

# ***A Primer on the Power of Hypnosis & Suggestive Language***

**By Steve Becker, LCSW, CH.T.  
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The power of suggestion is ubiquitous, literally shaping and influencing us from birth till death. As human beings, we are born suggestible, and remain so through life, and this is testament to our intellect and imagination, not weakness.

We influence each other continuously, and powerfully. All of us, to a great extent, have been suggested into who we are, and how we feel about ourselves, over our lifetimes.

Suggestive language does not depend on hypnosis for its power. And yet, states of hypnosis seem to supercharge the persuasive impact of suggestive language.

It seems that, in hypnotic states of mind, appealing, acceptable suggestions penetrate our psyches with an especially deep impact.

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For this reason, hypnosis can pay particularly big dividends in the realm of new goal attainment and positive self-perceptual shifts.

I want to be clear: While hypnosis derives its therapeutic value—in large measure—from the power of suggestive language, yet suggestive language in general does *not* depend on hypnosis for its power. Bear in mind, we spend the bulk of our lives in non-hypnotic states, and remain continuously receptive to suggestive influence.

What *is* suggestive language, exactly? We can begin by differentiating its two principal forms—direct suggestion, and indirect suggestion.

Consider this example of a direct suggestion:

“You’d better be home by 11, or else.”

Now, contrast it with an example of an indirect suggestion:

“My trust in you can start rebuilding tonight when you come home no later than 11.”

Immediately, you can begin to discern some differences between direct, and indirect, suggestion. Both statements makes the same core suggestion—“be home by 11.”

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But they do so differently. The direct suggestion expresses itself in a somewhat challenging, controlling tone. The indirect suggestion, contrastingly, is firm in its suggestive agenda, yet encouraging. It also assumes cooperation in its use of presuppositional language—“*when you come no later than 11.*” And, it manages to sneak in a quiet second suggestion—how possible it is for trust to be rebuilt.

Presuppositional language, as you will see, can imbue suggestive language with great influential power. Let’s take a look at another everyday case of its effective use.

You are in The Gap, and a clerk approaches you with either of these statements:

Direct suggestion: “Those are our newest shirts. Would you like to buy some?”

Indirect suggestion: “Enjoy browsing our new shirt selections, and just let me know when I can ring you up for the sales discounts?”

Which of these suggestive styles would leave *you* feeling more influenced? It would be pretty easy, you might agree, to reply to the first with a flat-out, “No.” Or, “I’m not sure yet.” The indirect suggestive approach,

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however, uses presupposition—“let me know when I can ring you up”—in such a way that assumes your commitment to buy [into the suggestion]. Its subtle presumptuousness may leave you feeling snagged?

Consider this example of a parent suggesting to her child to think twice.

Direct suggestion: “Do not do that.”

Indirect suggestion: “I wouldn’t do that, Sherry.”

You may notice that indirect suggestive language tends to be more subtle, less aggressive, and, often for these reasons, more persuasive than direct suggestive language.

“Do not do that” is a strongly stated direct suggestion that might compel compliance, depending on the circumstances; but it might not, for it risks engendering a rebellious response; and, even it succeeds at eliciting compliance, the compliance may come at the cost of the complier’s resentment.

“I wouldn’t do that,” conversely, is one of many possible indirect forms of the same suggestion and, simple as it sounds, it does much more than its direct suggestive counterpart: it invites, for instance pause, reflection, and curiosity about possible consequences. It preserves the

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experience of free-will, autonomy. It generates less the experience of a command, than the invited opportunity for reconsideration.

When you warn a stranger, “I wouldn’t park my car in that spot unless you want to be towed,” you are offering an indirect suggestion that is more likely to leave him curious and appreciative, than defensive. As a result, there is a good probability of his accepting and using the suggestion. In that case, it is a brilliantly conceived and delivered suggestion, based on its outcome.

You could offer that same stranger the direct suggestion, “You ought to park elsewhere, that’s a bad spot,” and, while this suggestion, stated as such, might also be perceived as acceptable and useful, it might not. It risks being experienced as controlling and invasive, which could elicit defensiveness and resistance.

