

Confidential Class Manual

**The complete and uncensored lessons
from Blair Warren's Forbidden Keys to
Persuasion E-Class**

**Including -
Suggested Homework Assignments
Actual Q&A from the course
A Select Bibliography
And a chapter excerpt from Joe Vitale's book -*The
Seven Lost Secrets of Success***

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The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion Lesson Manual

What students have said about The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion...

"I am impressed with the material. It's exactly what I was looking for and what you represented. Learning how people REALLY operate and how to persuade them ethically to my way of thinking is the most valuable learning there is. Persuasion is the highest paid skill. And for good reason. There are so few who know how to do so effectively. There is fascinating information in the lessons and it's unlike anything that is available elsewhere. Plus, the information is immediately usable, in ALL areas of life. Having these secrets at my fingertips provides me with a high level of confidence. Thank you for making this material available. I think this material should have a high price. It is THAT valuable."

John Bedosky, Attorney-at-Law

"So many dirty little secrets... so many delicious ways to capitalize on them. Blair's Forbidden Keys are raw power, but only if you know them. You'll learn ways - shocking ways - to get people to act in your (and their) best interests. Miss this one, and tomorrow someone could be using the Forbidden Keys on YOU. You'd never even know."

Charles Burke, publisher
The Sizzling Edge Newsletter
<http://www.sizzlinsedse.com>

"I've studied, practiced and had a strong interest in persuasion and influence for about 20 years. Yet The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion challenged me with new material and outrageous ideas that make so much sense. It is not that everything else I knew is wrong, but that Blair has revealed another important facet of the puzzle that unlocks and adds power to the other elements. Blair is a good teacher, and his material is thoughtful and learnable. Anyone who needs to influence others should take this course. And that means everyone."

Geoff Kelly

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"The 'Forbidden Keys' information is both provocative and arresting. Apart from its excellence, I was so impressed with your substantial feedback on my homework assignments and responses to my questions. This personalization of your material is what makes it so immediately useful. Your offer of assisting with my keynote even after the course ends was over the top.

I have benefited enormously from your years of research into areas of persuasion that have puzzled and evaded me for years, and feel that I have been taken under the wing of a human nature guru!"

Mia Doucet

"Simply titillating! I haven't seen this quality of raw, unadulterated, usable intelligence since...well, never! I appreciate how you 'tell it like it is' and not sugar coat with theory and hyperbole that only sounds good.

The power one can harness with this intelligence is significant to say the least. Now I understand why you take such care in disseminating this information. Thanks for sharing it with me!"

W.N. New York, New
York

"The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion e-class is life changing with totally original, exciting insights into human nature. I have never seen these concepts discussed anywhere else. They are like an expose of our own nature. I found myself excited to receive and work through each lesson - a miracle given that I usually receive over 500 e-mails a day!

Blair's follow through and repeated emails inviting students to consult with him broke through my ridiculously overbooked schedule and got me to really apply the learning to my own business. His advice alone is worth many times the tuition for the course. The insights and suggestions he offers are down to earth and practical - not the usual marketing hype. Priceless!"

Larry Clapp, Ph.D. J.D.

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An Introduction to The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion

On March 26, 1997 two unrelated events occurred that directly led to the creation of this work and dramatically altered the way I communicate with others.

Long before that day, I'd been obsessed with the study of human nature, primarily techniques of influence and persuasion. I tore through every book, tape and article on the subject I could find and eagerly applied them in my personal and professional life. From conventional theories of sales and marketing to esoteric philosophies of interpersonal communication and everything in between, I was determined to learn everything I could about human behavior and how to influence it. I thought I had learned a lot. But on March 26, 1997 I had to throw virtually everything I had ever learned out the window.

The First Event

I was having breakfast with a friend of mine, an insurance agent who was struggling to sell new clients and retain his current ones. He explained how his business had never been tougher and he wasn't sure how much longer he could survive in it. We discussed some strategies and techniques he could try, but in the end he wasn't having any of it. He'd tried everything he could think of without success and had apparently resigned himself to failure. I will never forget a statement he made toward the end of our meeting.

"People need what I'm selling. I know it and in many cases they know it. I believe in my company, our products, and I know for a fact our rates are competitive. But still, I can't get them to buy."

With that, he shook his head and our meeting came to an end. While his problem wasn't obvious to himself, it seemed blatantly obvious to me. A negative attitude. No one can succeed with an attitude like that, I assured myself. Soon, however, my simplistic diagnosis would fall apart and be replaced with a haunting question that would consume much of my life for the next six years.

The Second Event

Like many other people I watched the evening news in horror as the actions of an obscure group of thirty-nine individuals transfixed the world. The group, which called themselves Heaven's Gate, had committed mass suicide under the direction of their leader, Marshall Applewhite. But why? Was it some tragic mistake? Did they take part in some bizarre spiritual ritual that accidentally led to their deaths? Had they been forced? Were they despondent?

Within days, videotaped "suicide notes" were broadcast. In them, members of the cult talked about the actions they were about to take, actions which by now had stunned the world. What reason did they offer to explain their actions?

They took their own lives so that they could shed their human containers and ascend to the level beyond human.

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They *knew* what they were doing! They weren't forced. It wasn't a mistake. It wasn't an accident and they weren't despondent. Quite the contrary, as they spoke they appeared happy, confident and even eager to get on with their plans. In other words, they couldn't wait to take their own lives!

Soon hordes of media experts offered explanations as to what had happened. Every possible cause was offered up. Some of the more common were that the victims were simply confused, vulnerable or insane. Some suggested they had been subjected to powerful brainwashing techniques that made them act against their will. Others pointed to the charismatic powers of their leader. It seemed everyone had a different theory as to why it happened, but one thing was certain. Whatever the forces were behind this tragedy, we could take solace in knowing that this type of event is exceedingly rare.

Soon the media furor over Heaven's Gate subsided and other stories captured the public interest. But for me, even though I had no personal connection to those affected by this tragedy, I noticed an irony that made it impossible for me to forget what had happened.

Marshall Applewhite convinced thirty-eight people to join him in committing the ultimate act of self-destruction, while my friend struggled to convince people to buy insurance policies for their own well-being. From here, I began to see similar ironies all around me.

There are parents who have nothing but the best intentions toward their children who lose complete control over them, virtually overnight, to gangs whose intentions are anything but honorable. There are truly spiritual people whose messages of hope and love are mocked and ultimately ignored while others who spew messages filled with hate, jealousy and revenge find legions of loyal followers. And of course there are those who can't be talked into making regular deposits into a savings account by family members who lose it all overnight after going into "business" with someone they've met just days before.

So while it may be reassuring to know that tragedies such as Heaven's Gate are rare, perhaps the principles that made them possible are not. With this realization, I had stumbled upon the question that has haunted me for years.

How does one convince other people to willingly act against their own self interests while others struggle to convince people to engage in acts that would clearly be in their own best interests?

In Search of Answers

It is tempting to think it is simply a matter of skill on the part of the manipulator, naivete on the part of the manipulated, or perhaps the existence of secret, super powerful techniques of persuasion that aren't known to the masses. These explanations are attractive because they seem to answer the question rather nicely. And surely there are varying degrees of truth to each of them. But ultimately, leaving the question at this point does little to help the average person truly understand the dynamics behind such situations.

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What if it isn't just a matter of skill, naivete, or technique? What if there is another factor, something even more difficult to accept? And what if that factor is honesty?

Dr. Robert Anthony once said, "The degree to which you will awaken will be in direct proportion to the amount of truth you can accept about yourself." It could also be said that the degree to which we will be able to influence others will be in direct proportion to the amount of truth we can accept about human nature.

You may find some of the material in this class shocking, even depressing. I know I did when I began my study. Some of it seemed so cruel and manipulative that after three years of research I abandoned the project. I boxed up my reference materials and everything I had written so far, determined never to let them see the light of day. Then, something turned it all around.

Over the next few months, I began to notice some key changes in the circumstances of my life. My relationships with my family, friends, clients and co-workers began to dramatically improve. I felt a greater sense of confidence and power in dealing with other people, even in the trickiest of circumstances. And perhaps, most important of all, I began to develop a deeper appreciation for life. When I looked back to determine what had made such changes possible, I was stunned at what I found:

My relationships had improved because my understanding of human nature had improved.

The research I had done earlier, while disheartening at the time, had given me a deeper understanding and appreciation of human nature, which was now showing up in all I did. While I wasn't consciously "trying" to use any of the techniques or strategies I had learned, it seemed they began to surface effortlessly, and more important, *appropriately* given the circumstances in which I found myself. I began to share some of this information with others and found it had similar results for them. Slowly, I began to consider resurrecting this project. Then, a family conversation convinced me to move forward.

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, like many families, ours became closer as we all tried to make sense of what had happened. In the midst of one conversation, a family member made a comment that floored me. He was talking about how Osama BinLaden's followers lived one of the most wretched lives on earth. Their living conditions, their poverty and their outlook for the future were almost unbelievable. Then, he said he couldn't understand how BinLaden could command such loyalty from his followers when he had never given them *a single thing of any value*. He concluded that his followers were stupid at best and crazy at worst. I was stunned. Here was another riddle of human nature being chalked up to some cause that gives us no power over the situation. I couldn't let the comment go unchallenged.

"What if his followers aren't stupid or crazy? What if they aren't that different from you or me? And what if he *did* give them something of value? But not just anything, but something they felt was worth giving their lives for? What if he gave them the greatest gift one person can give another?"

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"And what was that?" he asked.

