

# **HYPNOSIS and Other Stories**

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**CHAPTER 9 :**  
**Enhancing Performance: A Case Study.**

## **Chapter 10 - Enhancing Performance: A Case Study.**

This is a complex case study of unfolding excellence. Ursula (not her real name) was a professional athlete and televised sportscaster. She was stuck, unable to let go of an unfulfilling personal relationship with Danielle (not her real name). It was complex in that the former lovers had an ongoing professional relationship. Couples counseling hadn't resolved their issues, it had only clarified them, and Ursula's needs were not being met. It would be more amicable if Ursula could move on with her life, find a new life partner. Despite giving lip service to wanting a relationship, Danielle's behavior made it clear that she was no longer available to fill Ursula's longing for a committed life companion, and she wasn't willing to let go either. Ursula couldn't even imagine initiating a relationship with someone else while she was still emotionally invested in Danielle. Three years of being stuck, knowing she was stuck, and being frustrated by not knowing how to reclaim her sense of personal power in relation. As a professional with a strong emphasis on life-long learning and skill development, Ursula was frustrated that all her fine skills were not resolving this area of her life. The loyalty, dedication, and team building strategies that made her successful in her professional life were bogging down her personal life, and it was adversely spilling over into her professional performance capacity.

The work of Fritz Perls addresses the idea of unfinished stories, gestalten, things that drive a person from the inside until they are completed, resolved. The Gestalt approach seeks authenticity, being in the moment of now, looking at the foreground, what is obvious. Ursula revealed herself to me as an articulate, aware person, sensitive to the needs of others. One of her strongest values was her implicit mission orientation as a team player. She was unable to fully engage with her dynamic sports and entertainment lifestyle while she was emotionally stuck without a life partner to pal around with, share her innermost dreams with. Being solo was not her preferred style, she was most comfortable in a team structure. "I want someone to grow old with . . . I've got to go to a funeral this week, they were a couple for sixty years. I want a

companion to grow old and die with. . . . My parents have it. I know what it's like. . . . My father would be saying, 'Come to your senses'."

There is public debate about how much medical care, illness, and disease is related to stress, it is obviously greater than chance, 50 / 50. Anecdotally, 80% of the medical problems could be triggered by stress.<sup>4</sup> The obvious is that people benefit from learning to relax. Reduce overall systemic stress, establish state self-regulation in a relaxed state, and the body has a natural process which some call homeostasis, and others call homeodynamic. Homeostasis refers to the assumption of a natural range and rhythm within which a being functions optimally without breaking down, restoring and calming the system to the most effective baseline when not called upon for performance demands. Homeodynamic indicates that the natural rhythm can have fluctuations based on performance demands, and there is still that baseline of optimal relaxation wherein the body has its most effective calming and recovery from performance demands. My bias is the assumption that the body has an innate wisdom, a capacity to self-regulate and heal itself. The body is wise. Ursula and I initiated the progressive relaxation, and followed the assumption that the body holds residual tension in the areas where the knowledge needed to heal is stuck.

"Is there any part of your body that needs to relax still further?"

We broadened her awareness of the locations of residual tension in her body by assigning a color, a visual strategy of knowing.

"What color is the part that needs to relax still further?"

"What color would feel better?"

"Breathe that in, and breathe out the color of the tension."

Sometimes this is all it takes. Not with Ursula. She was still stuck. Sometimes I ask, "What color eyes would this feeling have if it had eyes?" I have assumptions about eye color, and that is a different trajectory in spelunking based on the work of William

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Raymond McKnight, Co-founder of Truman Medical in Key West, 2001 gave me this observation of the clients to his busy walk in clinic.

Baldwin, the option I selected to broadened Ursula's self awareness by eliciting an auditory knowing.

"If it could speak, what would it say?"

We established a dialogue between the part that needed to relax and Ursula.

"What purpose do you have in Ursula's life at this time?"

"What are you doing to her?"

"What are you doing for her?"