Sometimes direct suggestive language is necessary: you wouldn’t, for instance, indirectly suggest that your child not cross the street as a car is barreling down. In this case, a direct suggestion—indeed, a shouted command—is appropriate.

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As a rule, however, the skillful use of indirect suggestive language—more effectively than direct suggestive language—will significantly increase your influence over others, while lowering your risk of alienating them.

The challenge, as you may imagine, is to craft and deliver suggestions that the recipient—whether your child, spouse, or client—is likely to accept, and utilize, to good purpose. We will examine this challenge in greater depth ahead, taking a probing eye to a sampling of diverse suggestions.

But presently let's turn our attention to hypnosis, whose therapeutic properties, as I've suggested, derive in no small measure from the skilled, artful use of suggestive language.

What, to begin with, *is* hypnosis? Although the clinical application of hypnosis can yield wonderfully useful, and sometimes fascinating, results, it may be less mysterious than you imagine. If you conceive of hypnosis, for example, as a strange, magical, if not *mind-coopting*, experience (and then experience it), you are likely to be somewhat disappointed.

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Fundamentally, hypnosis is a mental/imaginative use of the mind that can help you harness your mind's productive power.

More specifically, hypnosis refers to a particular state of mind, specifically the hypnotic state of mind. The therapeutic use of that state of mind is called hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy, then, is the use of hypnosis, intentionally, for a therapeutic purpose.

As I noted previously, it seems that when we allow ourselves intentionally to enter hypnotic states of mind—or what some call the hypnotic trance—we make ourselves especially receptive to considering, imagining, and deeply absorbing, welcome, even life-changing positive suggestions and ideas.

This may be a good time to ask: Can I be hypnotized? The answer, almost certainly, is yes. Moreover, you might be surprised to know that you enter hypnotic states of mind naturally and regularly, most often in probable unawareness. This being the case, you can put to rest doubts about your hypnotizability.

The central feature of the hypnotic state—or hypnotic trance state—is the experience of deep internal absorption

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and concentration. That is, levels of absorption and concentration sufficient to engender, among other things, a pleasant sense of detachment, or dissociation, from the ordinary things around you. You may remain *well*, even *acutely*, aware of your surroundings, while perhaps feeling very pleasantly, dreamily removed from them.

You may also feel deeply relaxed, and calm. That relaxation may encompass your muscles, and your mind. You may feel a pleasant heaviness enter your limbs, or perhaps a lightness, or a pleasant numbness. Or, you may feel none of these things, or even something else entirely.

There are many examples of naturally occurring trance states. Whenever we find ourselves succumbing fully to the allure of a novel; movie; a work of art on which we become dreamily transfixed; the soothing ticking of a clock; the rhythm of our breathing on which we affix our calm, quiet, sustained attention; the comforting sound of a friend's voice; or the lulling rhythms of the hypnoterapist's voice—in these, and countless other instances, we are discovering and utilizing natural, everyday, hypnotically inductive experiences.

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If you stare at something fixedly for a while, just calmly, fixedly concentrate on an object with your eyes, and allow your eyes to grow heavier and heavier, and then allow them to close and rest, you may well have initiated—or begun to initiate—a self-trance.

Consider, for that matter, the driver who, internally self-occupied, sails past her everyday exit. This is likely the result of her having been internally very deeply absorbed—perhaps in music, talk radio, or fantasy; or perhaps she released herself to the hypnotic effect of the ambient darkness, or the emptiness of the highway.

In any case, she allowed herself to drift into a state of absorption and detachment sufficient to lessen her conscious awareness of the impending exit. This alludes, again, to the dissociative quality of the hypnotic state.

Another example of natural trance that we use for purposes of self pain-management occurs in the incurring of small bruises that, subsequently, we can't account for. At the moment of original injury, we were likely so preoccupied, so focused and internally distracted, that, effectively, we established an analgesic response to the bruise-causing event.

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Perhaps we registered the event (and any discomfort associated with it) when it occurred, but, if so, probably transiently, and we probably subconsciously deemed it unworthy of our attention.

What's more, we also deemed it unworthy of our memory, and in so doing, generated naturally and instantly an amnesiac response (on top of the self-analgesic response!)