"Simple," I said. "Hope. As crazy as that may sound to you or me, he promised them a way out of their present circumstances and in doing so, he gave them the ultimate gift, a sense of hope. Was it misguided? Absolutely. Were they foolish for believing him? You bet. But none of this mattered because in their minds he had taken them from being helpless individuals and turned them into 'holy warriors' who would enjoy untold pleasures in the afterlife."

Now, lest you misunderstand me, I in no way condone BinLaden's actions. Nor do I condone the actions of Marshall Applewhite, David Koresh, Adolph Hitler or any of the other people I've studied whose actions destroyed the lives of others. My sole purpose is to try to understand what made their actions possible. In this pursuit, I have learned two invaluable lessons.

First, the fundamental source of their power comes from a brutally honest understanding of human nature. And second, if we can stomach some ugly truths about ourselves, this same understanding can be used to improve lives and relationships, not just destroy them.

Life is a corrupting process from the time a child learns to play his mother against his father in the politics of when to go to bed, he who fears corruption fears life.

Saul Alinsky, 1960's Social Activist

Intended Audience

I want to point out that this class is about persuasion as it applies to a broad spectrum of interpersonal relationships and human communication. In other words, this is not a class specifically about copywriting, sales, marketing or family relationships, etc. It is a class about human nature - how to understand it, how to work with it and most importantly, how to profit from it. So while it goes without saying that salesmen, marketers, copywriters and others will most certainly profit from it, it is not intended to address any particular area of persuasion over another.

I have used these ideas in my work as a television producer to create numerous television programs and commercials, marketing strategies for our own company as well as those of clients and have used them in my daily life to improve my relationships with family, friends and clients. I cannot imagine an area of interpersonal communication that cannot be transformed by studying this material.

In closing, I have spent years studying how gurus, conmen and their ilk have persuaded others to engage in behavior that is unfathomable to most "normal" people. While in the wake of cult suicides or other newsworthy scams and schemes, the public is often intrigued with this same question, the analysis is shallow at best and the behavior often winds up being attributed to "crazy people doing crazy things." I believe this conclusion

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serves only one purpose - it puts our minds at ease and makes us feel smarter than those "weirdos" and "fools" we hear about on the news. And with that our opportunity to learn from these situations is lost.

What if these people aren't "fools"? What if they aren't "weirdos"? What if they are just like you and me but, unlike us, happened to have had the bad fortune of encountering someone with bad intentions who understood human nature better than the average person? What if there are tricks, principles and ideas that we can learn by studying these people that can give the rest of us a power that at times can be miraculous?

I believe there are. And I call them The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion.

Course Overview

Lesson 1: The Basis of Forbidden Persuasion and The Achilles Heel of the Human Mind

This class exposes many of the false notions people have regarding human behavior and clears the way for a more powerful and effective method of persuasion. We'll discuss two ugly truths that no one wants to talk about, three tendencies that force others to employ ulterior motives, a "trap door" to the human mind and more. These concepts alone are often enough to knock just about any persuasion campaign off dead center.

Lesson 2: How Cults Control Their Followers & What We Can Learn From Them - Pt. 1

Lesson 3: How Cults Control Their Followers & What We Can Learn From Them - Pt. 2

Sessions 2 and 3 focus on three concepts cult leaders use to gain and maintain control over their followers and more importantly, how we can use these same techniques in everyday life for the betterment of all involved. These three concepts can be used as a three tier system as cult leaders do, or depending on your circumstances and intentions, separately to electrify persuasive communication, solidify customer or client loyalty, generate automatic acceptance of one's ideas, etc.

Lesson 4: The Secret of Conjurers, Conmen & Comedians - Psychological Ventriloquism

This class is my personal favorite as it deals with perhaps the least understood but most universally applicable aspect of Forbidden Persuasion - Psychological Ventriloquism. This is a principle that underlies the performance of the most powerful magicians, comedians and conmen in the world, yet few of us even recognize it when it is employed right before our very eyes. Why? Because by definition you cannot see it - this is what makes the "magic" these people create possible. You're only supposed to feel its effects. After this class, you will not only begin to see it used all around you, you'll be able to employ it yourself to dramatically increase the power of virtually every situation you encounter.

Lesson 5: Playing Games You Cannot Lose - The Power of a God Complex

If you think about the most striking characteristic of the most powerful persuaders in existence, it has to be their profound sense of confidence. This is what gives them their

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power, their charisma, their ability to command attention. But this confidence is horribly misunderstood by virtually everyone. While some people obviously have "crossed the line of sanity" when it comes to confidence (e.g. Hitler, Jim Jones, etc.), the vast majority of these people have managed to develop what I refer to as a healthy "God Complex". This is not megalomania nor self-conceit. It is a powerful state of mind in which you play games you cannot lose and come from a position of total authenticity, yet it is available to even the most painfully insecure person, if he or she understands the philosophy behind it. In this class, we'll expose the source of this power and learn how to generate it on demand.

Lesson 6: The "third arm" of communication. Applying the Forbidden Keys in everyday life and an introduction to CMAD (Contextual Message Analysis and Design).

While everyone knows about verbal and nonverbal communication, few consider that there is another, equally powerful aspect of communication. And until this distinction is made we are leaving power on the table when it comes to persuasion. In our final class, we'll cover this neglected aspect of communication, we'll look at applying the Forbidden Keys to Persuasion in real life situations and I'll introduce you to CMAD, a strategic tool I've developed in my work with clients to improve their communications and their bottom lines.

Lesson 1: The Basis of Forbidden Persuasion and The Achilles Heel of the Human Mind

Welcome to the first lesson of The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion. In this lesson, we must set the stage for everything to come. Given that human nature is what it is, this isn't as easy as it sounds.

Whenever I discuss the idea of "forbidden persuasion" with others, I typically receive one of two responses. People are either fascinated or appalled. The following section is for those who are appalled.

Two Ugly Truths No One Wants to Talk About

The single greatest protest I hear is that I am teaching people to be manipulative. I disagree. People are *already* manipulative. What I am doing is encouraging them to stop lying to themselves about it, to understand why it's often necessary, and to learn how to do it more effectively. (Remember in the introduction when I said the degree to which we will be able to influence others would be in direct proportion to the amount of truth we can accept about human nature? I wasn't kidding.)

Ugly Truth #1

I love to ask people to explain the difference between persuasion and manipulation. Some say persuasion is based on logic whereas manipulation is based on trickery. Others say they mean the same thing, except that persuasion is ethical while manipulation is not. Some are honest enough to admit they don't know the difference but that they don't like the sound of the word manipulation. From what I can gather, most people think persuasion is what *they* do. Manipulation is what *other* people do. Why is it that manipulation has such a bad reputation?

According to my Webster's dictionary, "manipulate" has three shades of meaning. 1) to work or handle skillfully 2) to manage artfully or shrewdly, often in an unfair way and 3) to alter for one's own purposes.

With the exception of the phrase "in an unfair way," the word doesn't seem as awful as many people think. In fact, it sounds admirable. "To work or handle skillfully." Who doesn't want that? "To manage artfully or shrewdly." Uh oh, that word "shrewdly" doesn't sound very ethical, does it? Except when we turn back to Webster, we find it simply means "clever or sharp in practical affairs." Count me in. "To alter for one's own purposes." Here we go again. That doesn't sound very admirable, does it? But what if our *purpose* is admirable, could that justify our use of manipulation? My staunchest critics cry, "Never!" To which I respond, "Hypocrites."

If you've ever seen a pitchman working a crowd at a carnival or fair, you might have witnessed just such manipulation. Some pitchmen use confederates in the audience who are instructed to eagerly step forward to buy the pitchman's product when the buying stage of the pitch begins. This creates a sense of urgency and desire in the genuine

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audience members who may have been hesitant to buy before the sudden "rush" for the product. Sounds a bit sleazy, doesn't it? Even if the product is an excellent value and a perfect match for the audience members, few could justify the use of such a blatant manipulative tactic.

Now let's take a look at another type of pitch. The Evangelical Crusade.

It has been reported that when some evangelical preachers call for those in the audience to step forward to give their lives to Christ, they aren't always relying on just the Holy Spirit to get them moving. Apparently, before an event, a number of volunteers may be dispersed throughout the audience waiting for their signal to "spontaneously" come forward. In their wake, many of the remaining audience members follow suit. Some people have pointed to this very example to show the ethical use of the principle of social proof or consensus. Now, if it is true that this example is ethical while our pitchman's use of the identical principle is sleazy, we must ask ourselves why this is so. The answer?

We are hypocrites.

The truth is, everyone is a manipulator. Good people, bad people, young people, old people. None of us can escape this one. If we are going to survive, we are going to manipulate. Of course, no one likes to think of himself or herself in this way. Sure, other people manipulate, but not me. / have good intentions. / would never do such a thing. Now, granted, some people won't go out and do it *intentionally*, but don't be misled. They'll go out and manipulate just the same. You can count on it. Why? Because manipulation is a part of our very existence. We manipulate the environment, we manipulate people and we manipulate circumstances all in an effort to meet our needs and insure our survival.

Denying this doesn't make one less of a manipulator. Denying this makes one a less *conscious* manipulator. And that can make one a less effective manipulator.

"...we are all at the mercy of influences of which we are unaware and over which we have virtually no conscious control. What is even more frightening is that we ourselves, no matter how careful and discreet we believe ourselves to be, are constantly influencing others in ways of which we may be only dimly or not at all aware. Indeed, we may unconsciously be responsible for influences of which we consciously know nothing and which, if we knew them, we might find totally unacceptable."

Dr. Paul Watzlawick, Psychotherapist

Why is it important to admit this? Because the more we try to pretend we aren't manipulative, the more we tend to lose sight of the true psychological dynamics of our relationships. We begin to relate to one another in a world of make-believe where powerful persuasion can only occur by chance. To reverse this, we must accept that anytime we try to change the thoughts or behavior of another person, we are manipulating them. Persuasion may be the tool we use to manipulate, but we're attempting to manipulate them nonetheless.