It was all about loyalty, dedication, commitment. Her strategy, vision, persistence and dedication to following her dreams meant she was more like an ocean liner than a go fast boat, she was slow to turn away from her long term goals. I began to perceive her stuckness as indication of her tremendous dedication to doing what was right, persisting until she mastered a skill set and won. Her ideal was to be winning back her lost love. Persistence and skill development were the strategy for winning in other areas of her life. Her attachment to the outcome she preferred prevented her from being authentic in the reality of her lived experiences, that she was in love with an unavailable person. It was no longer a viable love affair, and she had no control over Danielle in eliciting behavior to fulfill Ursula's own needs for intimacy, commitment, affection. The minimal contacts were still intense for Ursula, the visual trigger of seeing Danielle elicited feelings of loss, grief, dark sorrow.

The easiest part of being a hypnotherapist occurs when the client is willingly leading the session with his / her body wisdom. Our goal is a shared authenticity, genuine relating in a safe bounded and unbounded environment. Bounded in that all parties to the encounter are safe. Unbounded in that something greater than the sum of the participants can unfold when a state of relaxed awareness is achieved and sustained over time. I encounter and expect to observe a dynamic, organic unfolding of self in relation when I attain and sustain my own state of relaxed self-regulation.

My kindergarten teacher, Marian Gyr, was a WWII Marine Sgt.<sup>5</sup> She was a font of many wisdoms for my younger cellf. She once said, “My cellf. I am a cell in the body of God. I must be a cell in the foot because I like to walk.”

I consider myself a spiritual monist. I view my cellf as a small part of a larger, creative, intelligent being. The light I illuminate within my cellf is a reflection of my larger sense of cellf and the light I perceive in other beings. Through my personal and professional practices, I cultivate a light center within my cellf, and imagine, that what I wish for myself is what I wish for others. I imagine that we reflect to each other the Divine Light, that loving sense, the interpersonal relating in the Divine Light of which I believe we are all sparks. As a spiritual monist, I hold the idea that I am part of something greater than my cellf. Sharing tools intended to reclaim awareness of cellf is a wonderous experience in which I get to observe how a person unfolds his / her images of cellf and dreams in an organic process of growth and development.

I prepare my inner space with an assumption of light to guide the processes of creating the sacred space for unfolding. I connect with my inner light. I connect with the outer light. I ask for a strong flow between the inner and outer light so that I become a pillar between heaven and earth. I imagine that a string of pearls connects me with the divine presence, the energy flowing in my life. The string of pearls is my spine, each bone a lovely pearl. The pearls extend beyond the edges of my body, rising up through my head, to the hand of the divine. I seek to be limber and lovely as a well strung strand of pearls.

Simply accessing the body wisdom through progressive relaxation and clearing out residual tension was insufficient for Ursula to dive from the edge of her stuckness into the depths of her capacity to change. Still stuck. She was persistent. We had to dive deeper. If it is true that, “the problem behind all problems is the fear of being unloved or unlovable”<sup>6</sup> (Mark Gilboyne, personal conversation, 1987), we needed to refocus her attention on her capacity to give and receive love in a rewarding,

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<sup>5</sup> Marian Strickland Gyr, October 11, 1921 - March 9, 2019. Minimalist, Quaker.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Gilboyne, 1987 personal conversation. October 28, 1924 – May 5, 2010. Nom de guerre Gil Boyne, an American Pioneer in modern hypnotherapy. Founder of the American Counsel of Hypnotist Examiners (ACHE).

reciprocating relationship. I thought we needed to start with loving herself fully enough to attract and notice other people who were potential life partners. I wanted to look through the eyes of love with Ursula.

“Is it light or dark inside?”

Inside referring to inside the body, I have an assumption that loving is light, energizing, joyful, healthful, vital, humorous, vibrant, dark is draining, exhausting, hidden, forbidden, fearful, sad, guilty, angry, shameful, numb, ignored, betrayed, shunned. We discovered a darkness within that rapidly transformed into a mixture of light and dark. We elicited a familiar pattern in the imagery of the yin / yang spiral of light and dark. She got it.

“In the middle of the darkness is a bright white spot. Go to that spot.”

Once she was able to discern a light place in the darkness, “Go rest yourself in that spark of light. Notice how that feels.”

She liked it. I asked her to say, “Let there be light,” three times. She did the simple exercise and described her experience of feeling lighter within, expanding light, and becoming surrounded by light that emanated out to a place beyond the edges of her skin.

