boss, it could jeopardise the family. So the subconscious develops a new goal – *"reject the boss"*. None of this has come into the woman's conscious awareness, so the subconscious creatively resolves the issue by influencing the woman's behaviour in a subtle way. *Eating.*

If she puts on weight and becomes less attractive, the boss won't flirt with her and the problem is solved. She'll be less likely to have an affair.

The woman came to see me because she had suddenly started putting on weight, for no apparent reason, and was finding it hard to shift with diets etc. The weight might come off with a determined effort, but as with most of these situations, the moment the conscious mind relaxes its efforts, the subconscious mind puts the weight back on. I knew that her mind wasn't broken, it wasn't some kind of random accident, there was a positive function underlying the new behaviour.

The emotional dynamics began to enter her conscious awareness through creative visualisations and exploration. Needless to say, once she had 'a chat' with her boss about the situation, the emotional conflict was resolved and the weight quickly returned to normal.

For another client, her weight issue was serving a function of punishing a boyfriend. She was subconsciously angry with his 'wandering eye' and constant references to other attractive women. So she expressed this via weight gain, from the belief *"if that's all you care about, then I need to know you really love me by not being physically attractive"*.

Let's have another real-world case example. As a game, you might like to guess what the initial 'goal' of therapy was.

As a child, a woman wasn't able to express emotions. Her father was very unexpressive, and always reacted negatively whenever she expressed true emotions. She therefore learned to believe that expressing emotions was to be associated with guilt, and that she shouldn't do it. Of course, blocked emotions spell trouble for the subconscious mind.

So a need evolved to *express emotions*. But to do so would mean feeling guilty. So how does the subconscious mind creatively resolve the issue? What was the presenting problem?

"I want to control the amount of wine that I drink in the evenings".

Wine was being used as a vessel for feeling more relaxed and having more of an excuse to express emotions. Now be careful not to *generalise* that *all wine drinkers are emotionally repressed*. It simply isn't true. Of course it will be true for *some*, but only some.

A fear about expressing emotions can develop in other ways. A person might have emotions *that they don't want*, and so the subconscious finds ways to repress them or release in other ways. A person with a great deal of anger might play hard sports, or even use sex as an outlet. A person may have sexual emotions that conflict with other goals (e.g. a sexual desire threatening a current relationship) and so find a way of ignoring or repressing it. People who were criticised or ridiculed as children for masturbating can develop complexes about feeling sexually permissive in later life.

Patterns of behaviour or association don't always have to make rational sense. Remember how we explored the idea of one thing associating with another?

One person presented with a fear of vomiting. Not just in themselves but also in other people. (Called emetophobia, fear of vomiting is misunderstood by a vast majority of hypnotherapists, who assume it follows the pattern of simpler phobias like fear of spiders. It doesn't – in most cases it's far more metaphorical and doesn't go away with simple phobia techniques.)

I noticed that the gesticulation offered for vomiting (moving the hand upwards and outwards as if vomiting) matched a later gesticulation used when talking about not feeling able to express things. The idea of vomit had become associated to 'dark secrets' and 'things brewing inside' that were being repressed due to guilt and shame. The act of vomiting was reminding the subconscious of losing control, of allowing dark secrets to erupt. Therapy revolved around re-educating the subconscious mind that vomit was just vomit, and building confidence to talk about and express emotions, ideas and issues of worry, guilt or shame.

Conflicts between the mind and another mind

Other people hold a powerful influence over us, whether we like it or not. Friends, family, relationships, colleagues, bosses. In loving relationships, each partner has a great hypnotic effect over the other. Both want approval, to feel loved, and so the expectations that are placed on them become highly influential.

This is positive where partners encourage each other, particularly where they praise and support any personal growth, development or honesty (e.g. expressing fears, envies, guilt etc).

However, it's also common that people place each other in cages, not giving enough space or belief to grow or evolve. When you think about it based on what we've discussed already, it's easy to see why. As a person gets to know another person, they form fixed-ideas and beliefs about that person. They then develop that subconscious 'blueprint' for their partner. Once this has happened, anything different might lead to mild discomfort, as the belief system is being challenged. So again, all the usual mechanisms come into play: filtering out any unexpected behaviour, making comments that reinforce the expected behaviours ("you

always…" "why do you never…"), distorting reality to fit with the expectations ("oh she's only going dancing because her friend asked her to, she doesn't really like that sort of thing, and she won't last long". She comes back from dancing having loved it – he then says "oh right – well I wouldn't have thought you liked that sort of thing" with a discouraging air. This then leads her to associate enjoying dancing with guilt, and next time she goes she can't enjoy it).

We have already seen how influential parents or teachers are to children – not only are they influential and their approval highly sought after, but children are impressionable and suggestible enough to accept any suggestions given.

Whilst the presence of certain stimuli can be powerfully influential, so can the absence of it (because it still carries suggestion). If a person learns to associate attention with seeking approval, then having people around and showing an interest can be highly motivating. The person wants to excel, achieve, impress. Their self-worth and self-esteem rely on the perception of others. They imagine other people having positive expectations of them (whether in reality they do or they don't), so the subconscious works towards that blueprint. Then, if the person ends up isolated – for example, moving away, or friends moving away, significant others leaving or dying, then everything changes. The encouragement disappears, the subconscious is no longer having to live up to an expectation. Subconscious fixed-ideas that rely on others for motivation can be vulnerable and lead, eventually, to apathy and lethargy. "Why not, no one cares about me". "What difference does it make, who's watching?"

The expectations that people have over other people are powerful because expectations create filters. People see what they expect to see, and ignore the rest. So if person A is expecting person B to be a certain way, both people are distorting their reality and being influenced. Person A is seeing in person B what he wants to see. Person A is *changing his own behaviour* towards the expectation. Person B is subconsciously picking up on those small subtleties and nuances, and allowing the expectation to be absorbed.

Imagine a person going in for an interview. Let's imagine it's a woman, and she is running the belief "They're going to think I'm rubbish". Subconsciously, she is playing negative mental movies, and she is expecting it to go badly. When she walks into the interview room, she is already going to be projecting tiny little signals and behaviours that say "you won't like me, I'm rubbish". It'll be in the posture, the voice, the eye contact, the words, the pacing. The interview panel will pick up on her expectation, and think "we shouldn't like her". An interviewer might frown at the woman. The woman then might see the frown and distort is as "See? They don't like me" and then frown herself. Both sides are influencing each other.

Conflicts between the Mind and Society

Expectations don't have to come from a person, they also arrive collectively as part of cultural society. The 'average', the 'norm'. Society is constantly telling you who to be, how to be, and how to feel.

The ideals of society are often what causes a person to seek therapy, because they aren't able to get away with whatever subconscious goals or fixed-ideas they are currently fulfilling.

For example if a person gains weight as a subconscious function to protect from infidelity, then they are going to run into a conflict when culture is telling them to be thin and beautiful.

A person who has such low self esteem that they can't be around people for fear of being hated may learn to cope with their loneliness. But the demands of earning money and needing to rely and depend on other people for goods and services suddenly raises a conflict of interests.

3 Dimensions of the Subconscious

Subconsciously then, we're really dealing with three dimensions, which can work together to form a myriad of situations and complexes.

Emotional energies

The need to protect the conscious mind from certain core fears, as well as guilt or anxiety. The

need to express emotions, to feel vital, alive, known and understood by others (protecting the fear of being alone, unloved).