Now, returning to the dictionary for just a moment, we are still left with a dilemma. If you recall, there was one little phrase in our definition of manipulation we have yet to consider: to manage artfully or shrewdly, often *in an unfair way*. Unfortunately, there is no way out of this one. Clearly there are "unfair" methods of manipulation that few but the criminally minded could justify but rest assured, those are outside the scope of this class. Every insight and technique we will discuss can be used for good or ill, unless those of us with good intentions refuse to acknowledge them. Then, they'll remain only in the hands of others with results we can hardly imagine. To prevent this, we must accept our first ugly truth about human nature:

Ugly truth #1: We are ALL manipulators. And since few of us can accept this, most of us are not only hypocrites, but also less effective in our communications with others as we could be.

Ugly Truth #2

In case you're thinking I'm suggesting we abandon all concern for morality, nothing could be further from the truth. Our sense of morality is what keeps us from acting like savages. Unfortunately, our *misuse* of our morality is what keeps us from truly understanding one another. And this leads to much of the conflict, confusion and frustration in our lives.

I was once at a party when the topic of cults came up. In particular, the Heaven's Gate UFO cult in which 39 people willingly took their own lives. I listened as people gave their various theories into how Marshall Applewhite had managed to have so much power over his followers. He used secret "mind control" techniques one person said. Another talked about the isolation of the group. One, who happened to be a nutritionist, thought that perhaps the group's strict diet made it difficult for them to reason effectively, thus making them more susceptible to suggestion. Whatever the explanation, everyone thought those in the cult had to have been crazy to have committed suicide. The discussion was going fast and furious when I asked a question, which instantly derailed everyone around me.

"What if they *weren't* crazy and what if they *didn't* commit suicide?" I asked.

"What are you talking about?" one woman asked. "Are you saying they were murdered?"

"Not at all. They clearly did what they did voluntarily. But what if it wasn't suicide? What if they simply *went to the next level*?"

At that point, the room fell silent. All eyes were on me.

"Don't you see, as long as you label what they did 'suicide,' it will never make any sense because we all "know" *sane people don't commit suicide*. The very act goes against our sense of survival. If you stop there, the only possible answer is that they were crazy. And worse, while it seems you may have answered the question, you haven't developed any greater understanding of these types of situations or any better chance of dealing with them in the future."

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"So what's the answer?" several people asked.

"I already told you. *They went to the next level.* Or, to put it more accurately, they *believed* they were going to the next level. And when you believe that, and you believe that the next level will be better than this one, you can't get there fast enough. It's only logical. You see, our basic question is wrong. Rather than ask how Applewhite got them to commit suicide, we should ask how he got them to believe they were going to the 'next level.' Answer that question, and we will have learned something useful."

"Useful for what?" one man demanded. "Those people were so strange I don't see how we could learn anything of value from studying them."

"And that's the real problem," I said. "Your sense of right and wrong won't even let you consider the possibility. And until you do, you will never understand how people like Marshall Applewhite, Jim Jones and David Koresh do what they do. And worse, the only people that will have access to that type of power will be the bad guys."

This story illustrates the primary reason we don't have a deeper understanding of human nature: our sense of morality not only affects how we act on the world, but how we *see* the world. It's one thing for our ethics to keep us from hurting one another, but it's quite another for them to keep us from *understanding* one another. The moment we try to make sense of another person's actions using our own sense of morality, we are destined to come away frustrated.

Unfortunately, this is the norm. After all, when we point a judgmental finger at others it has a way of making us feel morally superior to them. However, that's where the benefits of this finger pointing end.

When we forgo judgment and instead entertain the idea that people's actions make sense given their own sense of morality and their own interpretation of reality, we are well on our way to understanding them. We may never entirely agree with or even accept their behavior, but we may come to understand it. Then, and only then, can we even begin to hope to influence it with some semblance of precision.

So, rest assured, I'm not suggesting we abandon our ethics. Far from it. What I am encouraging us to do is to consider how our sense of morality can get in the way of our perceptions and accept our second ugly truth about human nature:

Ugly Truth #2: Our biggest impediment to understanding and influencing human behavior is that our sense of morality unconsciously filters our perceptions of others and as a result, invisibly alters the way we interact with them.

Okay, while there are certainly many other "ugly truths" we could discuss, for our purposes, these two are plenty. Still, don't think that by pointing these out I am rubber-stamping all of humanity as untrustworthy and deceptive. I am not. Clearly there is much about our behavior that is honorable, objective and benevolent, but that doesn't change the fact that these ugly truths are often out there affecting our lives, even when most people don't recognize their power or significance.

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Jim Jones, David Koresh, Adolph Hitler, and many, many others did recognize and exploit these aspects of human nature and untold numbers of people suffered as a result. Why didn't these victims see what they were walking into? And what can the rest of us learn from their mistakes? A lot.

The Masking of Intent

One should not be too straightforward. Go and see the forest. The straight trees are cut down, the crooked ones are left standing.

Chanakya - Fourth Century, B.C.

Ulterior motives. The phrase alone conjures up images that turn our stomachs. Unscrupulous salesmen, conniving politicians, backstabbing friends and coworkers, cheating lovers, lying children, ad nauseum. It seems the world is full of devious manipulators who tell us one thing just to get another. In fact, few things infuriate us more than discovering the ulterior motives of others. We feel betrayed, cheated and violated. How could others resort to such trickery and deceit against us? This is not a rhetorical question. There is an answer. And chances are, you're not going to like it.

People have ulterior motives because oftentimes that is the only way we can be persuaded to do anything.

Don't believe me? You will shortly. But first, there is one more bit of bad news we need to get out of the way.

Ulterior motives aren't just the tools of others, but of ourselves.

Or as Aristotle said, "All that we do is done with an eye to something else."

It is appropriate to begin here since ulterior motives lie at the heart of all forbidden persuasion. Whether it's propaganda, mind control, mental programming or any of the other forbidden areas, it is ultimately the masking of intent that makes them viable tools for change. So it is imperative that we come to terms with this fact early in our study.

Why We Can't Be Straight with One Another

Honesty is the best policy. If you want something, just come right out and say it. Be honest and forthright. Your listener will respect your honesty and will evaluate your request on its merits, and arrive at a rational, well-thought-out answer to your proposal. If you don't get the results you wanted, it just wasn't meant to be. If you believe this, let me suggest a few simple experiments.

If you're single, next time you meet someone you'd like to date, tell them everything you want out of a relationship right up front. Tell them everything you'll expect from them if the relationship progresses. If intimacy in the near future has crossed your mind, be sure you tell them. Or let's say you're a salesman and you're meeting with a prospect, lay all your cards on the table right up front. Tell them you're hoping they buy your most

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expensive model and an extended warranty. And don't forget to tell them about all the extras you're going to hit them up for. And finally, if you're a parent of a teenager, next time they rebel, just tell them you'd like them to stop. Give them a few good reasons and assert your authority. See how well they respond.

Would you approach influence situations like this? Not if you want to be successful. You can't, not because you want to be deceitful and conniving, but because, regardless of how much we like to think we live in a rational world, we don't. While there are times we can and should try to persuade others honestly and directly, more often than not, this is impossible.

Something is amiss. We cry out for others to be honest, then deny them. We despise those who are dishonest, then bow to their hidden desires. Are we lying to each other? Are we lying to ourselves? Are we forcing each other to choose between being honest failures or unscrupulous manipulators? Yes, yes, and yes. But only if we continue to cling to the belief that what we want is communication that is honest and forthright. In reality, we don't. We often want something else entirely. But before we get to that, let's take a look at some of our behavioral tendencies that often make it necessary to hide our intentions from one another.

Tendency #1

Last night I received two phone calls. The instant I pegged the callers as telemarketers, I hung up. Today, my wife and I went to an electronics store just to look around. Soon, we unexpectedly found ourselves considering buying a new TV. A salesman appeared but we waved him off. He didn't get the message. Like a mosquito he dropped back and hovered behind us. Every minute or so he would step forward and provide answers to questions we didn't ask. Eventually, we became so annoyed we left without spending a penny. Just a few hours prior to writing this section someone knocked on my front door. When I looked through the peephole and saw a stranger with a box of candy bars, I pretended I wasn't home. These are just a few examples that occurred in one 24-hour period that I could share with you.

The fact is each of us faces a barrage of various pitches every day. So while we already feel pinched for time, we have to fend off dozens of unwelcome attempts to sell us something. When we're eating dinner we don't want to switch long distance carriers. When we're working we don't want to stop and talk about color copiers with a stranger who walks in off the street. And when we're enjoying a TV program, we don't want to buy life insurance. Except in those rare cases when people actively seek out what we're proposing, they will resist. It's human nature. And once others begin to resist us, it is infinitely more difficult to persuade them than if they hadn't resisted in the first place.

Sounds obvious, right? Of course it does. Everybody knows this. If this is the case, why is there so much resistance in the world?

Prospects resist salespeople even when it would be in their best interests to listen. Employees resist their employers even when the suggestions would make their job easier. Kids resist their parents even though their parents have their best interests at heart.

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Students resist their teachers because they already know it all. Teachers resist their students because, after all, what do students know? The list goes on and on.

The interesting thing to consider is this: While most of us are unable to persuade people to do things that would benefit them, cult leaders and con men are able to convince highly intelligent people to willingly give up their possessions, their families, even their lives. How do these people get others to willingly act against their own best interests when most people can't get their children to take out the trash? They understand the importance of overcoming resistance.