Then we looked for the light above, “Imagine there is a window in the top of your head. Look up. Is it light or dark up there?”

The process of looking within, re-engaging in an inner light, looking up, re-engaging in an outer light, aligning the light for a sense of connection, provides a safe space for wise perceptions and decision making. Ideally, the capacity to frame life from a relaxed, loving perspective is generalized from a learning experience into the rest of life. My goal was to elicit the eagerness to live a vibrant, loving, uplifting, humorous, connected life.

I was hearing Ursula in longing, sorrow, loss, alone. I was holding in my mind Ursula’s capacity to allow her authentic inner strivings to generalize into an alignment with wise living strategies in daily activities. My goal was to establish a framework of

safety, love, and lightness from within which Ursula was restored into full access to her inner wisdom, her innate tool kit of useful strategies. “Come to your senses woman.”

Ursula had good role models for what it was like to have a sustained, long term committed relationship. She grew up observing elders who made wise decisions, decisions of integrity from a loving heart. Still the light above was not readily present for Ursula, so I asked her to remember Dawn with her rosy fingers.

“Remember. There is that slight wind that precedes the rosy fingers of dawn. Then the colors that fill the sky. Then the sun peeks above the horizon. What’s that like?”

She had it.

“Then comes the chariot of the sun god Apollo, drawing the golden orb above the horizon into the sky. What is it like at the beach at mid-day?”

She got it, bright, hot, permeating the body as if at the beach at noon.

“Does that light above connect with the light within?”

No.

“Breathe the light in, breathe out the gaps, imagine that deep within you there is a mirror, it reflects the light, deep within there is a mirror. Perhaps you have played with a mirror in sunlight, flashing, flashing. Align that mirror within with the light above. Connect the light above with the light within.”

She reported the light above connecting with the light within. Sometimes this is where a session comes to a comfortable ending. We had reached an hour, and this is sometimes where I give the person a homework assignment to spend a week practicing light imagery, deliberately breaking up old patterns of darkness and mixed responses. There is a residual, positive effect in the spontaneous smiling that often occurs when thinking light thoughts. Smiles are contagious.

Ursula’s conversation with me ranged on a variety of topics, including the work of Tad James, specifically his release of the four negative emotional clusters (Anger, Fear,

Sadness, Shame / Guilt), and Robin Casarjian, specifically her approach to forgiveness. Casarjian proposes that forgiveness is a daily spiritual practice. It includes looking at each person as someone needing to be acknowledged, emotionally safe, and loved. She gently reminds that a person needs to practice gentleness and compassion with oneself. Just because we practice forgiveness doesn't mean we stick around for more misbehavior or unfulfilled dreams. We can forgive and love at a distance.

Ursula was only in town briefly, she was eager to find a sense of closure, we extended our session until she indicated she was ready for closure: 2.5 hours.<sup>7</sup>

Many times hypnosis case studies illustrate the speed of a hypnotic process. This case demonstrates the role of an ongoing professional relationship with a client who lives in a different part of the world. The initial consultation was intended to take a look at where she was, where she was going, where she was stuck. She was still in love with her ex-girlfriend, the unavailable Danielle. Ursula had been unable to let go and initiate a dynamic committed relationship with anyone else until she resolved her unrequited longing for Danielle. Her desire to wait it out, win her back, was adversely impacting her professional life and Ursula didn't like being stuck. During our first session, we were exploring different exercises to re-engage Ursula's innate drive for excellence with her inner wisdom as framed in light and love.

We started our second session with progressive relaxation, then assessment for residual tension and release, elicitation of inner and outer light, and cultivation of the eyes of the heart. We had what I perceived to be a sufficiently safe place from which to initiate a process of decision making with integrity. I proposed an imagery to perceive the things that tied her to other people, places or things.

"Imagine that there are cords, like electrical cords, plugged into you. They take your energy to different people, places and things. Like a vacuum cord. When

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<sup>7</sup> I consider 2.5 hours to be a lengthy session. Even when I teach, I like to take breaks every 90 minutes.



you pull a cord and disconnect it from yourself, you can give it a tug and it will retract into the body, place or thing that was drawing on your energy.”