Associations

Emotions become associated to various triggers or stimuli, both external or imagined. Male figures can reflect and remind the subconscious of father, likewise females of mother. A person, a place or even a drink can become associated to *certain possibilities* which may then be associated to emotions that need releasing, resolving, protecting, or repressing.

Fixed-Ideas

Learned through experience, implication and suggestion – certain beliefs or ideas about the world, the self, or other people. Fixed-ideas give rise to self-reinforcing filters, screening out sensory information and 'acting as-if' until the idea becomes a reality. Such filters, beliefs and ideas narrow possibilities down – which emotional energies then have to work within. An idea of "I'm not good enough" doesn't allow for the feeling of pride at something well done, because it doesn't fit with the belief.

Fixed-ideas give rise to associations: "I'm guilty for being alive, and deserve to suffer" leads to the association of "opportunities = guilt and self sabotage". "I'm not attractive" leads to "food = comfort".

Emotional energies give rise to fixed-ideas: fear of guilt for leaving an unloved partner may lead to "if I'm unattractive, he'll leave me instead" and then the association of "food = comfort".

Associations direct emotional energies: "all men are bastards" becomes "what if I end up alone?" becomes "I might as well have my old destructive partner back".

Within that triangle are three very strong, influential two way relationships. Within those relationships is a space of great human complexity, leading to all kinds of consequences of thoughts, feelings beliefs, hopes, expectations and behaviours. And the space is ever-changing, being influenced by suggestion, the expectations of others, experience, and continual reinforcement through filters, self-talk and mental movies.

Readiness for Change

More often than not, a person's inner conflicts will go unnoticed. The psychological immune system will help distract away from them. The perceptual filters will develop to hide it from awareness. Thick blankets of denial will cloak the mind.

Defence mechanisms will develop to hide it away. This can be very energised and fearful. They can be over-compensations. They can be conversions of the key issue into something seemingly unrelated. The person may project their repressed emotions onto others as a way of expressing them.

The person will learn to adapt to and tolerate their limitations and negative world-views. They will mould their life choices and patterns around it.

But every now and then, and once in a while, the person will think *"I don't want this anymore."*

They have reached the all-important moment of feeling ready for change. It could be where the consequences cross a line and become unbearable. It could be when something in life reflects the conflict back in a way that can no longer be denied or ignored.

It could be a breakdown, where a person's whole map the world is shaken and disturbed, opening up that mass of confusion and insecurity with questions like "who am I" and "what's my life supposed to be about". Breakdown, breakthrough.

It's that readiness for change that starts to shake the rigidity of self-reinforcement. You no longer feel inclined to believe your own lies, or ignore the counter-evidence. You start welcoming it, admitting defeat, experiencing that empowering vulnerability as you strip away the false facades and pretenses.

You then become open and curious again, and driven by a will for improvement, to get back to that state of being totally self-approving and self-confident.

39

Part 5:

Self-Hypnosis
For Self-Improvement

By now you are likely to have given some thought to your own situation and limitations, and may have even had a few insights or realisations.

You should have also learned that you are already a very adequate self-hypnotist. You have been influencing your own subconscious with self-talk, imagination, paying attention to certain things over others, and talking to yourself and others in a way that reinforces your unwanted beliefs.

Let's now turn our attention to how you can enhance the relationship between your conscious and subconscious minds, resulting in greater congruence and a more positive direction.

We Don't Amputate – We Transform

It's important to begin with acknowledging a respect and sense of gratitude for your deeper mind and how it works. Where people have adapted or worked around barriers or learned limitations, it's common for a frustration or self-anger to develop. We think, talk and behave as though certain parts of ourselves were broken,

or needed removing. *"I wish I would cut out my gambling"*. "I hate my body for being overweight". "I always get a knotted stomach when I think of flying, I wish I could have it removed".

You are a mind and body. No single part of that system is trying to harm you, punish you, get in your way, or make your life any less fulfilling. It is simply that in trying to protect you from hurt and suffering, the subconscious has automatically learned a few fixed-ideas, beliefs and associations. *It is a positive force.*

It is important that you learn to forgive yourself, respect yourself, and appreciate your mind and body for its wonderful work. This, in itself is a major task and one that will be a gradual journey. For our purposes now though, it's enough to realise that your goals should be about changing the emotional energies that flow within, re-directing your confidence back to positive areas, and shifting the aspects of life you attend to most. With this approach, you aren't destroying or creating, merely transforming. It utilises the brains plasticity and flexibility of learning, forever in flux, just directing it in a positive way for a change.

Analysis vs Self-Hypnosis

Something that may have dawned on you whilst reading is not only how complex subconscious dynamics can be, but also how hidden they can be. How are you supposed to become aware of such learnings, false ideas, negative expectations etc if they are *subconscious?*

Fortunately, insight isn't always necessary. It's useful for you to have an appreciation of subconscious dynamics to build your confidence in the whole process of subconscious learning. Not only will you enjoy a greater awareness of others, but gradually you'll have a greater awareness of yourself. Self-awareness will automatically shift your conscious attention in different ways. You'll spot your negative self-talk, you'll be more aware of possible subconscious motives, and you'll have a more precise idea of what positive suggestions you'd like to program your mind with.

If you feel that you have complex issues that need resolving or working through, then certainly seek professional help. This guide and the ideas presented are in no way assumed to be a substitute for professional one-to-one advice and counselling.

Getting the Subconscious to Accept Positive Ideas

The overall goal is to implant new, positive and constructive ideas into the subconscious. We can achieve this by weakening the old ones, and strengthening the new ones.

Weakening old ideas

If you remember, part of the challenge of subconscious work is that fixed-ideas and expectations have a tendency to reinforce themselves. You filter your perception by noticing all the reinforcing evidence, ignoring the challenges. You self-talk your way into continuing to believe what you do.

Start to challenge the beliefs that aren't doing you any good. *"People don't like me"*. Really? Does *nobody* like you? How do you know? Are you giving them an adequate chance to get to know you? Play devil's advocate to your own mind, challenging and seeking out counter-evidence.

Become a better scientist before making claims about yourself.

Start paying attention to times where your unwanted behaviours aren't present. Notice the generalisations in your self-talk and thoughts, and begin to make them a little more accurate. "I *sometimes* get anxious". "*Some* people *might* not like me". The subconscious is then able to gradually absorb the obvious implication ("*Sometimes* therefore, I am *not* anxious". "*Some* people therefore, *may* like me".)

The purpose of this isn't to convince yourself that your issues aren't real – or that they'll go away if you challenge them. It's simply to start weakening the overall belief that *that's the way it is.*

In therapy, sometimes whilst talking about a client's phobia, I'll start injecting some humour. I may even have the client visualise something frightening but with everyone wearing Noddy hats. Once they've experienced their fear in a different way, the overall strength of the fear begins to weaken. The subconscious is absorbing the suggestion *"perhaps it's not so frightening after all"*.

Rather than thinking about your life in any negative light or expectations, why not start thinking about it in terms of what you want. Think about what would be different if you overcame your barriers. *Start giving your subconscious mind some positive imagery to play with.* It does no harm, and if you feel positive emotions along with it, it can be quite powerful in shifting the mental movies you play throughout the day.

