

Grace under pressure
Martial Arts and Sports Hypnosis

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Introduction

I once knew a little boy in England who asked his father “Do fathers always know more than their sons?” and the father said “Yes”. The next question was “Daddy, who invented the steam engine?” and the father said “James Watt”. Then the son came back with “ – but why didn’t James Watt’s father invent it?”

Gregory Bateson, How much do you know?

Miyamoto Mushashi, a 16th century Samurai suffered his only defeat at the hands of Muso Gonnosuke, an expert with the 4’ staff. This was not the first time that the two had met in combat. Years earlier they had fought their first duel. That time Miyamoto had won and had spared Muso’s life, he said, in order that Muso could meditate on his defeat. Muso did meditate, on a mountain (which seems mandatory in these circumstances) for between two and ten years, at which point he had a divine insight about how to defeat Mushasi, this master of the two swords, by using a short staff. He descended the mountain found, challenged and defeated Mushashi, and in respect allowed him to live. Muso went on to form a school and teach his skills. Though it had evidently been invaluable to him, he did not require that his students meditate for ten years on a mountain in order to learn these skills.

We remember back in the 1980’s when there was a series of advertisements in a national martial arts magazine, which offered prospective students a black belt in a month. We also remember the story of a television reporter who managed to go from no

grade to black-belt in a single days training. Now, we accept the ideas of accelerated learning, in fact we know that you certainly can step up learning at quite a rate. Much of our own work is focussed around helping martial artists and athletes to learn and improve skills at a vastly accelerated rate. But we do wonder just how comparable a one-day and a three-year black belt is?

On the flip side of this we also know of teachers who teach one skill at a time, in the order in which they learnt it, in the way in which they learnt it, for a predetermined length of time. It always takes a painfully long time to achieve anything. Yet the final quality of that achievement is high and well deserved. There is of course some middle ground.

Some skills take years to develop, and little time to learn. In this book we offer you the distillation of our own meditation and analysis of the structure of the skills that we have taken years to assimilate, learn and develop. We have learnt from great teachers and we have learnt from terrible teachers. We have learnt from our students, we have learnt from our peers and we have learnt from each other. We keep on learning, and we always will. We have read many books, observed many experts, but most of all we have tried things, and done things and learnt from getting it wrong and right.

This book is a book, not just for you to read, but for you to engage with. It is meant to be experienced. Some of it may seem unusual at first, and perhaps second and third, reading but we assure you every word is carefully crafted and thought about, and every story, paragraph and activity is designed to build a whole experience that is both meaningful and instructional. After the first reading, feel free to dip in at appropriate places, and you may find Chapter 8 a useful summary.

There is everything you need in these pages to begin the process of developing exquisite skills as a hypnotist, teacher, sportsman, martial artist and coach. Of course in a little over one hundred pages it is hard to provide completeness, and so we have focussed specifically on developing those skills that we know work, and that we have used successfully in our own work. In particular, skills that specifically relate to martial arts and sports, performance and coaching.

Chapter 1 introduces the idea of leading and pacing, and begins with the “power circle” to look at the powerful idea of anchoring. Chapter 2 is an appeal to those of you who find the terminology of psychology, linguistics and hypnosis hard to get underneath, to persevere. It also deals with the way in which we represent ideas in our minds and in our language. Chapter 3 focuses on the writing of suggestions and shows how to write a powerful relaxation script. Chapter 4 explores strategies for success, and leads directly to Chapter 5 where ways of making goals and objectives that are compelling are discussed.

Chapter 6 is where we examine hypnosis in depth, and where we introduce a number of ways of inducing trance. Chapter 7 looks at the utilisation of those trance states and Chapter 8 pulls this altogether giving a suggested framework for ways of working with groups and individuals. Chapter 9 offers some words of advice that we hope you find valuable. In the appendix you will find a number of scripts for you to use in your own contexts.

This book has its frame of reference in martial arts, but it is equally appropriate in any sporting context. The skills required of a martial artists - speed, power, flexibility, motivation, relaxation, clearness of thought, energy, accuracy, and many more; are just as important in all sports from sailing, through athletics to chess, albeit to differing degrees. And it doesn't have to stop inside a

sporting context, these skills, and others that you will learn as you engage with this book, are just as valuable in your family and at work, for your friends and loved ones, and of course yourself. Coaches, athletes, teachers, martial artists, competitors and practitioners will all find, in this book, things of value.