We looked at her connections that were failing to sustain her personal growth and development.

“Imagine what your power level is set at with all these cords plugged into you.”

I sometimes use a 0 – 10 scale, sometimes a 0 – 100 scale with zero meaning dead, and either 10 or 100 meaning top speed, highest level of energy.

“Between zero and 100, where is your power level set with all these cords plugged into you?”

“Now unplug the cords attached to people, places and things that are failing to be beneficial to you. Notice what your power level does when you disconnect those cords. Did it go up, down, or stay the same?”

Ursula initially reported a high score on energy, when she unplugged the cords, her self-report of power level dropped. I interpret this to mean that she found a sense of purpose and meaning in this relationship, and she felt less powerful letting go. I am about re-empowerment, finding what will work better. It appeared to me that Ursula wanted to continue to engage with Danielle in a loving manner without being drained or dragged down by the memories of loss. By asking Ursula to allow the light from above to flow through her body, out through the gaps left in the time / space continuum, Ursula could continue caring in a loving manner and simultaneously restore her own reservoir of energy.

“Imagine the light from above flowing through your body, filling the gaps in the time / space continuum left behind by those old cords that used to connect you with people, places, or things. Imagine that the light from above flows through you and flows out from you, filling the gaps in the time / space continuum left behind by the cords that used to connect you with those people, places, or things you just released. Something curious is occurring now, every time they think of you, every time you are tapped for energy, every time one of those people,

places or things draws upon your energy, it draws that light from above you, through you, feeding you at the same time those other people, places and things get fed. They fill their needs by drawing from the light above and as it passes through your body, it feeds you both. Every time that person, place or thing feels a need for your energy, it flows through you and feeds you, too. You are nourished.”

The idea that every time she connected at any level, she would get fed too, was an embedded message was that she was worthy of being fed, loved, cherished, and energized, too.

As soon as the cords were disconnected and the gaps were filled with light, Ursula gave a higher self-report of energy. She was aware of being active in the process of filling herself with light imagery, and she liked it. She immediately turned her sharp mind onto wondering how soon she could manifest another love. She was eager. Ready. Three years of waiting.

“How much time would be appropriate for you getting to know yourself, you as a single person, loving and loved by yourself, before you will be ready to attract a worthy partner. Someone who wants to play ball with you. Someone who shares the game. Someone who plays as an equal, willing and able to share the playing field with a worthy team mate?”

Ursula fell back into her stuckness over loving Danielle. Yes, it was possible to let go, but what if she waited a bit more, tried hard enough, long enough, she could make the relationship work. Ursula was still stuck. She couldn't imagine a future life without Danielle as her life companion, and as long as that was her foreground, she couldn't observe anyone else of interest. She couldn't imagine anyone else. Looking at and imagining other people as possible life partners felt like cheating. It didn't match her image of self as a woman of integrity.

Ursula's framing of her stuckness in being unable to perceive a future without Danielle, and her value for integrity, leads us to the use of a rocking chair test with old

mother wit. This experiential exercise looks at integrity using a simple future pacing to reframe the present decision-making process.

“Imagine you can go up the beam of light coming in through the window in the top of your head. Float up. Way up. Up there in the middle of nowhere surrounded by the creative intelligence of the universe. Go so far up there, the soul knows nothing of pain and suffering, it knows about growth and development. Let my voice go with you there and back again. When you are up there in the middle of nowhere, so far up there that the soul knows nothing of pain and suffering, it knows about growth and development, say, “I’m there,” or, “ok.”

*(wait for the response)*

“Now look around for the verandah, a big front porch. It is a deep, broad, shaded area filled with comfortable seating. Rockers, swings, hammock, chaise lounges, couches, whatever is most comfortable for you. It is a comfortable place to rest yourself. Take a seat, get comfortable, rest on this lovely verandah. And when you have settled in, you’ll you are not alone. Look around. Notice an old person is waiting for you. Those eyes. They look so familiar. This is you, the old person you have become. Just as you remember childhood, youth, your soul already knows about mid-life and old age. It’s a memory. Imagine.”