You may think to yourself *"Yes, that's all very well, but its just wishful thinking at the end of the day"*. This is not the truth. It isn't wishful, it is merely thinking. You are playing mental movies one way or the other, so you might as well feed your mind with something a little more nourishing. Such doubts are a product of the fearful mind trying to protect its ways, and is evidence of your psychological immune system at work.

Create opportunities to change your perceptions. Experience is a powerful influence, and throwing yourself into as many different situations as possible is an excellent way to explore your true potential and gain self-confidence. Something as simple as meeting a new person, walking a new route, or changing

the furniture can be enough to stimulate new ideas and perspectives.

Here are three more simple ways to start weakening old ideas:

1. Dissociation

We're so used to being ourselves, because we're always looking through our own lives. Have you ever had an experience where you have watched yourself on a video, and thought "wow, it looks so different to how it feels". The perception shift you can have from being dissociated can be quite powerful. A mental exercise you can do along those lines is this. Think of a situation in which you would like to act or feel differently. Picture it in your mind. Now remove yourself totally from the situation, and look at it from a different perspective. Perhaps you could be floating outside your office window, looking in. Perhaps you are looking at your house from a strange angle. You might notice that it becomes easier to see things more objectively. It then becomes easier to imagine yourself behaving or feeling differently. Then float back inside the picture you originally had, and experience how it feels different. Sometimes in therapy I use dissociation methods to clear away a fearful response – e.g. imagining watching a frightening event on a cinema screen, and then changing the size, colour, actors, music etc to get different responses.

2. Pace and direct

If you have an awareness of a residual emotion that you have lurking deep down, admit it yourself, followed by a direction into a more positive belief. Here's an example: "I don't deserve to be happy… but I deserve to be as happy as anyone else". "I feel unloved… but I know that love and approval surround me". "I'm not good at this… but I can learn to get better and better". "I feel anxious, but I know that I can handle it".

 'But' is a negative word, it negates what has gone before it. "I love you, BUT I do wish you wouldn't do that". In the examples above, using 'but' is actually useful because you are subconsciously negating the old belief that you no longer want. In everyday life though, its easy to use the 'but' word to negate positive things. If you spot yourself doing this, swap the word 'but' for 'and', it feels a whole lot different. "I

wish I could enjoy myself, BUT I worry about what people think" becomes "I worry what people think AND I'm going to enjoy myself".

3. Direct better mental movies

If you can lock onto the subconscious mental movies you are imagining to create a negative response, start changing them. Imagine something better. You could even just imagine something different. Change the camera angles, the people, faces, words, scenery, size, music.

Push the rubbish negative pictures further away, make them go black and white. Imagine crushing them or tearing them up. Get the good, positive pictures and movies and make them big, bright, colourful and vivid.

Go to town on it, give yourself a Hollywood budget. Throw in some special effects, an orchestra, fireworks! It's your imagination that your mind and body are responding to, so let's get creative!

Strengthening the Wanted Belief

This is where self-hypnosis comes in. You can offer positives suggestions to be accepted by your subconscious mind.

Remember that the subconscious mind responds to images and emotions. Words are amongst the most powerful symbols we have for various emotions, objects, places, actions, attitudes. Each and every word is a symbol for something else – which we are made instantly aware of because of the power of subconscious association. When listening to someone, we are making pictures all the time in our subconscious minds to process what they are saying. It is *subconscious* so you won't always be aware of these images.

If you think about listening to someone talking at length (or even reading this book), every single word represents a concept, and your mind strings them altogether to form impressions and meanings inside your mind. It happens so fast and automatically that we barely give the process any attention at all.

Even when thinking self-talk to yourself, again your deeper mind is processing those words and

thoughts via images and emotions in exactly the same way.

Words then are an important tool in forming positive and vivid suggestions to be readily accepted by the subconscious mind.

Visualisation is another powerful means of imprinting ideas and expectations. As already mentioned, these pictures and mental movies are something you do all the time anyway, but without realising it. If you ever encounter a sense of anxiety, it is because you are anticipating it. We wouldn't be able to anticipate anything were it not for the ability of the frontal lobes of our brains to create vivid imaginative ideas based on our past learning and experiences.

A biker has an accident. When he next gets on a bike, his mind is naturally and protectively going to conjure images of falling again. The association is strong.

We'll explore both words and pictures as powerful methods for self-suggestion, before moving onto how to train your mind and body to relax sufficiently to allow greater absorption of those ideas.

Creating Positive Verbal or Written Suggestions

I strongly recommend you begin your self-hypnosis journey by thinking or writing suggestions that you would like your subconscious mind to absorb. This will of course require a little reflection, careful thought and awareness of what you want for yourself.

Once you have gotten through the process of writing your positive suggestions down, you have a powerful resource which you can then imprint subconsciously in a number of ways.

You may be thinking "oh no, not another book asking me to write down my goals". This is different – it is important to ensure you have clarity about what you want. The written suggestions are simply a spring-board to successful self-hypnosis and self-programming.

Writing forces you to be specific and crystallizes your ideas. It prevents your ideas or thoughts wandering into vague and hazy concepts that

hold no influence or power. Having written your suggestions, check through to make sure they are in line with the following rules and advice. These are very important. Be sure to read to the very end.

Be Positive

Make sure that they are termed in positive ways, things that you want rather than things that you don't want. E.g. "I'm becoming more confident" rather than "I don't want to feel shy".

The subconscious mind doesn't process negation, so words like *don't* or *not* are pointless when giving direct subconscious suggestions. Whatever you do, don't think of a black cat. We have a powerful tendency to talk about what we want to *get rid of* which only reinforces the problem.

When you say "from now on, I will not have temper explosions toward my wife and children when I am angry", you are reminding yourself of the problem, and feeding those mental images to your subconscious. Talk about what you are going do. "I speak with love and understanding to my children, and they, in turn, feel good toward me". These ideas create positive mental images.

Be Realistic

Write suggestions that are achievable and possible. There are circumstances where it is wrong to suggest perfection. "I always organise my time perfectly" is an impossible goal for a mother of three lively children. It would be difficult to visualise and could only lead to frustration. "I'm always enthusiastic" is also a poor suggestion – would you want to be enthusiastic at a funeral?

Make Valid Suggestions

Sometimes you may find that your motives are being fuelled by the problem. For example, a sense of inferiority might overcompensate for itself with delusions of grandeur or appearing falsely confident. Suggestions should then be along the lines of "I approve of myself. I am recognising my worth and my strengths". Rather

than "I control people. I have power over people. I'm better than everyone", which would only serve to increase the feelings of inferiority.

Make sure your suggestions are towards positive results, not continuing the over-compensation pattern for a deeper fear or negative belief.

Personalise Your Suggestions

Make suggestions for you – for your attitudes, your behaviours, your thoughts. Don't suggest a change in others. You will find that others react to you differently anyway and may change as a result of you changing.

"My children always respect and obey me" is an ineffective suggestion. More constructive would be "I take a sincere and enthusiastic interest in my children, their activities and their friends and I understand their point of view. I easily express love and approval to my children".

Be In the Now

Often people think to themselves "I'm going to do (x) just as soon as I've finished (y)". Or "One of these days, I'm going to get round to doing (x)". The distance between the thought and the possible action remains the same – because the subconscious has interpreted it that way. Therefore it never happens! You then get "I've been meaning to do (x) for *years…*"

Think of suggestions as if they are happening now. Develop a mindset of expectancy for them in the here and now. Your subconscious can then begin to respond that expectation.

