

The Secret of Utilization: Expect “Failure”

The “failure” of the client, or of yourself in self-hypnosis, to develop the requested hypnotic response invites critical, negative, global, defeatist, hopeless conclusions in both subject and operator:

“I can’t do it.”

“It doesn’t work.”

Expect this. It will inevitably happen to you as both therapist and client. It is, therefore, a predictable opportunity to practice, model, teach, and learn, explicitly and implicitly,

- ✚ Acceptance (“Isn’t that interesting...”)
- ✚ Curiosity (“...and I wonder what will happen next...”)
- ✚ Positive expectancy
- ✚ Noticing small changes
- ✚ Successive approximation (building on those small changes)
- ✚ Flexibility
- ✚ Creativity
- ✚ Persistence

...all of which add up to, utilizing whatever the client’s response is.

Remember, everyone has a different set of hypnotic responses, and just a little exploring will uncover what is easy, what is difficult, what is learnable, and what is spontaneous. It is a skill, and whatever your initial level of talent, practice will improve your skill. (How many skills that are unconscious and automatic for you now were difficult on the first try?)

To quote Joe Barber in response to a client skeptical of hypnosis, “That’s a great attitude. It will really lead you to a healthy surprise when it works.”

To paraphrase Milton Erickson,

That’s a perfectly good place to start...

Charles Holton
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