

## **3 Ericksonian-style case studies by David Botsford**

Here are three examples of recent real-life clients of mine showing how Ericksonian hypnotic techniques were used to help them. All names have been changed.

### **A young man wanting to quit booze and build a career**

Miguel was referred by his mother, who was concerned at his heavy drinking and lack of motivation to build a career. When he arrived, he was wearing a bracelet with icons of different saints. When asked for the keyword which defined what he positively did want in life, he said, “control”, so that was the positive outcome it was decided to steer him towards. He mentioned that he spent a lot of time on Facebook, the social networking website, so that became a means of accessing useful memories and other unconscious resources.

In the session, I asked him to imagine getting on the Internet and looking through Facebook to find the one memory where he felt most in control and was sober. He recalled a particular evening at a nightclub where he was socializing while being sober and in control. He even simply ignored an alcoholic drink someone had bought for him and forgot to drink it. I asked him to look at himself in the Facebook photo in his imagination, and to make that picture big, life-size, in rich color and sharp focus, amplifying the music. Then I asked him to step inside Miguel’s body in that picture and re-experience that sense of control and being sober. I asked him to repeat the affirmation “I enjoy being in control”. By this time, Miguel was in a satisfactory trance. I asked him to remember a “learning set” of achievements: becoming fluent in both English and Spanish, learning to drive, and having given up so many childish and adolescent habits. Referring to the bracelet with saints’ portraits, I asked him to open up to divine protection, and to be aware of those saints on his wrist and what they each represented. Each saint represented something powerful – protection, wisdom, love, salvation and so on. I asked him to experience holy energy flowing from those icons in the form of different colored lights, energies and sounds, flowing together and forming a protective energy field around him. I suggested that nothing can get through that field unless Miguel approves of it, knows that it is good for him and consistent with his life of control, sobriety, freedom and achievement.

I asked Miguel to visit the Facebook pages of the future, when these transformations become a reality. He was encouraged to look at himself and his achievements now that this new way of life is becoming permanent: waking up in the morning feeling fresh, saving money, being a better friend, building a career, noting how happy his family and friends become, and a feeling of freedom. These were all positive goals he had specifically said he wanted to achieve by this transformation. I had him step inside these pictures and experience them directly. This was followed by ego-strengthening suggestions, some Milton model language and awakening.

### **A high school student who needed to get motivated and achieve a passing grade**

Jane was a high school student referred by her grandmother because she was paying little attention to studying, and needed to build up her motivation in order to graduate from high school. In the third grade, she had been considered an outstanding student, but had gradually become less and less interested in schooling and had recently got poor results. Her parents and grandparents were all strong influences on her and wanted her to change her studying habits so as to graduate from high school. When I asked her what she enjoyed doing, she said, “hanging out with friends”.

The first task was to demonstrate to her that she could change her state instantly, so I taught her self-hypnosis. I showed her that whatever goes through her mind is going to happen in the real world. I asked her to imagine her mother, father, grandfather and grandmother right in front of her and talking to her, saying:

“Just face this reality: when you succeed in getting passing grades and graduate from high school, this will get you into college, and that will get you a good career with more money to enjoy life, including hanging out with friends. You’re going to have to sit through the class anyway, so you may as well enjoy it and you may as well get a passing grade.”

(They had previously said this kind of thing to her and got her a passing grade.) I asked her how she would like to feel about school, and she said, “enjoyment” and “being excited”. Then I asked her to look through a photo album containing memories of enjoyment and being excited, and hanging out with friends. I asked her to make a careful note of what being excited looks, sounds and feels like. Then Jane was asked to imagine looking through the photo album of the future and seeing herself at her high school graduation dance. I asked her to make that picture and music vivid, and to step inside her own body in that experience and feel really excited. This was a way of getting her to be motivated at the prospect of graduating from high school. Then I had her take that same sense of excitement and apply it to classes, studying, and passing exams.

Following that, I asked her to imagine seeing the third-grade Jane who had been considered an outstanding student, and the “Jane” of the future after she had successfully graduated from high school and college and built a well-paid career. I suggested that she ask those two representations of success how to achieve the motivation she needed, and to listen to what they said. I then had her imagine all three “Janes” merging together to become one, by pulling the other two into her own body. I then had her imagine that photo album of the future, seeing herself graduating from high school and then college, then building a future career as a result of that academic success, and stepping inside her body in each of those photos. This was followed by some ego-strengthening and Milton model language before returning to the here and now.

### **A man who wanted to get slim again**

When Mike came to see me, he was extremely obese. His body was so large that he could no longer fit into a standard airplane seat. This was a real problem, as his job required a great deal of travel. His health was also potentially threatened.

Needless to say, it was important to focus Mike's attention on the possibility of slimness. I asked him whether he had ever been at a weight he had been happy with. He replied that several years before, there had been a period of six or eight months when he had been 175 pounds. This was a result of losing a lot of weight after a previous experience of obesity. He considered 175 pounds to be the most desirable weight for a man of his height, age and build.

I asked him to imagine watching home videos of himself at the time when he weighed 175 pounds. Watching those imaginary videos, he described a sense of high energy, the pleasure of being about to sit in planes without embarrassment, and compliments from friends, colleagues and family on how much slimmer he had become. As he continued to watch those videos, I asked him to think of a piece of music that he found particularly inspiring, and to add that as background music to the video he was watching. I then had him imagine stepping into his own body on that screen and directly experience memories of being his ideal weight. I had him repeat the affirmation, "It's great to be in control and be slim". In that highly focused state, I encouraged him to get in touch with his natural stomach hunger, and eat healthy foods to satisfy that hunger, and no more. Then I asked him to imagine traveling to the future, when he would be slim again. I had him imagine himself looking at himself in a full-length mirror weighing 175 pounds. I asked him to visualize a tailored suit, especially made for him at that ideal weight. In imagination, he put on that suit and attended a social function where he could imagine once again being slim and enjoying compliments from people about his success. This was followed by some ego-strengthening, some Milton model language, and awakening.

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