Now, if we can generate self-analgesic and amnesiac responses to glancing injuries in everyday circumstances, maybe you can begin to imagine how useful hypnosis can be in the clinical management of pain?

As a rule, whenever you are extremely zoned-*in*, or zoned-*out* (two sides of the same coin), you can be quite sure that you are experiencing a form of hypnotic trance.

It is interesting to consider that deliciously drowsy experience we feel just prior to falling asleep: this state has trance-like properties. We experience a deepening sense of relaxation—both mind and muscular. We become increasingly absorbed in that relaxation, sinking into it willingly and completely; detaching from, relinquishing

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vigilance of our surroundings (dissociation) the more we embrace completely our deepening somnolence.

Of course, we can resist this developing experience. We can refuse to relent to it, which is exactly, some might say, what the insomniac does frequently. Just the same, we can refuse to enter any sort of trance state, testament to the control we fully retain (in the hypnotic context) and can readily, as needed, assert.

Anything—or any process—that can capture the attention of an individual, deeply concentrate and restrict her attention, and facilitate an experience of detachment/dissociation from her surroundings, makes for an effective hypnotic induction.

I can recall enjoying an especially satisfying trance at a Nets game last year. During a break in the action, sometime in the second half, I found myself staring across the floor at a distant section of seats, and allowed myself to be lulled into a deeply absorbing, pleasant state of relaxation. As I stared ahead, calmly, fixedly, I allowed myself to use the diffuse, surrounding noise to support a growing feeling of calm detachment, and I remember allowing myself to enjoy the feeling of being enveloped in

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that vast sea of auditory stimulation that, in a non-hypnotic state, might have agitated me. I can remember feeling how deliciously pleasant it was to succumb to that trance feeling, and how I'd have liked to stay in it longer had my adorable son not begun peppering me, insistently, with impossible-to-ignore questions.

For me, in that stretch of several minutes, the environment inside the Continental Airlines Arena served as a wonderfully effective hypnotic induction. I used it, allowed it, to induce me into a trance.

For that matter, it's quite plausible to bore someone into a hypnotic trance. I can attest to having been driven into mild states of trance many times during, for instance, excruciatingly dull continuing education workshops. I doubt the presenter was consciously practicing hypnotism, but if you looked around the room, and observed, besides me, a roomful of clinicians in various states of boredom-induced coma, you might rightfully have accorded the workshop presenter the credential "master hypnotist."

Along these lines you—yes, *you*—have put people into trances without knowing it. Perhaps you balk at this assertion, but bear in mind—whenever the effect of your

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language (or body language), ever, has produced in someone that aforementioned highly zoned-*in*, or zoned-*out* feeling, you can congratulate yourself—you effectively hypnotized that individual.

All this may leave you thinking quite validly, if it's that easy to create hypnotic states in people, maybe the job of the hypnotherapist isn't as hard as one might think? After all, he/she is merely guiding the client to do purposely (enter trance states) what he already does naturally on a regular basis. Self-hypnosis in this light would seem less complicated, too: you'd merely be entering trance states when you like, in addition to the times you'd continue to enter them spontaneously.

What, then, precisely *is* the hypnotherapist's job? Certainly, many inaccurate notions about what hypnotherapists do originate in the antics of stage hypnotists, who leave their subjects performing, on command, ridiculous behaviors as if they lack wills, autonomous minds, and control of their bodies and decisions. These hypnotists present themselves, for entertainment purposes, as having a kind of omnipotent power when, in fact, their subjects are, for the most part,

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supporting, willingly, the hypnotist's agenda that the audience perceive him as the possessor of fantastic mind-control techniques.

This is a misleading presentation of hypnosis. No hypnotist in the world has the power to control your mind. When we speak of the power of hypnosis, we are speaking, remember, of your power, *not* the hypnotist's—specifically, your power to use your mind creatively, imaginatively, and intentionally, to good, personally therapeutic purpose.

The hypnotherapist's initial task, then, is to promote his client's comfort level with, and receptivity to, the idea of experiencing hypnosis; this means ensuring, first of all, that his client holds accurate (and not fallacious) ideas about hypnosis.

Next, he aims to offer the client a particular language and/or sensory experience that will support the client's development of the hypnotic trance.

