



*Clear Thinking newsletter from Uncommon Knowledge - Issue 72*

In this month's Clear Thinking...

1. 3 wily ways to make your clients more receptive
2. Learn advanced priming online with Precision Hypnosis

## **3 wily ways to make your clients more receptive**

*People aren't usually willing to abandon their ideas or habits just because you say so. Learn how you can easily help people become more open to therapeutic suggestions for change.*

When I first started out as a therapist I would sometimes run into 'difficult' clients – people who just didn't give the 'right' answers to my therapeutic questions. I remember one man I saw who had recently lost his job, and was suffering from depression and anxiety. The more I pressed him to consider what he wanted for his future, to imagine what he would be doing when he was feeling better, the more he shrugged, sighed and said "I just don't know!"

It's interesting to consider what was going on here. I was asking a man who was in a depressed and pessimistic state of mind to create goals for himself. Not surprisingly, he wasn't able to give very inspiring answers! How many times have you tried to persuade a client to do something, or wanted to help a friend to see their problem from a new perspective, only to find that they sighed sadly, said "Yes, but...", and started to tell you why your 'helpful suggestion' wouldn't work for them? Is there anything you can do to stop this from happening?

Yes. It's a 'friendly persuasion' technique called 'priming'.

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## **Priming is the skill of putting people in the right frame of mind *before* you try to persuade them to do something**

The psychologist John Bargh did some amazing research into how people's behavior can be influenced by seemingly innocuous events. In one experiment disguised as a linguistics test he asked people to arrange apparently random words on a table into sentences. However, if just a few of the words related to rudeness, e.g. 'obnoxious', or 'pushy', the participants were much more likely to interrupt someone in the corridor after the test (which was what the experimenters were actually interested in). If a few of the words related to politeness, they would wait much longer before interrupting. *None of the subjects had any idea that arranging the supposedly 'random' words had affected their behavior.*

A surge of similar studies has shown how the images we see, the topics that come up in our conversation, even objects and smells around us, have subtly persuasive effects on our subsequent choices and attitudes, *even though we are not conscious of any connection between the thing that 'primed' us and our later choices.*

### **Here are three subtle and powerful ways to use this advanced 'friendly persuasion' technique:**

Whatever you want someone to do, whether it's to think more optimistically about their future or to be more determined about going to the gym, *before* you ask them to do anything:

- 1. Talk about universal examples of the response you want them to have.**  
Tell them stories of how people found optimism in the direst of circumstances. Talk about the determination involved in everyday life, emphasizing how even coming to see a therapist takes a real determination to make a change.
- 2. Steer the conversation towards topics they feel resourceful about.**  
Chat about their hobbies, their interests. Show interest in their achievements and the people they care about. By doing this, you reinforce their strengths and lift their mood, so priming them to be more optimistic and determined when you ask them about their goals.
- 3. Pepper your language with positive words**  
Use words like *hope, resolve, passion, commitment, strength*. Remember that words like *depression, despair, loneliness* etc can still be used initially to 'match' the client's state or language, but using negative words for a whole hour or more will prime them (and you!) to go into those states. Persuasion works both ways.

By taking these steps in advance, you will have 'prepared the ground' for your suggestions, and you'll get noticeably better responses from people.

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These persuasion techniques can be used for any communication goal, from eliciting hypnotic phenomena to cheering up a friend. If your experience is like mine, you'll find that the more you use them, the less you seem to run into 'difficult clients', because you're consistently getting people into states where they can properly take on board your ideas and put them to good use.

## Learn advanced priming online with Precision Hypnosis

If you already use hypnosis in your practice, or are just an avid student of the art, our online course Precision Hypnosis will take your skills to a whole new level.

The next course starts November 9th which may seem like a long way off, but this course usually sells out way ahead of the start date.

[Read more about Precision Hypnosis here.](#)

I hope I'll meet you on the course.

[Mark Tyrrell](#)

Co-Founder

Uncommon Knowledge

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