In 1937, Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, in his book *Mental Poisoning*, wrote:

"Psychology teaches us that the only successful way by which to make another mind or a strange mind obey a wish of our own mind is to present that command or desire in such a subtle manner that it will be either unconsciously or willingly accepted by the other mind and acted upon with cooperation *before it has had time to analyze it and resent it*. But the instinct to resent a direct command is always present, and this natural and normal resentment must be overcome if we would have other persons do our bidding." (Italics added.)

The key here is the phrase "before it has had time to analyze it and resent it." If your target has time to think about your proposal, your target will more often than not begin to resist your proposal. You can count on it.

Try this sometime. Ask someone to stand and face you, about three feet away. Hold your hands up, palms toward them at about shoulder width. Ask your partner to do the same. Now, place your hands against theirs and hold them there. After a moment, begin to push against their hands and notice what happens. In virtually every instance, they will push back. And the harder you push, the harder they will push. Once this cycle begins a mutually satisfying result is almost impossible. When you're playing with someone, this type of game is usually fun. When you're trying to persuade someone, it's usually a disaster. The trick is to prevent resistance from even becoming an issue. The first step in doing this is to never forget the first tendency of human nature:

People resist unwelcome attempts to persuade them.

Tendency #2

A number of years ago my wife and I went to look at new cars. Before we did, we decided that no matter what, we weren't going to buy one. We simply wanted to look. With our checkbook back at home, we adamantly told every salesman we were only looking, not buying. The salesmen we met fell into two categories. Some took our words to heart, showed us to the lot, asked us to find them if we had any questions and disappeared. The others treated our position as a challenge and almost tried to beat us into buying a new car. Despite our pleas to be left alone, they couldn't bring themselves to leave. When they wouldn't, we did.

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But there was one fellow in a category all by himself. He said he understood and was glad to hear it. "Glad?" we asked. He laughed and said he was new to the car business and still wasn't comfortable with the whole process. He actually thanked us for being honest with him upfront so as not to waste his effort. We instantly loved this guy and asked him to show us around a bit. He said he wished he could but needed to take care of a few things first and, if we wouldn't mind, he would get with us shortly. No problem, we said as we walked out onto the lot feeling as though we'd met a friend rather than a salesman. Finally, we thought to ourselves, someone who understood what we wanted and wasn't going to pressure us.

I can't remember the exact amount, but I believe the car we bought from him that afternoon was around \$20,000. Yes, about an hour after meeting him, about an hour after convincing him we weren't going to buy a car, we did just that. And we did it gladly.

How was he able to get us to do something we didn't want to do? He gave us nothing to resist. By explaining he was new at selling cars and actually relieved we didn't want to buy one, he instantly put us at ease and was then able to work his magic.

During the recruitment process for the Heaven's Gate cult, there was never any secret that their ultimate goal was to leave on a UFO. For many followers, that was the main reason they joined. But unfortunately, the cult never defined the exact physical procedures that would have to be carried out to join them in space until it was too late. According to former Heaven's Gate member Robert Rubin, "No one would have gone along if they had mentioned suicide. We were supposed to go through a change to join them - but not suicide."

The first step in forbidden persuasion is often a small one. A seemingly innocent one, for that's the way to accommodate the second tendency of human nature:

People can't resist what they can't detect.

Tendency #3

One of the greatest con jobs of all time almost backfired until, with a little help, the victim convinced himself his money was safe. It wasn't.

It was Paris, 1925, and the Eiffel Tower was falling apart. Repairing the tower would be costly and its future was uncertain. This much was true. The details Victor Lustig would add, were not.

Lustig, a veteran con artist posing as a government official, gathered a half-dozen local scrap metal dealers and told them a secret. The city, unable to afford the upkeep on the tower, was planning to sell it for scrap, but due to expected controversy, needed to finalize the details before publicly announcing its plans. The dealers were being offered the chance to buy the tower before anyone else even knew it was available. With the help of elegant clothing, faked government documents and just a bit of human greed, Lustig convinced the men that he was legitimate, secured bids from each of them, and soon selected the "winner."

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As the deal neared completion, Lustig became concerned about being caught and his soon-to-be victim was getting suspicious. What was Lustig to do? Try to conclude the deal as quickly as possible? Abandon the scheme? Never. He had to reassure the mark of his honesty, but how? If he was too direct in his attempt, it might cause his mark to become even more suspicious. What he needed to do was find a way to get his victim to *convince himself that* Lustig was, in fact, a government official. In other words, he had to perform some act that would leave no doubt in his mark's mind that he was legitimate. His plan was risky. It was ingenious. And it worked perfectly.

In their next meeting, Lustig purposefully steered the discussion away from the tower and began talking about his own financial woes. As he talked, it became clear to his mark what was happening. He wasn't being conned, he was being asked for a bribe! Now he knew Lustig was a legitimate politician. Relieved, he handed over the bribe, concluded the deal and fell for one of the most famous cons in history. Yet, none of it would have happened unless Lustig clearly understood that while people sometimes believe what they are told, they never doubt what they conclude.

I remember reading a story many years ago about Ted Turner. Though I can't recall the author, the title, the magazine, or anything substantive about the article, there was something about it I will never forget. In it, there was a very brief account of the author riding along in Turner's vehicle as they got to know one another. At one point, Turner unexpectedly stopped his vehicle and, without saying a word, walked over to a soda can lying on the ground. He picked it up, threw it into the back of his vehicle, and continued driving. With that single anecdote the author painted a picture of an environmentally friendly and conscientious man. Had he simply said those things about Turner, they'd likely have gone unnoticed. But by showing Turner in action, the author allowed me to make that conclusion on my own. And not only have I never forgotten it, I've never questioned it.

".. .if you, in presenting your carefully veiled command and carefully worded or formed suggestion, can so involve it, decorate it, and clothe it that the other person's mind will hear it or recognize it or see it without immediately understanding its real nature, but will later on evolve it and mature it into a living vital idea of the individual's mind, then that individual will think or believe that the idea is one of his own conception, his own logical and reasoning conclusion, and (vanity of all vanity) because it is his own conceived and developed idea it must be true and correct and therefore worthy of immediate acceptance and highly enthusiastic adoption."

Dr. H. Spencer Lewis

Without a doubt, we are more committed to what we conclude than what we are told. If we come to believe something is false, virtually nothing will convince us it is true. If we come to believe something is true, virtually nothing will convince us it is false. The problem is, despite our faith in our conclusions, they often lead us astray without us even being aware of it. While few of us give this much thought, masters of persuasion never lose sight of the third tendency of human nature:

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People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

This third tendency is perhaps the most important of the three for it provides the basis for one of the most powerful tools of forbidden persuasion, namely, Psychological Ventriloquism. Lesson 4 will be dedicated to outlining the principles and applications of this little known tool.

For now though, it is enough for us to realize that the great majority of people never grasp the impact these tendencies have on everyday behavior. When mentioned, they seem too simple; not worthy of discussion. We seek more involved explanations and theories. And as we do, the tendencies slip from our awareness and once again guide our actions behind the scenes. While it's true we're capable of rational thought, we do so far less than we'd like to think. Psychologists Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, in their brilliant book, *The Age of Propaganda*, point out that even though we consider ourselves to be rational animals we're more like rationalizing animals. Some experts even go so far as to say that over 99% of our behavior is simply the result of conditioned responses. If this is the case, our minds must work continuously to rationalize our otherwise mindless actions. To confront and accept the alternative is simply too painful for a society that prides itself on rational thought.

Couple this denial of our own vulnerability with our insistence on honest and forthright persuasion, and we have a recipe for disaster. When we try to persuade an irrational person with a rational argument, the process goes something like this: We present our rational, well-thought-out arguments. Our prospect rejects them. Undaunted, we try again, only to get another, perhaps stronger, rejection. Clearly, our prospect isn't getting our message and frustration on both sides grows. We're upset. Our prospect is upset. And our sincere and honest proposal falls by the wayside. The situation is no different than the hands-against-hands experiment described earlier. We meet someone on neutral ground, begin to press our argument against them and they press back with rejection. We're using hands in one example and words in the other, but it's still force against force.

Now in case you think this discussion of ulterior motives is of no use outside of cults and con games, consider the following everyday business situations and the ulterior motives built into each:

Ads that look like entertainment or better yet, news reporting, such as infomercials, fake talk shows, and the like.

Mailing list/Lead generation campaigns disguised as "software registration", "rebate offers", "sweepstakes" etc.

Companies that offer "free" inspections or initial consultations that turn out to be not-so-free.

Low or no-cost seminars that are billed as demonstrations or educational presentations that somehow find their way to a secret "upsell" at the end.

And films and TV shows that "just so happen" to show brand-name products being used or displayed in the body of the "entertainment" itself. After all, it's hard to tune out an advertisement when it is embedded in the very program we're trying to watch.

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Now, there are two things that become apparent from these examples. First, ulterior motives are more commonplace than many people think. And second, to utilize the idea it is NOT necessary to hide the ulterior motive as much as it is to de-emphasize it. For example, in many of the lead generation examples just mentioned, people realize they're going to be placed on a mailing list, but if they were simply asked to put their name on a list, they wouldn't. It is only under the pretense of a more beneficial motive that they agree.

Still, clearly there are times when straightforward, factual communication is not only appropriate, but is actually demanded by either practicality or law. When someone asks you for the performance specifications of an automobile, a lawyer asks you to describe the events leading up to the murder, or your spouse asks where you were last night, you can rest assured they're not looking for a song and dance. But the majority of situations aren't this clear cut and each of us must use our own discretion to decide for ourselves when and where the use of ulterior motives would be most appropriate.