Finally, he offers the client, now in the pleasant hypnotic state, therapeutically meaningful suggestive language that will support the goals and/or changes to which the client aspires.

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The second of these tasks alludes to the supplying of the hypnotic induction, another way of saying the hypnotherapist's particular use of language and/or techniques to support the client's development of the trance state.

In conjunction with the trance induction, the artful, meaningful use of suggestive language and imagery effectuates hypnotherapy and/or self-hypnosis. The skilled hypnotherapist is able to conceive and offer suggestions in such a way that the client, on a subconscious level, can hear and accept them as true and meaningful, and use them.

This brings us, in a sense, full circle, back to the challenge—for all of us, not just hypnotherapists in clinical settings—of using suggestive language in a manner most likely to elicit in others the desired responsiveness.

For the remainder of this manual, as promised, we will examine in some depth multiple “suggestions”—discussing their structure and aims—to acquaint you more intimately with specific suggestive—especially indirect—language patterns.

I encourage you to consider these examples seriously, however mundane they may seem on the surface,

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preliminary to your own conscious, beginning, creative use of indirect suggestion. You will be a quick study, and ready much sooner than you might have imagined to begin successfully applying these strategies in your relationships.

### **Suggestion to sit down**

**Direct:** Why don't you sit down?

**Indirect:** Will you be sitting in that chair, or on the sofa?

*(The direct suggestion needs no comment; it's fairly transparent in its invitation to "sit down." The indirect suggestion, however, introduces subtlety: it presupposes, you may notice, that the recipient of the suggestion will sit, one way or the other—either on the chair, or sofa. Thus, it employs double-bind language—there is choice, at least the illusion of choice, but her response, in either case, must comply with the suggestion.)*

**Indirect:** It can feel so nice to rest after climbing that steep staircase?

*(This indirect suggestion uses a "truism," which is a statement or observation that is difficult to dispute.*

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*Truisms, in their inarguableness, encourage agreeable mind-sets. Once a person agrees, for instance, that it would be nice to rest after climbing a flight of steep stairs, the indirect suggestion to rest in a chair follows palatably. )*

### **Suggestion to remove jacket**

**Direct:** You probably want to remove that jacket? It's very hot in here.

*(Probably, but maybe not...yet? And what's your investment in my removing my jacket?)*

**Indirect:** It can feel so much cooler in here with jackets off and ties loosened.

*(Another truism that, on a hot, humid day, is difficult to contest and, for that reason, difficult not to enact.)*

**Indirect:** I wonder how much more comfortable you might feel with your jacket removed?

*(Notice the softer, less controlling tone of indirect suggestive language. This comes in especially handy when you are dealing with a guarded or oppositional personality.)*

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### **Suggestion to eat vegetables**

**Direct:** Eat your broccoli, if you want to have desert.

**Indirect:** After you finish your broccoli, that desert will sure taste good.

*(Notice the use of the presupposition, inasmuch as it suggests the child will finish her broccoli. When linked to an impending reward—in this case, desert—presuppositional language gains persuasiveness. At the same time, notice the underlined direct embedded suggestion—**finish your broccoli**. Embedded suggestions can be inserted within wider suggestions, or even non-suggestive language. You can highlight the embedded suggestion—giving it extra persuasive punch—by saying it with a subtle emphasis, calling quiet notice to it. More on embedded suggestions ahead. They will always be underlined.)*

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**Indirect:** I wonder whose imagination, at this table, is powerful enough to imagine that your vegetables taste like ice-cream? Which of you kids can imagine your vegetables tasting like ice-cream? Let me ask you this: Do any of you think...that you have an amazing enough imagination to turn your vegetables into the taste of ice-cream? Who wants to try, and let's see how well you do?

*((This indirect suggestion utilizes the imaginative, playful, game-loving, competitive sides of kids. You will have much success, especially with younger children, using this approach. This is extremely hypnotic language, as well. It effectively captures attention and focuses the child on her imaginative powers, encouraging her use of imagination to alter, or pretend to alter, her perception (in this case, her taste perception). Notice, too, the multiple embedded direct suggestions within the wider suggestion.))*

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**Suggestion for brushing teeth, using paradox**

**Indirect:** Whatever you do, \_\_\_\_\_, don't brush your teeth now, really really well. Don't do it. Do not brush your teeth. (*playfully*) Hey, where are you going? I said, don't brush your teeth right now. Come back here, right now! You'd better not brush those teeth really well!