“Imagine you become the old woman who stayed in the relationship that was unsatisfying for three years. Imagine. Whether it got better or not, you decided to stay. Look back on the life you lived as the woman who chose to stay. Notice how your decision to stay in relation with a person who refused to play a shared game of relating with you as a full partner for three years influenced you as you grew. Notice how it influences you as that old person on that big porch, that airy verandah. Notice how you feel about all that, your decision to stay in relation and how it influenced the rest of your life. And notice if you are feeling integrity because you did as you pleased and it was the right thing for you to do, to grow as you did, perhaps to feel feelings that you remember, or are you thinking, ‘I wish I would have done something different’.”

“Now return to the body of the younger woman, the one who floated up the beam of light, the younger self, the one surrounded by the creative intelligence of the universe. Remember, notice how you felt about becoming the old one who chose to stay in the relationship. And once you have explored those images, explore the concepts of integrity, despair, and wisdom, notice how you feel about it not, staying in a relationship that is not reciprocating at this time. Are you sensing integrity or despair staying in this non-reciprocating relationship?”

“Now imagine. Imagine you became the old woman who left the relationship that was unsatisfying for three years. Imagine. You chose a path of letting go of an unfulfilling relationship, letting go so that you could explore a life that may or may not have had the opportunity to live a life with a more appropriate life partner. Notice how you feel about that choice. Are you the old woman thinking, ‘I did as I pleased’, or are you the old one thinking, ‘I wish I would have done something different?’ And notice how you feel about all that. And notice if you have a feeling of integrity or despair. Once you have sensed that sense of being the old woman looking back on leaving that unfulfilling relationship, then return to the younger body. Return to the body of the younger woman, the woman who floated up the beam of light into the middle of nowhere, surrounded by the creative intelligence of the universe. Remember now. Notice how you felt about becoming the old one who chose to leave the unfulfilling relationship, freeing yourself for the possibility of a more fulfilling relationship with another person. And once you have explored those images, explore the concepts of integrity, despair, and wisdom. Notice how you feel about all that.”

We discussed integrity, choices, then I asked Ursula to ask her Mother Wit a series of questions and listen to the answers without saying them out loud.

“What am I doing that you are proud of?”

“What am I doing that you are not proud of?”

“What do you want me to do more of?”

“What do you want me to do less of?”

“What do you want to tell me about that I haven’t asked about?”

“Is there anything else I should be asking about or noticing?”

May I come back and visit?”

Ursula said goodbye to her elder self and flowed back down the beam of light into the body, bringing with her all the knowledge she needed to make loving decisions.

I proposed that there might be a pause between love relationships with other people, that it was possible to fill that gap with cultivating a healthy relationship with herself. The hunger for a relationship might be best initially fed with a loving, kind, gentle relationship with herself. She was adamant, she wanted a companion right now, preferably yesterday. She was hungry to give and receive love. What came out through asking her relaxed self how long she needed to love herself, cultivate a healthy, loving relationship with herself, before allowing another powerful love affair to unfold in her life was that a year was appropriate. Twelve months. It wasn’t what she wanted to hear, she wanted to hear that she could manifest something right now.

A week after Ursula returned home, she called to update me on her successful integration of new interpersonal strategies. Scheduling had been such that she was able to avoid direct physical contact with Danielle, which eliminated the trigger of longing that came with visual contact. The love was still a powerful aspect of her life. She was finding herself curiously free, pleased with being independent, and liked that she had learned strategies for coming out of a dark pit rapidly.

I consider a 2.5 hour session to be a rather lengthy process. In context with Ursula’s three years of suffering, I can understand how she could perceive the couple hour process as quick. The way she described her experiences, I got the impression her empowerment was in full flow of articulate, authentic expressions of loving kindness.

A week later, she called vulnerable. We went through the progressive relaxation much more quickly.

“Relax yourself from the top of the head to the tips of the toes, from the tips of the toes back up again. And scan the body for residual tension.”

