

Book Title: Hypnosis with the hard to hypnotise: *How to do Inductions with Resistant Clients, Analytical Subjects and Others who may be Difficult to Hypnotise*

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Reviewer: David Grant

About the author

Graham Old is a certified hypnotist and Solution-focussed therapist from the UK. He runs a private practice and has experience as an Assistant Social Worker and a Father's Worker. In addition, Old runs a popular hypnosis site on the web.

Old is a rated international speaker, writer and trainer with over thirty years' experience teaching self-hypnosis and meditation.

Including this book, Graham Old has written seventeen books in total, the above title being book six in the Inductions Master Class series.

About the book

Graham Old tackles the much talked about and often feared hard to hypnotise client. The common challenge that many hypnotherapists have encountered: how do you hypnotise analytical subjects and resistant clients?

In this, his sixth book in the *Master Class* series, Graham Old questions some of the more frequent advice given on the subject, with deferential clarity. Old questions the classic idea of resistance and suggests this should be re-imagined as an interactional or reciprocal event, rather than a trait of particular clients that definitively categorises them. Similarly, Old suggests analytical subjects are a myth and polarity responders are reframed. The author puts forward thought provoking commentary and presents practical advice throughout the book based on his experience in the client hypnotherapist setting. Old takes a close look at the subject of confusion, unpacking what it is, who it is useful for, how best to utilise it – and interestingly, why it may be best to avoid it.

The concept of kinaesthetic confusion and the importance of phenomena is eloquently covered and reiterated as essential when working with so-called analyticals. throughout, Old offers a variety of inductions and recommended strategies to ensure that hypnotists of all experience levels are confident and therefore excited about working with those clients they might have previously feared were too hard to hypnotise.

Summary of content

In the course of demystifying the notion of the hard to hypnotise, the author not only unpacks definitions, typical scripts, tips and techniques to consider when dealing with resistance as a category, but also visits a subset of resistant clients, referred to in NLP circles as "polarity responders", and in doing so, Old challenges the labelling of clients. These opening paragraphs set up the main thesis of the book. Old acknowledges the existence of people who are routinely more analytical than the average person. This audience is characterised by their constant dissecting and

interrogating the words, thoughts and ideas they receive. These are the clients who appear to apply impassive objective reason to anything they cannot logically explain. The author suggests it is all too easy to label these clients as hard-to-hypnotise or analytical when instead the hypnotherapist should change the method to suit the mind of the client. Confusion induction is reviewed and much of Milton Erickson's definition and use holds here, however, Old contends that using confusion to 'befuddle' someone into trance is often an outdated and non-therapeutic approach to inductions. Old finds such a battle-of-the wits to be largely unnecessary and unhelpful, and suggests the technique, although appropriate in certain settings, when carelessly applied, would surely increase resistance, and serves only to illustrate an incongruence between client and hypnotherapist. Old agrees with the importance of confusion as a tool in the hypnotherapists toolbox but encourages the use of confusion as part of a collaborative interaction as an example of client centered utilisation. He recommends a reimagination on the part of the therapist, as he himself welcomes a strong and active mind typical of an analytically oriented individual and utilizes the very nature of their thinking process. There is a far greater appreciation of kinaesthetic confusion and Old shares techniques and opinions on the effectiveness they offer. Phenomena is considered by the writer to be essential and is referred to throughout the book, and if anything should take the place of confusion as the go-to tool for working with analytical clients, Old suggests hypnotic phenomena should be it. Old provides examples of inductions using phenomena as well as kinaesthetic confusion scripts. Finally, the author delves into the vast universe of hypnotic language. The author discusses ways for someone to become more hypnotic. The process involves exercises and practices to increase subconscious responses, absorption, and imagination capabilities. In this chapter, Old points out the aim is to remove the fear and prejudice that can come from working with this audience considered to be analytical, resistant or somehow hard to hypnotise. The idea is to reboot the thinking, to introduce a fresh flexibility to work clients who may stretch us, but ultimately take us to new levels of competency.

Analysis and evaluation of the book

Graham Old isn't a fan of labels, nor is he a fan of confusion as the default induction technique. That much is clear in the reading of his book. He does however make some valuable points, notably, that utilisation is under appreciated if not ignored, as an alternative option when working with resistant clients as a general category. To quote, "I am not suggesting that no one else should use confusion, or that they must share my view on it. I am simply saying that the way *I see confusion commonly used* does not fit with my commitment to Therapeutic Inductions." He goes on to write, "If you feel that you can incorporate confusion into your inductions in a way that respects the individuality of your clients and acknowledges their unique gifts, by all means go for it." Much of Old's writing here attempts to clarify why resistance is not a useful concept, implying that the client at some level doesn't want to change, which may be contrary to all evidence, most notably the fact that they have paid for your services and are sitting before you. Instead, Old suggests that resistance happens when the therapist's expectation is not in sync with the client, or the client is not ready to receive the impetus to change in the way we are delivering it. This unreadiness could be the result of fear, or simply because they don't understand what is taking place. Old writes, "In a hypnotic context, it may be because they do not understand their role in the process." Perseverance is required, Old cites a hypno forum he came across where a participant was asking for advice on a particularly tricky client. The therapist was attempting the Elman induction but could not achieve eye closure. The client would insist on opening their eyes, either when told they could not, or if they heard a disturbing sound, sensed a light flicker and so on. The first person to respond to this questioner was supposedly an experienced hypnotherapist. Their response was an emphatic, "*they're resisting – fire the client.*" Old himself had a client who had been raped, during the ordeal her eyes were glued shut. Although

he doesn't suggest this was the case on the forum, he makes the point that it demonstrates that an assumption of resistance may be a leap.

Conclusion: Should you read this book?

The authors commentary on utilization is interesting. Do we hypnotherapists routinely confine our definition of utilization as a tool to employ for those in-the-moment unexpected occurrences, an abreaction event maybe? The sudden barking of the neighbour's dog mid-session? Maybe, depending on the hypnotherapists level of experience. But what about utilizing the way your client's brain is wired from the get-go? I have been described as an analytical type all my life, and in my experience, it is generally summed up in a catch-all sort of one size fits all definition. It's frustrating and frankly annoying at times. At best it describes part of who I am, at worst it makes vague generalisations that could describe anyone. Graham Old provides an alternative approach to the old problem of hard to hypnotise individuals. He does so using a friendly but respectful writing style and supports his point of view throughout the book with example scripts and useful how-to steps intended to move the practitioner away from a therapist centered approach to a client centered approach. The client centered approach is of course the fundamental tenet of our training here at SAIH, and as such, much of Old's best practice recommendations offer nothing we shouldn't already know. Standard operating procedure so to speak. I did note some leading in the scripts he offers, a naughty author oversight or is it my analytical eye being ever critical. In any case, reading is learning and there are certainly some valuable nuggets to be mined from the pages of Graham Old's book. If anything, it serves to confirm how comprehensive our training is through our governing body. Having said that, the question remains, should you read this book? I did, and I don't regret it at all. Maybe you won't either.