*(Younger kids love this indirect, paradoxical approach, which happens to use double-bind language, creating a win/win situation: the child will, and can, defy you and, at the same time, give you what you want. Everyone's happy, because the child has retained her defiance and made you happy at the same time. She can stand her ground while complying with you, an ideal result. And you aren't enabling her defiance because the humorous, playful tone of the suggestion turns it into a game, not really an endorsement of her defiance. This indirect language strategy works beautifully with kids up to age four, can remain effective through age six, and, used more discriminatively, can even work with older kids. Notice too how we've managed to embed four direct suggestions within the wider suggestion, and how playful those embedded direct suggestions can sound in the playful,*

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*wider paradoxical context. I encourage this indirect approach widely with kids who are being stubborn and oppositional. They can feel uncompromised and please you at the same time.)*

### **Suggestion for your child's attention**

**Direct:** Listen to me.

**Indirect:** You know, \_\_\_\_\_, it can take more energy to keep ignoring someone than listen to me very carefully, immediately.

*(Note the underlined embedded direct suggestion in the wider suggestion. Embedded direct suggestions, as noted, can be inserted creatively within indirect suggestions. As mentioned, they can pack subliminal, influential punch. To repeat, the power of the embedded message is best achieved by verbalizing it in such a way as to stress it, but not dramatically.)*

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**Suggestion to cease negative attention-seeking**

**Direct:** Stop looking for attention!!

**Indirect:** You know, \_\_\_\_\_, there are so many ways to get attention.

**Indirect:** \_\_\_\_\_, you really wouldn't want to stop harassing your sister now, would you?

**Indirect:** It's amazing, \_\_\_\_\_, how quickly you can go from immature, to suddenly so very mature.

**Indirect:** I'm wondering, \_\_\_\_\_, how well you can find a new, better way to get the attention you want. Think, you can do it.

**Indirect:** It's quite impressive, \_\_\_\_\_, how fast you can be mature suddenly.

*(Note the variety of indirect suggestive language in these examples and, especially, the embedded direct suggestions. For instance, "Think, you can do it," is an embedded direct suggestion that also introduces an element of confusion. It*

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*could be stated more as a question “(think, you can do it?”) or, as a statement, in which case the embedded suggestion—you can do it— gets accentuated. Or, perhaps you could state it, but with just a flavor of a questioning inflection, to preserve the confusional aspect of the language?)*

**Suggestion to open up, communicate feelings**

**Direct:** Be honest with me...why are you so upset?

**Indirect:** Sometimes, even when you don't want to talk about it, it can help to share your feelings with someone you trust.

*(A truism containing two embedded direct suggestions in an indirect suggestion.)*

**Indirect:** Sometimes, after you're not ready to talk about it, it can help to talk your feelings through.

*((Slightly more complicated structure: there is a confusional element here, combined with presuppositional language—“after you're not ready to talk about it” is confusing, while suggesting indirectly that, “after you won't*

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*discuss it, you can, and will.” Confusional language can effectively disarm resistance and opposition. In disorienting the individual, it can create an opening of receptivity that can be seized productively.)*

### **Suggestion for cooperation on multiple tasks**

**Direct:** You need to clean up this mess in your room, write that letter of apology, and then get yourselves to bed immediately.

**Indirect:** After you boys clean up this mess, and write a letter of apology to your classmates, you can take all the time you need to be in bed in five minutes.

*(There is presuppositional language here—that is, the indirectly expressed assumption that tasks will be met, and that, after the tasks are met, yet a final task—putting yourselves to bed—will be met at well. Notice how the final task is presented almost as a reward. There is the seeming generosity of allowing the kids “all the time you need” but of course five minutes is then established as the limit. Also, note how the final expectation is structured as an embedded direct suggestion.)*

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**Teacher suggesting student cease yakking**

**Direct:** Stop talking, \_\_\_\_\_, for the last time, or you can visit the principal.

**Indirect:** \_\_\_\_\_, would you like to keep up that chatting in the principal's office, or would you prefer to remain in the classroom, quiet as a mouse for the rest of the afternoon?