Specify a time for Action

Suggestions should be linked to various stimuli, and times. For example, an actor suffering stage fright who is anxious and apprehensive about his opening night, June 12th, might structure his suggestions as "On June 12th, as I step onto the stage, I am calm and poised and relaxed. I speak easily. I deliver my lines fluently. My actions are perfectly tuned and timed".

Note that they are written in the present tense even though they refer to a future behaviour occurring at a specific time.

"Two weeks from today when I am speaking to my employees, I am perfectly calm and relaxed and I speak easily and fluently".

Avoid use of the word *will* such as I *will* be confident. Will implies future, and it will remain that way. It doesn't create a positive mental image. Instead use "I am *becoming* more confident" or "When I meet new people I *am* confident".

Combining timing with being realistic – progression

Sometimes, a progressive development must be suggested. If you have a chronic illness or a broken leg you wouldn't say "my leg is strong and healthy". But you could say my leg is growing stronger and healthier each day".

Be specific

Choose a specific area you want to improve, and work one at a time. Notice some improvements in one area before moving on to another goal.

Whilst you are working towards a goal, should something become more of a priority then use your intuition to shift your suggestions accordingly. For example if you are working on building confidence, and then have trouble sleeping, it's a good idea to give yourself suggestions for relaxation, and restful deep sleep.

Be specific with the details, enabling a richer visualisation for the words you use. "I am becoming more confident, people are noticing the positive energy I project, people want to talk to me, I feel relaxed when talking and this makes others feel good".

People are *very* specific in their negative self-talk. Consider this: *"I'm afraid of people. I'm especially afraid when I stand to speak to an audience. As I begin to speak, my mouth is dry, my lips are stiff and not fully under my control. I feel as if I'm breathing from the back of my throat. My voice isn't projecting more than an inch or two past my lips. I know that everyone in the audience can see my legs quivering and shaking…"*

By flipping each statement, we can create a wholly positive set of suggestions: *"I like people. I enjoy speaking to people. I especially enjoy talking to an*

audience. As I begin speaking, my lips are flexible, my mouth is moist, my breathing is deep and from the diaphragm. My legs are strong beneath me. My hands are poised and calm…"

Whilst being specific, also be target oriented where possible. This is important, for example, with weight loss. I often ask clients how much weight they would like to lose, and by when – and they have no idea! They answer along the lines of "just lose *some* weight, at *some* point in the future". This isn't giving the subconscious anything to respond to – so it will respond to the idea of *food* instead as that's what's being referred to again and again in all the diets and books. Someone wanting to lose weight should build into their suggestions how much weight they would like to lose and by when. E.g. "It's November, and I have lost a stone in weight. I am enjoying my new energy, and my improved health. I feel good. I am wearing new clothes and when I look in the mirror I can see the difference…".

Start small

When you have made a list of areas you'd like to work on, you'll have an idea of what is the biggest priority. However, it might be unwise to begin with this. You need to balance your excitement for a goal (which contributes positively to the acceptance of new ideas) with imagining it won't work – which you may find if the goal in question is something big and powerful that you have been struggling with for years.

Based on your learnings of subconscious dynamics in this book, you may also have a greater appreciation for how certain beliefs could be underlying other areas. Personalities are a bit like trees – the behaviours and feelings you see on the outside are just a rich array of leaves. The energy reaching those leaves is coming from branches, which in turn is coming from a trunk, and that trunk is more-or-less your subconscious beliefs and fixed-ideas.

For example, weight loss. You could give yourself suggestions to eat healthily. But also give yourself suggestions to feel comfortable and relaxed when you get home from work (for example). And taking it deeper still, suggestions that you deserve to be attractive and protect your body and health.

You will find that any positive feedback builds your sense of belief and self-command. Your level of self-doubt will begin to decrease with positive results. This then allows subsequent suggestions to be more powerful.

So after eating more healthily, you could then start giving yourself suggestions to feel good, valuable and self-approving.

Keep it simple

There is no need to impress the subconscious mind with fancy academia, jargon, poetry or cleverness. You just need to impress it with positive, mental imagery, via words and imagined visualisations. Speak to your subconscious as though it were a bright nine year old child.

Use exciting and emotional words

Visual imagery is made all the more vivid and enriching with words of excitement and feeling. The subconscious responds to emotion. Use words such as: vibrant, sparkling, thrilling, wonderful, powerful, radiant, loving, generous, abundant, exciting, delightful, beautiful, joyous.

Be holistic

Avoid suggestions that are about 'getting rid of', 'forgetting', or 'losing'. Your mind, body, confidence, energies and emotions add up to a whole. You can only transfer energy, confidence or emotional energy, you cannot create or destroy it. Rather than 'getting rid of' an unwanted habit, write suggestions to redirect whatever energy is fuelling the function of the habit. E.g. if nail-biting: "I am becoming self-approving and relaxed, so my finger nails can now grow long and strong".

Writing "I want to forget all about that terrible event" would be wrong. You would just be pushing it further in the subconscious where it continues to influence you. Instead be constructive about the *meanings* you give to the event. "I am realising that I did the best I could at the time". "I can think about X and realise I had no other choice, I remain relaxed and distant". Or "I am learning to release my anger

through forgiveness, for I am a forgiving person".

Symbolise your Suggestions

Whether using verbal or visual suggestions, choose a short word or phrase which symbolises the feeling and content. Write this at the top of your suggestions. It's important to find the correct symbol. If your suggestion is for overcoming feelings of inferiority your symbol might be "Dynamic Self-Confidence" or "Poise". If you are overcoming insomnia your symbol might be "Easy Slumber" or "Sleep Like a Log" or "Mountain Air". If you want to lose weight you might use "Size 10" or "Slender and Sexy" or "Sweet Sixteen".

Try to find a symbol which calls to mind a strong feeling or a vivid picture. The symbol doesn't have to mean a thing to anyone else, it is created for you and a symbol which provokes a surge of feeling and energy or excitement for you is what you should use.

The symbol is very important and very useful. Your symbol will become associated to your suggestions and positive directions at a subconscious level. When in a relaxed state, you will not wish to remember all the suggestions, yet you can trigger your symbol instead and allow your subconscious to automatically arouse the suggestions for you at a level below your awareness.

The symbol can also serve as a reminder in everyday life. You can think of the symbol to allow sudden surges in confidence, positive self-worth, or whatever results your suggestions are directed towards.

The symbol can also be written down, for example on a small card to leave by your bed, or place in your card or wallet. By seeing the symbol again and again, you are allowing the positive suggestions to be aroused and reinforced.

Read your Suggestions Aloud

Feel comfortable and familiar with your suggestions by reading them aloud. This also checks through anything that sounds jarring or not quite right. Obviously find somewhere private to do this, to prevent embarrassment or self-consciousness!

Reading the suggestions to yourself at this point is useful for a few reasons. It also starts the process of suggestion. You are thinking the words, reading the words, you are speaking the words, and you are also hearing the words. The next time you read your suggestions you'll be that much more familiar with them. This will reduce further any doubt or uncertainty, you will be compounding your belief each time. You'll also be associating the suggestions subconsciously with your symbol.

Reading the words also ensures that each word is read. When reading silently, it is easy to skim and scan the words without really taking them in.