Now, as I said earlier, ulterior motives lie at the heart of all forbidden persuasion. This is why we have covered them in such detail and with such unflinching honesty. And now that we have done so, we're ready to answer the apparently absurd statement I made earlier, namely that despite what we may think, we often do not want communication that is "honest and forthright" but something else entirely.

The psychologist Sam Keen once pointed out that some primitive cultures considered the use of direct, unimaginative communication to be an insult because it didn't engage the listener's imagination. I believe the same statement is even more true today, with one major exception - we can't admit it to ourselves. Despite our steadfast belief in our rationality and appeal for "factual" direct communication, our behavior reveals our true desires. We are drawn to, and respond to, indirect communication. But why? Not because we want to, but because indirect communication fulfills our most basic and urgent psychological need. And that's...

THE ACHILLES HEEL OF THE HUMAN MIND

People have been searching for the keys to the human mind since the beginning of time. And since the birth of psychology many have laid claim to having found them. Abraham Maslow developed one of the best-known theories. Maslow identified five basic needs that drove human behavior. These needs were:

Physiological needs (food, shelter, etc.)

Safety/security needs (protection of one's person, family and possessions, etc.)

Social needs (love, sex, friendships, etc.)

Self needs (self-respect, self-confidence, etc.)

Self-actualizing needs (personal growth, fulfilling of one's purpose, etc.)

In short, Maslow argued that people's needs in one category must be met before they can turn their attention to the next. For our purposes, the important thing for us to take away

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from Maslow's work is the idea that we are *need driven*. And while Maslow's five-category model has its place in the world of psychology, at this point in our study, a simpler model will suffice. A model that has but one need. A need that everyone seems to recognize, but few know how to exploit. The following quote from media mogul Roger Ailes alludes to this need:

"Let's face it, there are three things that the media are interested in: pictures, mistakes and attacks. It's my orchestra-pit theory of politics. If you have two guys on a stage and one guy says, "I have a solution to the Middle East problem" and the other guy falls in the orchestra pit, who do you think is going to be on the evening news?"

Now when we consider that the media's job is to cater to us, that is, to provide us with what most interests us, we can see that this quote is less about "media" than it is about human nature.

Still, we can all laugh at the absurdity in Ailes' quote. But a good laugh is all most people will get out of it. There is something else hidden behind the humor. Something that when exploited has a power beyond belief. Marshall Applewhite, David Koresh and Jim Jones used it to seize control of their followers and lead them to their deaths. And all around us, political and race-based organizations use it to whip their people into hate-filled frenzies. What these people, and all the master manipulators before them, know, is that people have a desperate need for mental engagement - to have their attention captured, focused and intensified.

While the need for mental engagement doesn't appear on Maslow's scale and doesn't replace those he identified, it can override them. Just as physiological needs take precedence over safety/security needs, the need for mental engagement can override our physiological needs, if only for a while. We can be starving and searching for food when something comes along, distracts us, and before we know it, hours have passed without any sensation of hunger. We can be in severe pain and without our being aware of it, something else comes along and captures our attention and the pain is gone. We've all experienced situations like these, yet upon reflection they don't seem to make any sense. Why would we put off something important like eating or seeking medical attention, for something less important? Because we don't have any choice. The body may send signals to the brain indicating its needs, but the mind doesn't have to pay attention to them. What the mind must do though, is pay attention to something. And without proper mental discipline, the mind will focus on the most appealing option before it.

Every moment of every day, we want to be engaged in something. It often doesn't matter what it is as long as it can gain and maintain our attention. We seek entertainment, conversation, confrontation. We do crossword puzzles, work in the garden, listen to music. We cook, we clean, we rearrange. Even when we're exhausted and want to relax, we simply engage in something else. We swim, we go to amusement parks and we meditate. All this in an effort to alleviate the one thing few people can endure: boredom.

The need for mental engagement is so fundamental that few give it much thought. But it's always there, lurking just behind our awareness, looking for something to "lock onto."

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This is why many of us are so easily distracted. Unless our current thoughts or activities are sufficiently engaging, the next best thing that comes along will pull us away. And since it's through engagement that we experience and through experience that we are changed, those who engage us hold the keys to our hearts and minds, and from there, our actions. We do not see these people as manipulators. We see them as saviors.

What holds attention determines action.

William James

We can no more decide what we pay attention to than we can decide whom we will love.

Dr. Jerome Barkow, Darwin, Sex and Status

These quotes illustrate the profound affect attention plays in our lives. They also point the way to a secret door into the human mind, that when compromised, leaves us open to committing acts we wouldn't dream of were we in control of our own thoughts.

Now, while it is one thing to accept that we can only act upon those things of which we are aware, it is quite another to admit that we have little control over what those things are. Surely, this has to be an exception rather than the rule. Sorry. No such luck.

As an experiment, the next time you are trying to concentrate on something important and a distraction occurs, don't pay any attention to it. If you do this honestly you will find that you can't do it at all. It is impossible. If you are aware that a distraction occurred, it has *already* captured your attention, against your will, even if only for a moment. Your concentration has been broken. This is the very dilemma that many people seek to remedy through meditation. While with great discipline we can improve our ability to concentrate through meditation, the ability to completely control our thoughts is an impossibility. Put me in front of the world's greatest guru in the deepest of all meditations, give me a hammer and a clean shot at his toe, and I guarantee you I will get his attention. So much for meditation. Even then, that requires discipline. And if there is one thing most of us lack, it's discipline. Therefore, when it comes to what we will pay attention to, we hardly have the last word. In fact, most of us are so scattered in our lives that we hardly have any word at all.

The irony is, when it comes to our attention, other people can exercise more control over it than we do. And what's worse, we often don't even realize it until it's too late.

Imagine for a moment that you are in a movie theater waiting for the lights to dim and the show to start. As you wait, you try to relax and get comfortable. You notice the sticky floor beneath your feet. Beside you, your companion's seat squeaks every time they move. Behind you, a group of teenagers won't stop talking. And in front of you a very tall man just sat down and, unless you sit just so, is blocking your view. Still, you know that soon the movie will start and all these things will fade from your awareness. But remember, you are attending this movie as an experiment and I have asked you to perform one simple action. I have given you a small hand-held device with a button on it and have asked you to simply press the button the moment the movie captures your

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attention and you lose all sense of the other things going on around you. After that, you are free to enjoy the film. If the film is one you have really been eager to watch, how long do you think it will be before you press the button?

The answer? You would never press the button. By the very definition of the experiment you couldn't do it. At least not when I asked you to because if you are still conscious of my request, the movie has yet to fully capture your attention. So you have to wait. But then, when the moment does come and your attention is captured, you are no longer conscious of my request for you to press the button. The experiment would be a failure. But then again, maybe not. While this experiment will never tell us the time it takes for one to have their attention captured, it shows us something infinitely more important.

It shows us that we may never know our attention has been captured until after it is released.

This is why it is so important for us to recognize the value of fully engaging another's mind. It is also critical to understand the difference between "attention" and "attention capture".

It is one thing to "pay attention to something", it is quite another to have our attention "captured" by something. While in both cases, we may or may not voluntarily give our attention to the arresting stimulus, that is where the similarities end. When we "pay attention", we maintain an awareness of our "selves" and therefore maintain control over the encounter. When our attention is "captured", we lose all sense of our "selves" as in our movie theater example. "We" literally *do not exist* at that moment in time. And if we do not exist, we do not have conscious control in that moment of our own mental state.

Of course, this situation is only temporary. At some point, the lights in the theater will go on, our neighbor will step on our toes going to the bathroom, or some errant thought will seize upon us ("Did I lock the door to my house?") and the spell will be broken. But make no mistake about it, the "spell" is real and our lack of conscious control during its existence is real. And more importantly, the consequences can be mind-boggling.

The Effects of Attention Capture

While some view capturing attention as the first stage of persuasion, many of those I studied seemed to view it as the *only* stage of persuasion. The fact is, there isn't a single principle of persuasion you can't violate and still succeed if you sufficiently engage another's mind. No matter how unskilled or unpolished you may be, if you can capture and hold another person's attention long enough, they will eventually fold to your command. Why? Because when our attention is captured, our conscious judgment and self-awareness recedes and suggestibility takes their place.

Dr. Ronald C. Simons in his book *Boo! Culture, Experience and the Startle Reflex*, discusses four different effects attention capture may have on an individual. Paralysis, approach, matching and obedience.

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Paralysis is induced when something stops us in our tracks. Whatever we were thinking or doing prior to having our attention captured ceases as our attention focuses on whatever has commanded it.

Approach occurs when we find ourselves drawn toward that which captures our attention.

According to Dr. Simons, "When attention is captured, it is not only mental activity that is affected. Sometimes all movement ceases.. .but sometimes the person whose attention has been captured orients to and *moves irresistibly toward the arresting stimulus.*" (Italics added)

Matching refers to the involuntary mimicking of the behavior of another. Specifically, the behavior of the one who has captured our attention.

As for this type of obedience, Dr. Simons says, "Automatic Obedience means being unable to refuse to obey a command that one might reasonably wish to refuse, issued by someone without the authority or power to compel obedience."

Given these four possible effects of attention capture, is it any wonder that all forbidden persuasion begins and ends with the mental engagement of one's target?

In the early 1930's, Hitler was looking for someone to direct a film documenting their 1934 Nazi rally in Nuremberg. While he had access to numerous filmmakers who were well versed in the objectives of the Nazi party and could have made films that would have made strong, logical arguments for their cause, Hitler chose a director with virtually no directing experience and even less knowledge of the Nazi party. He chose a young woman named Leni Riefenstahl. Why did Hitler choose someone with virtually no knowledge of the message he wanted to convey? Because she knew something even more important. She knew how to weave a spell with film and engage her viewers like no one had ever seen before. The result of her efforts? *Triumph of the Will*, arguably the most powerful propaganda film ever made. In fact, for nine years, from the time the film was completed in 1936 until the end of the war, this film was shown in every theater in Germany. That is how much Hitler believed in the power of Riefenstahl's work.