*(There is double-binding suggestive language here: You can persist chatting if you like (your choice), but not here, in the classroom, and really nowhere tenable (the principal's office, we know, is not a welcome place to continue the problematic behavior). And so, without being directly confronted and controlled, the student is indirectly faced with a bind: on the surface, he's left with a seeming choice, of which there's really only one reasonable response—to stop talking, and remain in the classroom, quiet.)*

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### **Suggestion for follow-through on chores**

**Direct:** Remember what you have to do...take out the garbage, which is still sitting there, and do your homework, which I know you haven't done.

**Indirect:** Will you be doing your homework, or taking out the garbage, first?

*(Nice double-bind suggestive language that uses presuppositional influence as well. The double-bind here suggests choice, and, with the presupposition, that both tasks will get done— it's just a question of which one he'll choose to do first? )*

### **Suggesting the offering of reassurance**

**Direct:** Do you like me, or what?

**Indirect:** It's hard, sometimes, to know when someone likes you.

**Indirect:** It's hard, sometimes, wondering how much, or not, someone likes you.

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**Indirect:** It's not always easy trying to read people's signals of interest.

*(Sound familiar? These indirect suggestions are "truisms," in that they are hard-to-disagree-with assertions.*

*Meantime quietly, indirectly, they transmit the message, "Reassure me. Inform me how you feel about me?" )*

### **Suggestion for persistent practice**

**Direct:** If you want to get better, \_\_\_\_\_, you're going to have to practice.

**Indirect:** Wouldn't it be nice if we could get really good at something without having to practice on a regular basis.

*(This unassuming indirect suggestion utilizes a truism and an embedded direct suggestion to makes its persuasive point.)*

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**Suggestions that your partner communicate**

**Direct:** I'd like to know what you think?

**Direct:** Do you have a response?

**Indirect:** I no longer have the mind-reading capabilities,  
\_\_\_\_\_, that I never had.

*(Indirect suggestion with a confusional edge.)*

**Indirect:** You don't have to respond, \_\_\_\_\_, unless you  
don't want to.

*(Confusional language using double negatives; also a  
double-bind: both choices, offered indirectly, suggest a  
"response.")*

**Indirect:** Sometimes I think you fail to appreciate how  
much I value your feedback.

*(Powerful, unassuming indirect appeal for more  
responsiveness.)*

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**Suggestion to notice pants**

**Direct:** You might want to consider those pants?

**Indirect:** You seem to be noticing a pair of pants that are selling like crazy.

*(He may or may not have noticed them; if not, he'll be noticing now! And, he'll be especially curious to know what's selling like crazy.)*

**Suggestion of a shirt's comfort**

**Direct:** That's a very comfortable shirt.

**Indirect:** That shirt is even more comfortable on the skin than it feels to the touch.

*(Indirectly suggests an especially pleasurable tactile experience not to be missed.)*

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### **Suggestions to buy something**

**Direct:** Are you ready to buy yet?

**Indirect:** Please enjoy browsing, and just let me know when you'd like me to ring you up?

*(Indirectly presupposes a purchase while encouraging the non-pressure invitation to browse. This is also an artful double-bind: Browse all you want (feel no pressure), until you buy something ( pressure)).*

**Indirect:** Please enjoy browsing and just let me know when you find something that interests you?

**Indirect:** Just browsing? Great. Just let me know when I can help you decide which unit to buy?

**Indirect:** I realize there's nothing more annoying than an aggressive salesman. Whenever you decide which computer to purchase, just let me know, so that I can apply the appropriate discount?