Hypnotise Yourself

For the purpose of this section, I have left the process of relaxation until the next part of the book (Part 6). This is because it is necessary to first focus on the logistics of self-hypnosis.

The following assumes you are in a state of relaxation, and are open and receptive to new ideas and suggestions.

Make no effort to remember what your symbol means, or even to think of your original suggestions. You have already associated the symbol through rehearsing your suggestions to yourself. When you think of the symbol, the suggestions will begin to arouse automatically in your subconscious mind. You may even become notice certain words, phrases or images floating in and out of awareness. This will continue as you just allow your mind to drift.

The reason that you associate the symbol with the suggestions beforehand is that as you go into hypnosis, your conscious, analytical mind slows down. It's no state of mind to be trying to remember lengthy and accurate suggestions as you will be working against yourself. By triggering the symbol, you release the essence and concept of your suggestions with a minimum of conscious activity. In this way you'll get a greater response to the suggestion.

If you don't notice results in three weeks, then perhaps rewrite your suggestion with more

46

positive, vivid and captivating imagery. You should read the suggestions with true feeling, and get good mental pictures of a successful solution to the problem.

The 21 day rule

It seems to be a common truth that it takes about 21 days for anything to become 'subconsciously absorbed'. For example, if you move house, it takes about 21 days for the new place to become 'normal'. If you change jobs, after a bout three weeks you are (hopefully) more settled and everything is becoming more taken for granted.

The 21-day rule can be applied to your practice of self hypnosis too. You should practice at least once a day for three weeks, in entering a state of relaxation and repeating your symbol. This may sound ambitious, but you needn't take long for each practice. It could be a brief moment. It could even be another moment of high arousal – when you are really excited about something else you suddenly think of the symbol and use that opportunity whilst your subconscious is more open.

Even if you look at your symbol every day for 21 days, then you will have given yourself a great shot as subconsciously absorbing the positive suggestions.

I have had clients who have lost weight using this method. Positive suggestions were associated to a symbol which the client then wrote on the back of a business card. They then placed the card on their fridges, or on cupboards. The positive suggestions were aroused and they were able to exercise greater self-control over their eating. After about three weeks the process becomes more automatic, and the cards can be taken down.

Naturally occurring moments of relaxation are also useful times to remind yourself of the symbol – e.g. hot baths, just after waking in the morning, just before falling asleep.

Part 6:

Hypnotic Training

This section will explore the nature of hypnosis and how to go about relaxing yourself into a progressively hypnotic state.

Hypnosis is a natural state of mind which is profoundly relaxing – mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Your awareness is drawn away from irrelevant, external stimuli, and you become inwardly focussed. You stop paying attention to the outside, and relax the conscious, reasoning, rational and critical faculty of the conscious mind.

Your concentration effortlessly narrows onto selective ideas. This is how suggestions are then firmly taken hold of by your deeper mind. Imagine if you had a large wooden platform, with many small holes dug out. Your job was to move the board and try to successfully role a ball into a specific hole. You'd get stuck, over compensate the movement to release the ball, and then it would go flying of into another hole. This is much like every day conscious attention, flitting from one thing to another with little control. By concentrating your attention, you reduce all of those little holes into one deep hole, that the ball (your positive ideas and suggestions) can then fall into.

Hypnosis is a natural state of mind, and as we have already explored it does not have to happen artificially. It happens spontaneously in moments of high arousal, whether fear or excitement. You enter a hypnogogic state of lucid daydreaming just before and just after sleeping at night.

Hypnotic relaxation lowers the barriers between the conscious and subconscious levels of your mind, allowing your subconscious to become more accessible.

Learning to Relax

The first step is to train yourself to relax completely both in mind and body and withdraw from the external world. You can remain aware of it and yet not concerned with it.

Find yourself a comfortable place where you can sit or rest in a relaxed position. Choose somewhere warm, and a time when you can embark on your hypnotic training without interruption. It needn't take long, however be sure not to rush yourself, or think "I'll just do this before doing such-and-such". Thoughts like this will only serve to distract you from the task at hand.

Say to yourself "each time I use this method for self-hypnosis, I enter into hypnotic relaxation faster and easier than ever before". Also tell yourself "each sound around me is causing me to relax even more and to go deeper".

"My subconscious is going to permanently impress the positive suggestions aroused by (your symbol)".

"Whilst relaxing, my body will feel nourished and calm. I will wake feeling refreshed, alert and full of positive energy" If necessary, add "I will wake in exactly (5-10, however-many) minutes".

As you may have intuited, hypnotic relaxation relies on suggestion in a similar way to positive self-programming. You are learning a heightened state of self-command, which ultimately leads to greater self-awareness and increased self-control. Through small self-suggestions to relax, you will be trusting your suggestions more and more. These compound on each other. By the time you think of your symbol, you will be in an ideal and powerful state to accept your suggestions with ease.

So, hypnosis relies upon suggestion, which in turn relies upon imagination and images, and words are excellent symbols for such concepts.

I will detail three very good methods for self-hypnosis. I have been careful to select succinct, easy to remember techniques that are not script based. You may have read about relaxation before, however it is unlikely that you will have come across these methods. They are very good indeed. Once you are familiar with them, you can find one that is preferable or most effective for you, or intuitively mix and match according to your needs at the time. Through mixing and matching you can create many more unique relaxation techniques for yourself.

I supply a relaxation CD designed to train you to respond well to relaxation, it is available on the website www.121hypnosis.com and sometimes available as a package with this book. By listening to the CD you can become comfortable and familiar with the process of relaxation, whilst building confidence in your own ability to relax at will and respond to your own relaxing suggestions. The CD is by no means essential, it is simply a further useful resource if necessary.

All of the following methods begin by resting comfortably. The ideal position is to be lying down, legs outstretched, arms outstretched, fingers barely touching, jaw gently open.

Before practicing any of these methods, you must want them to work, and expect them to work. Any negative thoughts will surely work against you, and you simply be responding to your own negative suggestions instead of positive ones.

Eye Closure #1

Stare at a spot on the wall or on the ceiling. Stare at that spot for a few moments, whilst becoming aware of your breathing, and any sensations you notice.

Take a deep breath, then say to yourself gently out loud, "sleep now". You will feel your eyes wanting to close, however allow them to remain open.

Take another deep breath, then again as you exhale slowly, gently murmur "sleep now". Again, keep your eyes open (however heavy and tired they feel!)

A third and even deeper breath. As you exhale, "sleep now" and finally allow your eyes to close. You may notice a deep calming effect, like falling within yourself. This may even be suitable to begin thinking of your symbol for your pre-written suggestions. You are now ready to begin a method of relaxation.

Eye Closure #2

Begin by sitting in the following way: eyes open, staring upwards at a spot on the wall or ceiling, your head tilted slightly forward. Your toes liften slightly above the floor. Your hands, also lifted above your lap or the arms of a chair. It will feel slightly unusual and even uncomfortable.

Whilst staring at the spot, take a deep breath in, and as you breath out allow your eyes to close.

Another deep breath in, and as you breath out your feet relax.

On the next exhalation, allow your hands to drop.

On the next, allow your head to drop back.

On the next, allow your whole body to just slump as much you'd like to, to enjoy the pleasant wave of relaxation that moves through.