In watching this film, one is almost taken aback by how little information it tries to communicate. While there are a number of clips of political speeches by Hitler and his henchmen throughout, most of the film is simply a montage of images put to music. There is no narrator to help "explain" the Nazi party or its objectives to viewers. And technically, the film contains a number of logical mistakes such as camera platforms being visible in the background of some shots and cameras apparently vanishing and reappearing in thin air when the same scene is shown at different angles. So in some important respects, the film leaves something to be desired. But in terms of impact, the film could not have been more powerful.

According to Riefenstahl, her goal was to create a sense of rhythm and imagery, *not* a logically sound presentation in support of the Nazi Party. In other words, she sought to engage the viewer, not educate him. Unfortunately, her instinct was flawless and she created a film that is absolutely spellbinding to this day, over 65 years after it was made.

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While gaining someone's attention is sometimes not too difficult, maintaining it long enough to have much of an affect on behavior often is. Achieving a true state of Attention Capture is difficult and this is often what separates the masters of persuasion from the masses. The good news is, while few can mesmerize others like Svengali, it isn't necessary to do so in order to achieve powerfully persuasive results. By merely striving for attention capture and working ever toward it, we will begin to gain a hold and charisma over others that we wouldn't have dreamed of by using traditional means.

But how does one begin to capture another's attention? Is there a single concept that can help make this happen?

It is common in the field of persuasion to search for "triggers" that will help capture another's attention. If you've read much of the literature in the field you'll discover that where one person discovers six triggers, another discovers twelve, someone else twenty four and so on. You get the idea. Now I'm not discounting these people or their theories at all as these distinctions can be very helpful and enlightening. In fact, we'll even make some distinctions of our own as we progress through this class. Still one major problem with this approach is that often it isn't very practical. Why? Simple. We don't remember the distinctions when it counts. They may excite us as we learn of them but they too often escape us before we can apply them. A colleague of mine once read a book that discussed over thirty different persuasion strategies and while he declared the work to be fascinating, he confessed that just a few hours after reading it he couldn't remember a single one.

The point I'm trying to make here is that while making ever-finer distinctions in this field is interesting, it often isn't very useful in real life. In fact, I've encountered some people who have studied persuasive communication so extensively and have learned so many theoretical constructs that now no one knows what the hell they're saying anymore. And when you consider that many of the cult leaders and conmen of the world had little if any formal training in these "state-of-the-art" persuasion techniques yet still made their mark on mankind, doesn't it seem obvious that there is something more basic going on here? Well there is, and it goes a little something like this:

While there are an untold number of "things" that may capture people's attention, there is one type of "bait" we are all susceptible to: incongruity. In other words, things that are "out of place", that don't make sense in a given context, or that confuse us will invariably grab our attention, and if exploited properly, will maintain it as well.

There are two reasons why this is so.

The first is nothing less than our survival instinct. We are literally "wired" to notice those things in our environment that "stand out" from the norm in the chance that they may threaten our survival. Even trivial incongruities will capture our attention. Why? Because if they stand out, *we must pay attention to them if for no other reason than to evaluate them as trivial*. In other words, first comes attention, then comes evaluation. It can't be any other way.

The second reason incongruities are so critical in capturing our attention is that we are naturally drawn to things that increase our energy level, that make us feel more alive, and

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the attempt to resolve intellectual incongruities does just that. Psychologist Donald M. Johnson in his book *The Psychology of Humor and Wit* puts it this way, "Perception of an incongruity arouses energy directed toward resolution." While it seems obvious that we'd be drawn to that which increases our energy level, few people recognize this as one of the results of a perceived incongruity.

Yet the concept of Incongruity Theory is one of the most useful ideas we can entertain in an effort to capture the attention of others. Here are just a few of the ways incongruities can be applied in an effort to capture the attention of others:

Cults paint incredible pictures of possibility that contrast sharply with the mechanized day-to-day existence most of us experience. From the chance to study under a "true messiah" to a taste of nirvana to spaceships and comets to human cloning, cults know how to set themselves apart from normality.

Con artists often create unique situations that appear "too good to be true" in which their mark (victim) is lead to believe that if they act fast, they can profit from this incredible "stroke of luck". Given that the opportunity is unique, that is it isn't likely to happen again and is thus incongruous with everyday life, our attention is often captured and our compliance often follows.

Have you come across any talking dogs lately? How about frogs or lizards? Not likely, unless you've been watching television in the last few years. From the Taco Bell Chihuahua to Budweiser's talking frogs to Geico's talking lizard, these incongruities capture our attention and many of us watch commercials such as these as if they were entertainment rather than product pitches. In fact, many of the "catch phrases" used in commercials are so unique that they become part of our daily culture. From the incongruity of the nice little old lady who belted out "Where's the beef to the over-the-top Budweiser "What's up" guys, we often not only pay attention to these commercials, we often pay homage to them as well. If you want to study countless examples of incongruities at work, television commercials are one of the best places to look as producers have just thirty seconds to grab your attention and slip in a message. A monumental feat to say the least.

Incongruities can also arise from placing two conflicting ideas side by side. When my son was much younger he came home from school one day and asked me, "What mammals can jump higher than a house?" What a silly question, I thought to myself. No mammal can jump higher than a house. That is absurd (i.e. that is an incongruity!) When I told him that, he insisted I was wrong and refused to tell me the answer. As much as I'm embarrassed to admit it, I must have struggled with that riddle for fifteen minutes before he finally gave me the answer. In other words, a silly grade school riddle had *captured my attention*. (In case you haven't figured it out, the answer is all mammals can jump higher than a house. Houses can't jump.)

A more serious example of two ideas creating an incongruity is the very question that led me to create this course:

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How does one convince other people to willingly act against their own self interests while others struggle to convince people to engage in acts that would clearly be in their own best interests?

This question is a beautiful example of an incongruity in action. It not only captured my attention, but it drew me into a near obsession in an effort to resolve the incongruity.

If you're still not convinced about the power and applicability of Incongruity Theory, here is one more reason to give it some serious consideration: we are extremely susceptible to suggestion once we've identified an incongruity and seek to resolve it. We often accept the first answer that seems to make sense of the incongruity, even if the answer is given by the person who created the incongruity in the first place!

One of the easiest areas to witness this process in action is politics. Politicians routinely point out and play up an "evil" in society that has heretofore gone uncorrected. Whether it be unemployment, universal healthcare, war with Iraq, or any one of dozens of other pet issues, politicians whip the public into a frenzy of concern for an issue, then just so happen to "suggest" the solution to the problem. And guess what? Those who accept the politician's definition of the problem typically accept the politician's solution as well. Sounds silly when it's pointed out but it's anything but silly when it leads us down a path someone else has laid out for us.

Incongruity theory is highly applicable across a broad spectrum of persuasion situations. When coupled with the idea of "hidden addictions" which we'll cover next week, the results can be powerful beyond belief. Just imagine the control you would have over a drug addict if you were his sole source of drugs, over a man dying of thirst if you could give him a simple glass of water, or over a person with no sense of self-worth if you could make him feel indispensable. This is the type of power we'll cover in our next class. For now though, here is a recap of this week's material, followed by this week's homework.

Recap

We started out by uncovering two ugly truths that lie at the heart of much of our human interaction - two truths that help us understand how much of the conflict in our relationships comes to be.

Ugly truth #1: We are ALL manipulators. And since few of us can accept this, most of us are not only hypocrites, but very ineffective in our communications with others.

Ugly Truth #2: Our biggest impediment to understanding and influencing human behavior is that our sense of morality unconsciously filters our perceptions of others and as a result, invisibly alters the way we interact with them.

Next, we explored the idea of resistance in persuasion and highlighted three behavioral tendencies that often necessitate our use of indirect communication.

Tendency #1: People resist unwelcome attempts to persuade them.

Tendency #2: People can't resist what they can't detect.

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Tendency #3: People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

And we concluded this lesson with a discussion on the importance of Attention Capture and one of the primary ways to achieve it, Incongruity Theory. We explored how Incongruity Theory facilitates the capture of attention and persuasion by playing on our survival instinct, by raising our psychic energy level and leaving us in an increased state of suggestibility.

This is a lot of ground to cover in just our first lesson. Still, we have just scratched the surface of our material. But the lessons to come are built upon the ideas we've just covered so it's critical that we become more familiar with just how much they affect our daily lives. Our homework is designed to help us do just that.

Homework

For the next week or so, pay special attention in your day-to-day activities and see if you can find at least one example of each of the ideas we just recapped in action. If you're like I was when I first started studying this material, you won't have to work very hard at this. Examples will just pop out at you when you least expect it. In conversations, in movies or television shows, maybe even in books or newspapers, you'll suddenly realize that one of the ideas we've discussed is at work right before your very eyes and suddenly the situation will make more sense. Whether the principle is being violated and resistance and conflict ensue or the principle is being applied and better communication results, all that matters is that you are able to identify it in your own life.

Now, select the two or three most interesting examples you've identified and write a paragraph or two for each explaining the situation and any insights you developed as a result of spotting it.

This exercise is an important step in taking these ideas off the page and making them your own. You might also find that identifying these situations becomes somewhat of a habit for you as it's almost like a game, and a very enlightening one as well.

And finally, even though we're just beginning, I want you to select an area of your own marketing or persuasion efforts that you'd like to work on and analyze it in light of the information we've discussed. Can you identify any areas of resistance and trace them back to our three tendencies? Can you see how modifying your approach in light of this information could lead to greater success?