A word to the wise; realise your limitations. Yet whilst working at the boundaries of your knowledge and ability, continue to strive to overcome them, until you find new ones, at a higher level. The book is not the learning. The book is not the knowledge. Feedback is essential in any kind of learning, so make sure that you listen and observe. Ask advice and listen to it. This way you will always find teachers, everywhere.

Our challenge to you then is to take part in the pages of this book, do the activities, think through and about and over and underneath the ideas, use them in your training, teaching, coaching and daily life, follow up on the background reading, seek out teachers and experts, learn and then take everything you know and come back and teach us something. Enjoy the book.

Chapter 1 - Challenge me the Trance

A monk once asked Joshu "I have just arrived at the monastery and don't know the proper way to go about practice, please tell me what to do." Joshu said "Have you eaten breakfast?" The monk replied "Yes, I have just finished eating" Joshu said "then wash your bowl"
Sekkei Harada, The Essence of Zen.

JUST CHATTING

It was late, past midnight, and tomorrow would be an early start. Two martial artists were sat at the kitchen table, drinking coffee and chatting. In the morning, which was by now just a few hours away, they would be teaching on a national course. It wasn't unusual though for them to be up so late, as they rarely saw each other and were only really able to catch up at times like this. Quite often the conversation centred around the qualities of various martial arts, and on new techniques that had been learned or developed. However this night their minds were on the forthcoming course, and the focus of this particular discussion was training, learning, technique, performance and skill. Questions were asked such as: How can we teach better? How can the students become more skilful? How can they learn more quickly? How can they develop an appropriate understanding of the underlying principles of their art? What can we do, as experienced teachers, to make the difference that makes the difference? And most importantly, what can we do *tomorrow* to begin to start the process?

Time was getting on, and morning was approaching. The coffee was running out. One of the pair steered the chat towards Hypnosis as a possible direction, after all it had been seen to be very valuable in accelerated learning and sports performance enhancement (Ligget, 2000). Ever the sceptic, the other dismissed Hypnosis and began to explain in great detail just how, although valuable, it wouldn't work for everyone, and certainly not on him. He wasn't really very convinced of any benefits - maybe in some cases, but certainly not in groups or in a team, group or class situation. And besides, it was time to get some sleep.

Before retiring to bed, they spoke about Hypnosis some more, throwing around ideas and questions. It was agreed that, being an open-minded sort of chap, the sceptic would allow his friend to have a go and "fail" in hypnotising him. At the very most perhaps he could succeed in allowing him to relax deeply and shut his eyes (after all they both could do with a rest). While his eyes were closed, and he was relaxed, his friend talked to him softly, inducing a deeply hypnotic state.

When he opened his eyes, after 45 minutes, he was alert and awake, and said how he felt energised by the experience, which was very interesting indeed. It was particularly amazing because of the brief time that he had had his eyes closed. His friend pointed out the time to him and said that he had actually been chatting to him non-stop for 45 minutes!! The sceptic looked at his friend and said "Curious, I'll have to look into this" Now maybe you think that it is not difficult to talk non-stop for 45 minutes, you probably know people who do this all of the time. But do they take you into a relaxing state and bring you back energised and awake? Could you do this, to others? to yourself? Wouldn't this be a useful and valuable skill?

Of course, there wasn't much sleeping done that night, and the next morning the training was lead by two extremely enthusiastic teachers. That was 10 years ago, and over that time the "looking-into" became much more than that. Now that sceptic and his friend are the co-authors of this book. A book that pulls together their experiences over all of those years, of developing learning, exploring and (most importantly) **doing-it**.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

This book is not a heavy academic tome, rather it is a practical guide, in the form of a conversation with you, the reader. You will learn, you will explore, you will discover and hopefully you will be entertained. Throughout out this book we will stop and tell you little stories, big stories and give you things to do. Everything in this book is important; nothing is there just to fill up space. We are going to give you many things in this book - ideas, advice knowledge, experiences. But if we could give you just one thing, it would be this simple piece of advice – don't just read it, don't just think about it, **do it**.