Relaxation Method #1 – lets pretend

Pretend that your eyes are firmly closed to the extent that even if you were to open them, you wouldn't be able to. It sounds strange – but when you practice this you will realise just how powerful your imagination is, even when pretending. When you get it right, you should notice that strange sensation between trying to open your eyes and them wanting to remain shut.

Whilst you are doing this, give yourself mental suggestions for relaxation. Send the relaxation in your eyelids right on down to the toes on your feet.

You can then begin to pretend that a heavy sense of drifty relaxation is moving into your hands. Feel them becoming heavier, and numb. Pretend that your hands are merging with whatever they are resting on. *Pretend*. Then, try to lift them, and find that the harder you try, the heavier they are and the more they remain perfectly rested.

It may sound strange to read, but try it and explore the strange sensation of working against yourself. It opens up the imagination in a wonderful way, and therefore the subconscious. You will enter a state whereby any further suggestions you give yourself will take hold. It is then ideal to think of your symbol.

When practised enough, this method can be used in waking life to achieve rapid effects, such as mild pain relief, confidence and of course relaxation.

When toying with this phenomena of suggestion, I have on occasion stuck my hand to the desk and not been able to remove it for a couple of minutes. But then being a hypnotist, I am well practiced!

Mental relaxation

The prior method is fantastic for relaxing physically, however you may find your mind aroused by the peculiar nature of not being able to open your eyes or lift your hands.

Visualise the numbers 99 in your mind. Murmur them softly. Then begin to slowly count down, gently speaking the numbers. Let the numbers get heavier and heavier, finding them harder to speak, until they just drop right out of your mind. When they do, you'll have perfect mental relaxation and you can then allow your symbol to emerge.

Allow the numbers to drift and dissolve in their own time, preferably before you count down to 90.

Relaxation Method #2 - autogenic

This borrows from auto-genic training, and utilises self-suggestion. Give yourself mental suggestions such as:
"My legs are relaxing" x5
"My legs are getting heavier and heavier" x5
"My arms are relaxing" x5
"My arms are getting heavier and heavier" x5
"I am drifting inside" x5
"I am relaxing" x5
"Deeper and deeper" x5

Visualise relevant imagery to accompany your suggestions. Continue going until you notice that you can no longer feel your body. Then you can allow your symbol to drift into mind.

Relaxation Method #3 – follow me around the room

As you rest with your eyes closed, think to yourself the various sensory stimuli that surround you, whilst linking them with "and" or "as" or "because" and attaching suggestions for relaxation.

For example: "I can hear a bird outside, and I can feel myself breathing, as I start to relax, because if my eyes were open I could see the lamp, and I can feel my feet on the floor, and they are relaxing and becoming heavier, as I can hear creaking from the chair, and I can feel my back against the chair, and I am relaxing and I

can imagine the rug and I can hear my breathing and its becoming deeper and I am relaxing…"

If you find it too mentally arousing keeping up with yourself, then group the senses. I.e. think of four things you can hear, followed by four things you could see, followed by four things you can feel, then three of each, then two of each.

Switching your sensory awareness like this can be very relaxing so be careful not to fall asleep.

Creative Use of Your Mind

Being familiar now with methods of self-hypnosis, the dynamics of suggestion and symbols, you may begin to form your own ideas. For example, consider using another symbol to associate to the process of *relaxation.* When practiced, you can then become even more responsive and even faster.

You may wish to say to yourself the following: "Each time I spell out r-e-l-a-x (or another symbol word) my eyelids close and I go into a deeper, sounder more relaxing hypnotic state.

Awakening

Tell yourself, "whenever I count from 1 to 5 and say wide awake my eyelids always open automatically and I am then wide awake feeling calm, relaxed, refreshed, mentally alert, invigorated, feeling good. I always awaken from hypnosis feeling good in every way".

Stay Positive

Be observant as to differences that you notice in the days following your start of your journey in self-hypnosis. Remember that you are in control of your mind – so keep your thoughts and beliefs positive. If something bad happens the next day, be careful not to dismiss it all because of a silly generalisation or distortion of reality.

Self-hypnosis is perhaps one of the most powerful skills you could learn. By learning to influence your own subconscious mind, you are literally tapping into the great inner core of direction and power that has guided your life up until this point.

Part 7:

Some of Life's Traps

Having explored subconscious dynamics and self-hypnosis, I am devoted the final chapter to an exploration of a few of life's common pitfalls. It is useful in its own right, but also to explore and reinforce some of the information which we've discussed so far.

It may also enrich your people-watching skills.

The False Ego

There is a basic flaw of being a conscious human being. Having evolved to the extent that we are self-aware, we are also able to self-doubt. This leads to a deep down fear *"what if I'm no good". "What if I'm unlovable".*

How frightening then, to truly expose our true feelings, our true selves, *who we are* as human beings. To expose our true inner feelings and to risk being rejected is for many among the most raw and feared of experiences.

To protect ourselves, we create false egos – versions of ourselves that we can safely present to the world. It's the emotional equivalent of having a limited company. If you get sued or go bust, its not you who has to pay up, only the *company* is liable. With false egos, if someone rejects you its not *you* who has to be hurt, it's just your façade. We separate ourselves from others with screens of phoniness, of living up to

expectations, acting, hiding true feelings, defense mechanisms, over-compensation patterns.

It gets to the point where people *have no idea they are doing it*. They have learned to accept that their false ego is *really them*. The thought of it not being creates total confusion, insecurity, and a reminder of that big underlying fear.

But every now and then, a crack shows – a sudden desire for something that is incongruent with the image. A sudden nostalgic memory to old times where things were different yet so much more *real* and emotionally comfortable.

An old friend who visits and the rapport is no where near as good as it used to be.

The false ego affects everyone to some extent. It can take a life time to become self-aware enough to be genuinely honest – or just a very loving, very trusting relationship.

There is a wonderful little book on the subject of how courageous is it to really reveal your true self to someone else. It is by John Powell, and is called "Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am". In it, Powell transcribes an interview he had with a publisher about the book, and it goes like this:

Author: I am writing a booklet, to be called "Why am i afraid to tell you who i am?"

Other: Do you want to want an answer to your question?

Author: That is the purpose the purpose of the booklet, to answer the question.

Other: But do you want my answer?

Author: Yes, of course I do.

Other: I am afraid to tell you who I am, because if I tell you who i am, you may not like who I am, and it's all that I have.

Here are some more fantastic quotes from the book:

"If I expose my nakedness as a person to you - Do not make me feel shame."

"I can help you to accept and open yourself mostly by accepting and revealing myself to you."

"I can only know that much of myself which I have had the courage to confide to you."

"The greatest kindness I have to offer you is always: the truth."

"To reveal myself openly and honestly takes the rawest kind of courage."

"Whatever my secrets are, remember when I entrust them to you, they are part of me."

"To tell you my THOUGHTS is to locate myself in a category. To tell you about my FEELINGS is to tell you about ME."

"To understand people, I must try to hear what they are NOT saying, what they perhaps will never be able to say."

"It is a law of human life, as certain as gravity: To live fully, we must learn to use things and love people…not love things and use people."

That last one is a real gem, and worth remembering.

The false ego is a complex topic, and one which I can barely scratch the surface of in this context. However I do think it is worth bringing your attention to it, to offer food for thought. If it strikes a chord then I certainly recommend reading Powell's book.