Explore how you might be able to apply the idea of Incongruity Theory to the area you've chosen to analyze. Remember, you want to apply the incongruity not simply to stand out, but to create a desire for resolution in the mind of your prospect. Here are a few questions that will help you spot opportunities to employ an incongruity:

What are your prospects expectations about the way you will approach them? Now, in light of these expectations, what might you alter about your approach that would strike your prospect as unique and thus reduce resistance and create interest?

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Remember the car salesman that told my wife and I he was glad we weren't interested in buying a car? His approach was the one that stood out when everyone else either walked away or tried to pressure us. It was this incongruity that drew us to him and lead to us buy a new car despite our original intentions.

A host on a talk radio station in my local market recently started a commercial for a homebuilder with the following statement, "You know, ranch style homes are just plain ugly." Say what? What kind of a commercial IS this? With that one simple incongruity, I was listening. And judging from how often he uses tactics like this, I'd be willing to bet they're more than just a little effective.

A cinematographer once told me that he often used a similar philosophy when selecting camera angles. Given a certain scene, he asked himself, what were the three or four most obvious angles from which to shoot this particular scene? Then, knowing that 99 out of 100 other cinematographers would select one of these angles, he would reject them and pick a different angle. In other words, he would select an angle that would be incongruous with audience expectations. The result? His work was almost guaranteed to look different from that of any of his competitors.

Again, ask yourself, how might you alter your current efforts to set yourself apart from others and increase your chances of success?

As a reminder, don't be in too much of a rush to "rework" your approach just yet as there's much more ahead in our class that you'll want to consider first. Next week we'll cover Hidden Addictions, Gaslighting and more. These are some of the little known tools that master persuaders use to turn strangers into followers and followers into fanatics.

Lesson 2: The Mechanics of Cult Mind Control - Part 1

Our next two lessons detail a three-tiered approach cults use to gain, keep and exercise control over other people: meeting hidden addictions, inducing isolation, and gaslighting. But more importantly, as we go along we'll explore how these same concepts can be used in ethical ways to enhance our communication with others.

While we'll consider these three concepts in a logical sequence, they are independent of one another. This is important, as there are situations in which the three step approach may be inappropriate and/or ineffective, while utilizing just one or two of these ideas can produce powerful effects.

So while these three concepts are not appropriate in every influence situation, their use is far more common than many people realize. They are used by all types of people, from scam artists to religious leaders, from gang members to family members, with equal effectiveness - even when they are used unwittingly. Like the other methods mentioned in this class, they are presented here for only one reason. They work.

In lesson 3, we'll explore the second and third tiers of this system. But for this lesson, we're going to explore the idea of hidden addictions, how they drive our behavior without our awareness, how they affect virtually every decision we make, and most importantly, how simply by being aware of them we can dramatically increase our powers of persuasion.

The Concept of Hidden Addictions

Are there people in your life for whom you would do almost anything? How about your kids? Your spouse? Your parents? Your best friend? For most of us, there are a handful of people in our lives for whom we would do almost anything to please. Even if we agree to a request somewhat reluctantly, perhaps one that isn't entirely in our own best interests, we take a certain pleasure in pleasing these people. But what is it about them that makes us so willing to comply with their requests?

While each of us may answer this question in different ways, a common denominator would have to be that these people meet some of our deepest psychological needs. Love, companionship, respect to name just a few. So in a very real way, these people are the most important people in our lives. We may have compassion and concern for all humanity, but for these people we have much more; we have unconditional love and appreciation. This explains the hold they seem to have over us and our eagerness to please them.

But these people are special. It takes time to develop and maintain relationships like these and therefore most of us don't have too many of them in our lives. In fact, most people have little control over us and have to work at getting us to do what they wish. We aren't going to just give our hearts, money, time or other resources to just anyone. That would be ridiculous. Unfortunately, if there is one thing people can be, it's ridiculous.

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While it's true we each have a few of these special people in our lives, it's also true we've all met people who seemingly weren't so special, but quickly managed to gain a similar power over us - the salesman whom we met only minutes before but now we find it almost impossible to say no to him, our significant other who went from a total stranger to an obsession in the blink of an eye, or the acquaintance with whom, within minutes, we're sharing our most intimate secrets. What is it about these people that makes us bond with them so strongly, so quickly, and with so little thought? Whether they knew it or not, they stumbled upon one of our hidden addictions and when we recognized the opportunity to indulge it, like any good junkie, we lost control of ourselves.

One day, as I sat hunched over my desk at the end of a particularly long day at the office, a friend, who happens to be a massage therapist, snuck up behind me, grabbed my shoulders and began to squeeze. In an instant I was in another world and almost fell out of my chair as my body went limp. Until that moment, I hadn't realized how tense my body had gotten and how stressed out I was. Though she only rubbed my shoulders for a minute or so, for that brief period of time, I lost touch with everything else in my life and no one had more potential influence with me than she did.

Just this week, as I was shopping at a local mall, I passed a drinking fountain and, almost as an afterthought, went back for a quick drink. My "quick drink" lasted more than a full minute as I guzzled down what seemed like a gallon of water. How strange, I thought to myself. I didn't even realize I was thirsty until I took my first sip. Then, I could barely stop drinking.

I tell you these stories to point out an aspect of human nature that few of us even acknowledge. At any given moment of any given day, regardless of what desires we are consciously working to fulfill, we have needs we rarely, if ever, consider, that when given the opportunity to be met, can rise up and derail us in an instant. All our resolve, all our common sense, and all our morality can vanish in thin air only to be replaced with the behavior of an insatiable addict.

All men are tempted. There is no man that lives that can't be broken down, provided it is the right temptation, put in the right spot.

Henry Ward Beecher - Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit, 1887

Not everyone can be vulnerable like this, you might say. Yes, everyone. That is, everyone with an ego. Clearly there are differences in degrees of vulnerability as everyone's sense of self is different, but just as everyone is susceptible to the laws of gravity, everyone is susceptible to the desires of the ego. Given the right bait and the right opportunity, anyone can fall. Anyone.

Shortly, I will reveal the most common needs, or hidden addictions, I discovered while researching this material. But first, I want to point out two reasons why I refer to these as "addictions" rather than simply needs.

First, the idea of "needs" or "desires" leads us to dismiss them as being too basic or obvious, leaving ourselves, and those we care about, vulnerable to those who don't

dismiss them. And second, these "needs" are never permanently satisfied. While we can feel satisfied at any given moment and thus no longer see ourselves as vulnerable, the desire for more can always resurface, often with greater power than before.

And why do I call them "hidden" addictions? Because they're desires few of us want to acknowledge, especially about ourselves. Sure, other people may need these things, but not us. At least, not until the opportunity to satisfy them arises. These addictions are hidden from ourselves and others because to admit having them is to admit weakness. So to improve our image to both ourselves and others, we cover them up with prettier, nobler goals. And soon, our own true desires are a mystery, even to ourselves.

The great motivational speaker Zig Ziglar has often pointed out that we can get what we want by helping other people get what they want. This statement is true enough. But exactly what is it that people want? Therein lies the rub.

The Attempt to Discover What Other People Want

Which of the following do you think would be the best way to discover what other people truly want?

- A) Consult their astrology charts
- B) Hire psychics to do "readings" on them
- C) Look up their years of birth on a placemat in a Chinese Restaurant to learn about their personality, or
- D) Ask them what they want

Now, of those four, I don't actually know which one is the "best" way to discover what other people truly want, but I know which one is often the *worst* way and that is, D) ask them what they want. That's right. More often than not we are the *last* people to know what we truly want. Of course, few of us even want to consider this possibility. But if we look around at the evidence, the conclusion is inescapable.

Go ask a random group of ten people what they'd like to see more of on television newscasts. Specifically, ask them whether they'd like to see more stories that are positive in nature or more stories that are negative in nature. It's a pretty safe bet that something like 9 out of 10 will want to see more positive oriented stories. After all, isn't the fact that television news is littered with negative stories of human misery and depravity a favorite topic of conversation and debate? Yes, most of us want to see more positive oriented newscasts. Or at least that's what we think we want.

To find out what we *really* want, pay special attention to newscasts during ratings periods. These are the times when television and radio stations try to get the most people to tune into their broadcasts. How do they do it? By giving people what they want. Not what they *say* they want, but what they *actually* want, based on their behavior. And what is it that we want? Disaster. Tragedy. Betrayal. Sexual exposes. Give us these, even though we profess to despise them, and your ratings will soar! Is it any wonder why the saying "if it bleeds, it leads" is a common expression in the news business?

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My wife and I were recently watching a "Reality Dating Show" on television about a guy going on a date with two women at one time. At the end of the show, he would have to select only one that he would like to see again. Before meeting the women, he was asked what type of a woman he was looking for. He said he was tired of "airheads with no aspirations" and wanted a woman who had clear professional and personal goals for her life. Enter the two women. The first was a beautiful brunette who was working her way through law school and wanted to go to work for the local district attorney's office. The second was a bubbly blonde who, in between giggles, managed to say she had recently dropped out of college due to burnout and really just wanted to party for a while until she could discover her "place in life." Given that he wanted a girl with direction in her life, which one do you think he chose? That's right. The blonde.

Our video production company was once asked to bid on a large project for a pharmaceutical company. After receiving a tour of their facility and being told for nearly two hours about all the different things they wanted to show in their video I asked a simple question.

"What is the purpose of this video?"

The room fell silent. I slid a copy of my demo tape across the table to the leader of the group and continued.

"Pretend this is your tape. It's done. Now, who are you going to send it to? And once they watch it, what do you want them to think, do, or believe that they wouldn't have thought, done or believed had they not watched the video? Are you trying to educate pharmacists, secure new clients, or let the stockholders know about the great things you've been doing lately? Until we know the answer to those questions, we won't know what to include in the video."