This is so important, because we want you to have an experience and to develop an understanding of how to utilize basic hypnotic techniques to improve your martial arts. We want to help you build beliefs that will empower and help you to **do it** better, faster and to enjoy it even more. You know especially, as a martial artist or sports person, that time spent on the mat, on the track, in the gym, on target or in the dojo *doing-it* is the most important time in your training and learning. And in the end you stand or fall by your ability to do-it yourself, and to teach others to do-it. You may like to get a journal or notebook to use as you go through this book, as some of the things that we will ask you to

do will involve writing, and you may like to note ideas and anything else that surprises you.

THE ADVENTURE STARTS HERE

Telling a story: Do-it

Go back and think of something that you learned to do really well. For example learning to punch, perhaps a specific punch, or a kick. You can choose any physical technique you like, but it must be one that you have learnt to do extremely well.

Now you have 5 minutes to tell a story about how that learning. Either imagine that you are telling the story to someone, or actually do-it, tell that story to someone. You have 5 minutes; so make sure that you fill it. Use the whole 5 minutes.

Perhaps you could write this story down (do-it). We will come back to it later.

So let's go on the adventure right now, and let's begin as we mean to go on, let's do-it.

There is of course no sense in not starting right at the very beginning, and so we would like to start by asking you to consider one thing very carefully, one thing that will help you to make a difference, not just in the Martial arts teaching and training, but everywhere in your life. There is one tool that is invaluable to us, it helps us communicate, and share feelings and emotions. That tool is none other than - voice. And here is our first trick, our first tip for you. It relates to the voice and of course it really needs to be shown face to face or heard. However by doing the following exercise you can begin to develop the correct technique to gain control not only of what you say, but how you say it.

Voice Control: Do-it

First of all take the first and index fingers from your right hand and place them on your nose. Now say “*This is my nose*”

Now breathe out and place the fingers on your mouth: say “*this is my mouth*”

Repeat this process for your chest and stomach. Each time lowering your voice to make it sound more relaxing and calm.

Now make your voice sound *curious about relaxing*. Now make it sound intrigued. And finally, confident.

So the difference between a relaxing, calm, guiding voice and an annoying, irritating grating voice is that one is nasal and the other starts from deep down in the stomach. Imagine what it would be like for a child to be read a bedtime story in a whiney, nasal voice. We are pretty confident that our children would not find that a suitable preparation for getting ready to go to sleep!! What about a nasal salesman? Would you buy your goods from someone with a voice like a strimmer? (Maybe if you were buying a strimmer I suppose.) Now let’s see just how relaxing you can sound. Did you write your story down? (Have we started to do it yet?).

Voice Exercise 2: Do-It

Now read your story with a different tone of voice. One that is relaxed and comes from the stomach as opposed to one that comes through your nose.

Are you starting to sound different yet? Good, we hope you are. You see it is so important, when you say words like *learn*, that you say them in a way that encourages learning. You must be confident, and say words meaningfully and with enthusiasm. Now don’t get us wrong, we are not suggesting over the top enthusiasm, try and do-it with gentle enthusiasm. With learning,

for example, we want you to be able to recreate a positive, curious, feeling and experience for your students, and you can start to do that by correct use of your voice.

We know that you already teach people to punch , kick, run, hit, slice, pass or grapple well, whatever your speciality. But there is more to teaching than demonstrating, and there is more to learning than copying (although these are very important parts of the learning puzzle), and there is more to sports and martial arts expertise and success than pure physical technique. Right now we would like you to consider this very important additional piece of the puzzle. And it concerns your ability to know what you are aiming at. If, for example, you are going to ask someone to really enjoy relaxing, what is that going to feel like? What is it going to sound like? And what is it going to look like? So here we go again, time for you to do it.

Relax: Do-It
For this do-it you will need access to a video camera, perhaps you can borrow one if you don't already have one. Now put in the corner of the room, sit yourself down in front of it and relax, and enjoy. Do this for ten minutes, you could even shut your eyes, and allow your mind to go away on a journey of its own.

Now watch the tape. What do you see? Does your breathing change, does your skin colour change? When you were relaxing what did you feel (write this down – do it). Good.

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