Stuck-in-a-Rut

Life has many ruts to fall into. As mentioned earlier, after a short amount of time, things become subconsciously imprinted to the extent that you don't have to think about them. Like driving, learning a language, it all becomes *automatic*. Your conscious attention is used only for things that are different, novel or worthy of attention.

When you are just on subconscious auto-pilot, it can feel as though time goes very fast. The weeks and months fly by. There simply isn't enough learning and absorption going on. If you think back to when you were an infant, it felt as though the months and years stretched out far beyond what they do now. It seems slows down so much that it approaches infinity as you get to birth. You rarely hear a six year old saying "wow, seven in a weeks time, don't birthdays come round fast!"

But there are so many new things to do in life, and so many new people to meet. How could anyone get stuck in a rut?

When things are on auto-pilot, there is no new stimuli to respond to in a different way. It can be very difficult even thinking of some inspired new idea or direction because there isn't the stimuli available to have the new idea!

And then even if a new idea or impulse does come along, it's easy for the heavy flywheel of reinforcement and routine to flatten it out again. "It can wait until tomorrow…" "What's the point it doing it now…" "I'm so used to my quiet evenings in I don't want to risk doing anything else…"

53

Taking action

In such situations, you should really find the energy inside to discipline yourself into action. *Taking action* is the most resourceful, powerful asset a human being can have. It is the difference between doing something, and doing nothing. Expressing yourself, and stagnating. Fulfilling a great idea, and wasting it. Having a packed year of *doing,* and a year that flies by. Being alone, or meeting that person you always wanted to talk to. Taking action is more valuable than knowledge, than intelligence, than resources. Many intelligent, knowledgeable and resourceful people have lived lives stuck in a rut. Barely known or appreciated by anyone. Whilst others have carved incredible feats, empires, companies, relationships, careers based on that infectious desire to *take action*.

Even taking action in small ways can deliver a teaser feeling of how great the reward can be. Make a list of all the things that need doing, and just get them done. It feels much better than spending the rest of the year procrastinating and thinking about it! Even if you make mistakes, just roll on. Mistakes are the stuff of experience, they aren't about you, just about what has happened. There is no failure, only feedback, so get on with it and *take action*.

An emotional rut

Some ruts can be quite literal – stuck between one emotional energy and another. You could visualise it as walking in a valley, not able to climb either of the two sides beside you.

A common example would be carefully treading the path between fulfilling your dreams and wishes on one side, and being secure and comfortable on the other. Wanting to change careers and find something interesting and challenging (what if it goes wrong?) vs paying the mortgage, paying the bills, looking after the kids (what if this is all I have to look forward to anymore?)

Relationships – treading the path between "What if s/he is not the right one for me?" vs "What if end up alone forever more without her/him?"

There are certainly many ruts out there. You don't need to work hard to identify them – they are pretty easy to spot just through that 'rut feeling' that you probably know all too well.

Sometimes, as mentioned earlier, a 'shake up' can do wonders for getting you out of a rut. *Change. Variety.* Move the furniture around. Start reading about something you know nothing about. Go to a new place. Meet a new person and view your life through *their* eyes, *their* perceptions and attitudes, and *their* world view.

If you have a beard or moustache, shave it off. Get some new clothes and see how it feels. Get a new haircut. It may sound strange but the simplest of things can be all that's needed to inspire you over the edge of a rut.

Something more introspective as a way of exploring your rut would be using parts imagery. With your eyes closed, and in a relaxed state, visualise different parts of yourself. Find the part that wants to do something different. Find the part that is scared of change. Find the part that is stuck in the past somehow. Have them communicate to each other, moving forward to resolve their differences and share resources. It may sound strange, the idea of watching parts of your inner mind communicating. When I do this in therapy sessions people sometimes think of what their different parts would say – but I can spot the conscious effort and ignore it. You are looking for the moment when 'something just comes to mind'. Your subconscious starts communicating and you are watching it taking place. It can be a useful resources for getting over hurdles, resolving inner conflicts and finding the necessary inner resources to move forward.

Ignorance of Irrationality

Irrationality is a natural part of the mind. We take credit for successes, excuse failures on external failures. We allow our opinions to be influenced by associated, but unrelated concepts or ideas. We allow ourselves to be influenced by the mindset we are in, and the feelings carried over from other unrelated events. We judge things (and people) based on generalised observations, and then develop filters than wrongly reinforce those opinions. We remember things that suit our worldview and beliefs, and forget those that don't, giving biased and distorted evidence. We allow our opinions to be based on emotional needs, whilst attempting to

use logic, even forcefully, to justify them. We're prepared to bet more on a dice-roll we roll ourselves rather than one rolled by someone else, because we believe random events are somehow in our control. We stand by and watch terrible acts without intervening because we assume someone else will. We blend into groups we belong to and allow our opinions to be influenced.

Yet, we maintain the subjective illusion that we are logical, objective, level-headed, and *rational*. We defend ourselves to varying levels of force – justifying our actions and allowing that incredible creative subconscious mechanism for *reasoning* to do its thing.

Which is healthy. You could easily start feeling quite mad if you were made aware of all of your irrational and illogical thoughts and behaviours. Indeed, whilst studying such things I have found myself beginning to question almost everything, to the point of *losing* the point. Irrationality keeps you distracted from the areas about life and yourself that would make you quite depressed, it gives you the illusion of consistency and *being ok*.

However, the trap here is to be completely ignorant to the fact that your mind can work quite illogically and irrationally. If you have no appreciation for your own thought loop-holes and cognitive illusions, then there is a tendency to *justify them with force* to the point that you might be unkind, patronising or destructive towards others. Its useful, for example in an argument, to have the thought "what if I *am* wrong here. What if my evidence is *wrong*. What if I *have* overlooked the evidence that she is pointing out. What if I just want to believe my viewpoint because *I can save looking embarrassed*, even if it means the company loses out. What if I'd rather be angry and aggressive than to be *wrong*".

Having an appreciation for irrationality (including the generalisations, distortions and ignorance we explored in Part 3) can prevent you from wandering into the trap of "I'm right!" even when you are wrong.

In a less black-and-white way, it can also prevent you from wandering into dead ends or unprofitable (emotionally or otherwise) life decisions, based on illogical thoughts.

Guilt vs Desire – the relationship trap

This is about relationships, where you can end up believing something that you know deep down isn't real (again succumbing to irrationality as a way from admitting certain painful truths).

The initial stage of relationships (which may translate as 'lust') is a minefield of distorted perception. The initial high emotion caused by having companionship, being listened to, being liked and approved of, and enjoying sex is so good that it becomes immediately addictive.

The filters are there – you see what you want to see, believe what you want to believe, bend your perception to fit that rosy fantasy of everything being tickety-boo. You build up massive expectations of your partner, and then influence them to fulfil the expectations – and likewise they of you.

Once the dizzy neurochemistry starts balancing out again, you start seeing truth. You start bridging that gap with reality again (at least as far as your mind is capable of going). This is where the irrational distorted perception ends and a genuine chance of true love beings – cultivating an honest, trusting relationship where each part has the confidence to *offer themselves* and have the vulnerability *be known and accepted*.

Of course it could go the other way – you may decide 'things weren't meant to be'. The trap here is that the knowledge of things not being particularly compatible, or you not having the confidence or belief to really expose yourself and be vulnerable to the other, gets repressed. The threat of hurting the partner, of appearing inconsistent with your earlier lust, is simply too great. The very idea of it, of imagining how they might react if they knew the *truth* about you, immediately brings about feelings of guilt and shame. The *power to hurt someone*. So its repressed, and once again you being to tolerate life and adapt to the emotionally enduring and unfulfilled life of being *stuck in a rut*.