*(These examples all use presupposition to suggest indirectly the expectation of a purchase. The invitation to*

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*browse disarms resistance and suggests low expectations, while the presuppositional language suggests a buying outcome. Several embedded direct suggestions pack influence.)*

### **Suggestion to buy car**

**Direct:** You will find that car extremely reliable and satisfying.

**Indirect:** If reliability and satisfaction matter to you, you may want to take *that* one out for a test drive?

**Indirect:** If it's reliability and satisfaction you're after, I can see you've done your homework.

*(Direct suggestions can be persuasive in the right circumstances; however, as we've seen, they risk being perceived as aggressive and controlling. The indirect suggestions in these examples, especially the last, flatter the customer's intelligence, increasing his motivation to be a pleasing customer. The use of "if" is respectful and unpresumptuous, while at the same time it craftily addresses the customer's obvious interests—of course the*

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*customer is interested in reliability and satisfaction, who isn't? The indirect suggestions here use language that is difficult to dispute (truisms), making them comparatively acceptable—remember, it's hard to reject an idea that's undebatable. Just as important, it's even harder to resist applying an idea or suggestion that you've accepted!)*

### **Suggestion for improved physical status**

**Direct:** Are you feeling better this week, John?

**Indirect:** What improved this week, a little or a lot, your depression or your anxiety?

*(The presupposition makes its presence felt in the doctor's presupposing of the patient's improvement. Not only that, the doctor gives him two double binds—he had to improve, either a little or a lot, take your choice; and, there had to be improvement in either his depression, or anxiety, take your choice. That's a lot of influence packed into a small sentence in the form of a question?)*

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**Confusional language,  
utilized in a sales interaction**

**Salesman:** I wonder if you have any idea how much you know about that car?

**Customer:** I don't know anything about this car.

**Salesman:** Yes, but you may know more than you think you want to know because the car is so intriguing, and rightfully so.

**Customer:** Huh?

**Salesman:** That's right. That's the effect this car has on people...it leaves them somewhat speechless. If it's reliability, incredible handling, and orgasmic acceleration you like, I can see you've really done your homework. When you're ready, let me know what questions you've got and *when* you'd like to experience that speechlessness on a test drive?

*(You might wonder, could this language annoy a customer?)*

*Maybe, but its persuasive impact will likely supercede its annoying properties. As you can see, the indirect suggestions are contained within confusional language that is likely to disorient the customer just enough to prime his receptivity to the salesman's closing, final embedded direct*

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*suggestion—experience that speechlessness...on a test drive? Here, too, is the use of flattery of the customer's intelligence to increase his motivation to cooperate.)*

### **Suggestion for a second date**

**Direct:** Will you go out with me again?

**Indirect:** What will you prefer to do on our next date? A movie, a delicious dinner at the new seafood restaurant that opened up in town, or perhaps bowling, or perhaps all three?

*(You can see how much more difficult the indirect suggestive language makes it for the poor girl to say "Um, I don't think so." This indirect suggestion uses the powerful presupposition of interest plus an array of binding incentive-laden alternatives.)*

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### **Suggestions to child for pain relief**

**Direct:** Oh, my, does it hurt?

**Indirect:** Hmm...I wonder how nice some cool ice will feel on that?

**Indirect:** I wonder what a kiss on that boo-boo will do for you?

**Indirect:** Sometimes, when you close your eyes, and count very slowly to three, the pain just disappears.

*(The direct suggestion here actually suggests the experience of pain, inviting the answer, “Yes.” In contrast, the indirect suggestions appeal to the child’s imagination for self- pain relief. Vivid, relevant suggestions stimulate the imagination; the stimulated imagination then imbues the suggestions with influential force.)*

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**Indirect suggestion to buy shirt**

**Direct:** I'm telling you, you can't go wrong with that shirt.

**Indirect:** My buddy never gets laid, except when he wears that shirt.

*(This indirect suggestion, used on the right demographic, could generate an inventory problem for the store manager.)*

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## **Congratulations!**

You've completed your primer on hypnosis and the power of indirect suggestive language. I hope I've succeeded at illuminating these subjects without having bored you into a trance?

On the other hand, *if* I bored you into a trance, then perhaps I succeeded on a whole other, unintended, level?

I seriously welcome your contact regarding any aspect of this manual and its content. I also encourage you to check out my website for a schedule of ongoing and upcoming workshops.

And I leave you with this thought of encouragement: To really master suggestively influential language—especially the power of indirect suggestion—you'll want to practice and play with the language. Be as creative as you can. Brainstorm all kinds of indirect suggestions for diverse purposes and audiences, on paper, in notebooks, on your family and friends. Most important, have fun experimenting!

And please let me know how you're doing.

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