We practiced the inner light exercise, the outer light exercise, connecting the lights. The residually tense parts of her body were described by her as two explicit parts: a career self and a personal self which were clearly delineated in different colors representing these aspects of self. We explored what color would feel better for each part. We elicited each part to make a trip up the beam of light into the middle of nowhere to visit mother wit, explore the rocking chair test of integrity with the old woman, explore the decisions and behavioral activities that she was experiencing, find strength in continued progress toward her goal of being kind, gentle, and loving with herself. We added a microcosmic orbit to her exercises, modified from the images presented by author Mantak Chia.

“Imagine the tongue to the palette, just behind the top teeth. Imagine. This is a light switch that allows the energy to complete a circuit. If you want to stop the circuit, remove the tongue from that position. Tongue to the palette is like turning on a light. Tongue off the palette is like turning off the light. Imagine. There is a light within you. A light within you. Imagine that you can drop a pearl of light from that light within you to the perineum. The place between the vagina and the anus. Ever play pinball? Imagine you can shoot that pearl of light up the spine by pulling up slightly on the anus, like the use of muscles to stop the flow of urine. Pull up that pearl of light as you breathe in, as you imagine the pearl of light flowing up the spine with the inbreath. It clears and energizes all the energy centers of the spine. Like pinball game, touching every bundle of nerves along the way, cleaning and energizing the nerves. The pearl of light flows up between the lobes of the brain, inside the skull, making a circuit up the spine, along the inside of the skull, coming to rest between the eyes. With the out breath the pearl of light flows down the front of the body, cleansing and purifying the organs. The pearl of light comes to rest ever so briefly at the perineum before flowing up the spine with the inbreath, and a slight pull up on the muscles of the anus, shooting the pearl of light up the spine, allowing it to roll around the inside of the head, resting ever so briefly at the space between the eyes before flowing down the front of the body, cleansing and purifying the organs.”

“Imagine that the light flows out the window in the top of the head, rising like a beautiful fountain. Imagine it is cresting, and then flowing back down around the bubble of light around your body.”

Ursula practiced imagining the energy cleansing her body, emitting from the top of her head, reaching an apex, and then washing off the edges of the bubble of light. As it came back down to the ground it was pulled back up into the body like a circulating pump draws water in for a fountain. We expanded her sense of self in relation, to imagine herself like a tree.

“Imagine roots extending from the toes and sides and heels of the feet. Roots going all the way down to the center of the earth. Imagine energy coming up from the center of the earth, entering the arch of the foot like a freshwater spring, flowing up the legs, the body, out the top of the head in that wonderful flow of energy, cresting like a fountain, and washing you off, cleansing, clearing and energizing you.”

At the end of our phone call, Ursula was once again describing herself as being filled with light. This article summarizes the second part of that first session, which came to a natural point of closure when Ursula was able to report that she felt light inside, light around her, able to see through loving eyes and make wise decisions. It includes two phone consultations in which my goal was to sustain the stated objective of twelve months being kind, gentle, fun and loving to herself.

Many of the case studies in hypnosis I write about demonstrate the most rapid, elegant processes. This case is complex. Ursula initiated contact upon her return to her home country to establish an ongoing professional relationship. She wanted ongoing assistance to help her through her twelve proposed months of metamorphosis back into the excellence in professional performance and endearment in personal performance that she preferred. Even Kings and Queens seek the company of effective advisors.

Post Script

Ursula did not wait a year to initiate another love affair. She was quickly into a relationship with another athlete, Jane (not her real name). It was passionate, powerful, it wiped Danielle from her mind and life. That was rocky for a year, on again, off again, lots of conflict, difficulties with communicating wants and needs in such a way as to be able to achieve her wants and needs. After a couple of years of chaos, Ursula broke of the relationship with Jane. She took a year to get to know herself, including prayer, meditation, dating with friends not lovers, and grief. She then restored her relationship with Jane under much better conditions. The terms she set for herself while in trance, take a year off to get to know yourself, were apparently needed by her inner most wisdom to resolve her own internal conflicts, and heal whatever she needed healing in order to be healthy in relationship. The opportunity for an extraordinary love relationship interfered with that inner set plan, but did not stop it. The opportunity for love and companionship finished wiping Danielle out of her mind and life. Once Ursula had her year of self reflection, she was able to comfortably restore her passionate relationship with Jane, they are still together as I write this post script (2022).

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