Of course the other weight of emotional threat pushing on the damn is the *fear of being alone*. But this is equally balanced with the fear of not being with the right person. Or the desire of finding someone else. *The wandering eye.*

Eventually, the energies involved can quite inevitably lead to meltdown, breakdown, tears and bad poetry. Unless of course, a breakthrough is made whereby such a deep, emotionally expressive and vulnerable discussion occurs where *you really start knowing each other for the first time*. This can be like meeting someone entirely new, and another chance of true love is available.

Otherwise, its just a painful, irrational waiting game. You could be costing (or they could be costing you) the chance of true love, of someone who genuinely is able to offer love and accept the love that you have to offer them.

It's a delicate path to tread, one where you learn more about listening to your heart over your head than any other area of life.

Childhood in adulthood

When a person is young and impressionable, the blueprint for 'normality' impresses itself upon the subconscious. *What is normal.*

There is then a tendency, when later in life things get confusing, frightening or insecure, to subconsciously yearn for *normality*. What feels comfortable *normal*. The normal world that you learned in your childhood.

For many this will be yearning someone to look after you and offer direction – a mentor or someone who appears to care. For those who were over-reliant on their parents, it may be a *mother figure* or a *father figure*.

However, if as a child you witnessed lots of violence and conflict, then this could also be your view of normality. Seeking relationships with are abusive and destructive. If you were overly punished it could lead to a fetish for pain and suffering. If you were left alone and ignored it could lead to a need to be away from people.

For many there is no problem with this, and it certainly shouldn't be a problem unless it becomes a barrier to healthy, productive living.

However where childish tendencies are observed, it might be worth resolving those needs with self-hypnosis and subconscious re-education.

Childhood can also influence adulthood through unresolved needs. A father who left early or was never around can lead to a powerful *need for approval*, a hole which has never been filled.

Parents who didn't allow adequate expression of emotions, can lead to a need to *express oneself on a grand scale*. If repressed, more conflicts can arise.

Again, these examples offer further thought when creating good, positive suggestions.

St Paul said:

> "As a child, I thoughts as a child, I saw through a glass darkly. As a man, I see clearly, I put aside childish things".

My Map is Your Map

The way you see the world is based on your individual experiences, your learnings, your subconscious attitudes, beliefs and fixed-ideas. You see *yourself*, reflected in the world. What you see is based on *you*. It is unique to *you.*

Two people could see the exact same event and take away completely different observations and meanings.

The trap is in thinking, as is totally natural, that everyone sees the world the same as you do. In print, and when reading it, it may seem obvious. "Well of course we're all different, we all have different world-views". And it is obvious. But subconsciously, its still quite instinctive, natural and therefore *subconsciously automatic* to still assume that others will think the same way.

On-line forums are riddled with conflicts and arguments built around differing viewpoints. With anonymity, people are no longer interested in quite the same way in 'being liked' and so the primal urges and destructive tendencies are more apparent.

We think people whose view differ widely to our own are 'nuts'. *Deluded*. Ignorant. 'Out there'. Read news stories about other cultures and religions and think "wow, how could they?" Again, more generalisations. "I wouldn't have done that if I were you". But you would! Because if you were anyone else, you would also have their *worldview* and be exactly the same.

The trap is in thinking that your world is 'THE world'. This has many dire consequences. One is the confusion, prejudice, xenophobia, fear, hostility, 'desire to put right' you'll feel when stumbling upon different world views.

Another is how restricting it can be to your own learning and experience. "This is just the way it is". But it isn't – shifting a perception or attitude can literally change the world in which you live. I have had clients who made significant shifts, and are still reporting differences. Whole new doors and opportunities can open up, *because now you see them.*

Being able to appreciate that your world view is unique to you, and is just as valid as anyone else's is a valuable learning to make. Again, it can take a lifetime to achieve, and much courage.

In my early days I volunteered at a place offering low-cost therapy to people on low-incomes. The manager told me she had reservations against accepting me because of my age – I was 26 and deemed to 'not have enough experience'. She said "what if you had a depressed client, and you had no experience of what they were going through". I had a number of valid responses. One was the sheer ignorance of equating youth with a lack of experience. The other was the overestimated value of experience. She was assuming that one experience of depression was the same as any other. That if I had suffered depression, *I would therefore know what any other sufferer was going through.* My map is my map – not anyone else's. The skills I offer as a therapist are to enable others to use *their own* inner resources and negotiate *their own* inner conflicts. Not to say "There there, I know what you are feeling" because I honestly have no idea what they are feeling. Of course I have been depressed, but I am *me.* One of the biggest mistakes a therapist can make is to pretend to know what someone else is experiencing and to *sympathise.*

> "It ain't what you know, but what you think you know that ain't so, that's the problem."

Taking steps back from your view of the world will open your mind up to reality more and more. You will never see it purely and truthfully, but the closer you get the freer you become.

Epilogue:
The Truth About You

Unless you're one of those people who skips to the end, by now you will have read through a lot of ideas and information.

You may have wondered about yourself, your own mind, your limitations, and what you want to achieve. You may have thought about cause and effect, and realised how influenced you were by various experiences and expectations.

Hopefully, you will have developed an appreciation not only for the complexity of subconscious dynamics, but also just how different peoples' world views are. It's easy to assume we all look at the world in the same way, in fact it's natural to assume as such, but it couldn't be farther from the truth.

People are so varied in their complexities and experiences that we never truly get to know someone, we only see them through how we see ourselves. Our filters are never open enough to see the world and reality for what it truly is. Even approaching such a state is what has been written about in many classic Zen texts, for it would be truly enlightening.

When reading self-help texts and becoming a little introspective, it's easy to feel undermined. I really don't want that for you – I want you to feel empowered, aware, and ready for change. Ready to take charge of yourself, develop greater self-rapport and enjoy what you deserve. To approve of yourself. To accept yourself as a lovable person. To accept the love and approval that surrounds you, and to feel confident enough to express that love and approval to others.

Because *that* is the truth.

The truth is that you weren't thrown into the world by a malevolent force, to suffer and feel rotten about yourself.

You were born full of confidence, curiosity, a desire to learn, love, be loved and to be happy.

The unique experiences of life have directed your raw emotions, and led to certain patterns and tendencies to satisfy your deep emotional needs.

You have absorbed fixed-ideas, beliefs and expectations which have shaped your view of the world, and its possibilities and opportunities.

As a human being you have a conscious right to influence yourself and to direct your own future. Reading this book will have already stimulated new ideas and directions.

The truth about you is that you are unique, and life is expressing itself through you in a way in which it's never done before.

Onward:
Contact and Feedback

Thank you for purchasing this book, I sincerely hope you found it interesting and informative. Most of all, I hope it stimulates you to take action and to experience positive change in your life.

I would welcome your feedback, whether relating to the text or to any results you have had in putting it into practice.

Such feedback is useful for marketing testimonials and may encourage others to follow in your steps.

If you have any questions about the text or your thoughts in relation to the text then you may contact me.

I also appreciate any word-of-mouth referrals. If you have enjoyed reading, then please tell your friends and encourage them to visit the site also.

Kind regards,

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