The leader smiled.

"Of all the producers we've talked to so far," he said, " you're the first to even ask that question. The rest just talked about budget, equipment, and make-up and catering issues. I'm kind of surprised we missed such an important question."

That's when I knew I was going to get the job. It was about a week later that I found out I didn't. A friend of mine who worked for the company explained what happened.

It turns out they were worried about losing "momentum" if they stopped to reconsider the purpose of the project. When I asked my friend how they could even consider producing a video without knowing *why* they wanted to produce it, he thought about it for a moment, then gave me the real reason. He said they were trying to spend some of their budget money before the end of the year and maybe, just maybe, they thought producing a video would be *a nice break in the monotony around the office*. Suddenly it made sense. They never wanted a video. They wanted to have a "party" - to have fun! Making the video was simply their way of having a party while looking like they were doing their jobs. Of course, they could never admit to having such a motive, to me or to themselves.

But it isn't just "other people" who don't know what they really want. We rarely do, either.

Many years ago I was selling a classic Volkswagen Beetle that I'd driven for over ten years. I didn't want to sell it, but it was time to get a safer car. Reluctantly, I put it in the newspaper and stated that I wanted \$1500 firm. If I had to sell my "baby" I was at least going to get top dollar for it. Within four hours of the ad running, I had a long list of people who wanted to look at the car. Selling this one would be easy. Soon, I had two offers, one for \$1400 and one for \$1450. But I wasn't budging. I wanted \$1500. Firm.

That afternoon, a clean-cut young man showed up and fell in love with my car. He was amazed at how well I'd kept it up and how much work I'd put into it. He asked me how long I'd had it and why I was selling it. When I told him I was selling it reluctantly, he said what a shame that was and that he couldn't imagine having to part with a car that meant that much to him. Then he told me how much he would love to buy it but that he could only afford to pay \$ 1250 and that he would understand if I rejected his offer. With a quick handshake the deal was done. While I didn't get my \$1500 price, I got something more important - something I wasn't even aware I wanted until it was placed before me: a buyer who would love my car as much as I did.

If you had placed the guy from the dating show, the pharmaceutical employees and myself on a lie detector and asked us what we wanted in each of those situations, we would have passed with flying colors - even though we didn't have a clue what our real desires were. We would have honestly answered with what turned out to be a lie. Most people are no different. To find out what people want we must look past their words. We must understand what moves them to act in spite of their conscious desires. In short, we must understand their hidden addictions.

The real persuaders are our appetites, our fears and above all our vanity. The skillful propagandist stirs and coaches these internal persuaders.

Eric Hoffer

The Hidden Addictions

The examples we have seen so far illustrate only the principle of unconscious desires overpowering conscious ones. If we leave it at that, we are still left with an endless number of unconscious desires our targets may have, the discovery of which is beyond anyone's ability. If we are to profit from this principle, we must simplify the process of discovering just what a person's hidden addictions are. Fortunately, this is easier than it may seem.

In the course of my research, I have identified some basic needs we all have, but prefer not to admit having, that are strong enough to warrant being called hidden addictions. They are not temporary, material desires that come and go; they are permanent psychological desires that are ultimately insatiable. At any given moment, we are vulnerable to one or more of these hidden addictions demanding to be met. While we

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may not be conscious of just which ones we're vulnerable to at any particular time, we will suddenly become conscious of them if the opportunity to satisfy them presents itself.

When these basic needs go unmet, we are more vulnerable than we'd like to admit. Let's take a quick look at each of them, and then discuss them and their use in a bit more detail.

Hidden Addiction #1:

A cult leader, standing before a potential convert, senses the woman's hesitation to join his cause. In an instant he drops all talk of his group and what it offers and turns his attention toward the woman. He compliments her on her many intellectual and social gifts. They are rare gifts indeed, he assures her and laments how much his group could use more people with just such important qualities. The woman smiles and, almost blushing, thanks the man for the compliment. Soon she is a full-fledged member of the cult.

A heckler from the back of the room begins to destroy a magician's act. Without missing a beat, the magician explains he needs a volunteer for a very important task. Hands shoot up across the room, but it's too late. The magician has already made his selection. "How about you?" he asks the heckler. "Would you be so kind as to assist me with this next trick? You seem to have just what it takes to help me pull off this particular miracle." The man dashes for the front of the room and leaves the heckling behind. The magician has already performed a miracle even though he has yet to begin his next trick.

These examples illustrate perhaps the most fundamental of all needs and the most seductive of all pitches. People are drawn to people who need them. Who doesn't need a sense that their life matters? Who doesn't want to feel like they have an important role to play in life? Give someone a sense that they are truly needed, not because you are desperate, but because they are special, and you will be giving them one of the greatest gifts imaginable.

In describing the feeling this gives a person, one former cult member said, "I had been fed adoration; the food of the gods." The food of the gods, indeed.

Hidden Addiction #1: People need to feel needed.

Hidden Addiction #2:

A businessman fidgets as he recounts his troubles during his first meeting with a new consultant. The consultant listens intently, occasionally asking his client to expand on some seemingly irrelevant point. The businessman fidgets a bit more until he spots the consultant gently nodding his head. The more the consultant nods, the more comfortable the client feels. Toward the end of their meeting, the consultant announces that he knows just what's causing the man's troubles. It's a common problem and quite easy to deal with. The client's fidgeting stops as the consultant begins to explain.

A woman with a mysterious illness is under the care of the finest doctors in her community. As they inch closer to a complete diagnosis and appropriate treatment, the woman hears of a "specialist" in Mexico who has successfully treated people with similar

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problems. Although skeptical, she makes an appointment with the man just to hear what he has to say. Upon hearing her symptoms the man assures her he knows exactly what is going on and how to proceed. Though her original doctors try to assure her they are very close to "truly understanding her medical condition," the woman leaves their care and begins treatment with her new specialist.

Whether or not these experts truly understand the nature of these peoples' problems is irrelevant. What is relevant is that they met, or at least promised to meet, a hidden addiction that caused the people to move in their direction. There may be many things people can tolerate, but a lack of hope isn't one of them. Those who can create a sense of hope in the face of hopelessness command attention. Those who can deliver on their promises command loyalty. Those who can do both are among the most powerful of all as they have mastered our second hidden addiction.

Hidden Addiction #2: When aware of an impasse, people will do anything to gain a sense of hope.

Hidden Addiction #3:

A man who is frustrated with his life and feels he has nowhere to turn is stopped in his tracks when he hears a story of how others have been sabotaging him behind his back. In an instant the mystery behind his frustration has been solved and the source of his problem identified. His gratitude toward the person who exposed this conspiracy is immeasurable, as is his hatred of the saboteur. When his benefactor further explains how to combat those who wished him harm, the man is eager to do his part.

Though this tactic may seem blatantly obvious and manipulative to an outside observer, it is highly seductive to those seeking someone to blame for their circumstances and is behind some of the greatest tragedies in human history. Millions of innocent people have been targeted for no other reason than the fact that doing so made certain others feel better about themselves. If the desire for a scapegoat is great enough, there is no accusation that can be made against another that is too radical to be believed.

According to anthropologist Marvin Harris in his book *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*, this aspect of human nature played an important part in the witch hunts of the past. Fostering the belief in, and mounting aggressive campaigns against, witches was more than a demonstration of ignorance and superstition of the masses. It was a demonstration of brilliant strategy of the few. Harris points out,

"... it shifted responsibility for the crisis of late medieval society from both Church and state to imaginary demons in human form. Preoccupied with the fantastic activities of these demons, the distraught, alienated, pauperized masses blamed the rampant Devil instead of the corrupt clergy and the rapacious nobility. Not only were the Church and state exonerated, but they were made indispensable."

How convenient for the state and the Church. When people are frustrated and don't know which way to turn, those who help them identify an external cause for their problems provide an attractive solution indeed. In the face of difficulty, there is perhaps

no stronger instinct than the desire to determine that the source of the problem is outside ourselves. In other words, to find a scapegoat.

There are few concepts more powerful in human relationships than the use of scapegoats, yet most of us hold a very narrow concept of scapegoating and don't recognize the enormous practical and ethical uses it provides. In just a bit, we'll discover a way to ethically employ this concept. It's an idea that has been used to sell everything from antidepressants and weight loss medications to religions and dogmas of every sort. For now though, it is enough to simply acknowledge our third hidden addiction.

Hidden Addiction #3: People need a scapegoat.

Hidden Addiction #4:

A teenager becomes increasingly frustrated at his inability to communicate with his parents and, in time, they are barely speaking and he is often left to himself. He begins to act out in order to get attention and his parents desperately try to curb his disturbing behavior. Then, however, with no apparent explanation, his behavior improves. The arguments and the outlandish behavior become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, soon thereafter, so does their relationship. It turns out that at school he has found a handful of other people who truly understand him and accept him for who he is. They aren't the quality of people he would normally associate with, but who cares? They have satisfied his most precious need. And in time, he becomes just like them.

Whenever we hear of someone suddenly abandoning a particular way of life for another, the temptation to attribute his or her behavior to mysterious forces is strong. But in reality, the reason is often nothing more than the person finally felt genuinely noticed and understood.

This need can even be met without direct interaction between the two parties involved. A writer or a speaker can create the sense that their audience is understood by echoing their thoughts back to them. When we learn another thinks just like we do we feel validated and soon attraction and dedication begin to develop. One former member of the Heaven's Gate cult described how his interest in the cult, lead by Applewhite, also known as Do, grew in just such a manner.

"As Do spoke, questions would come to mind, as I would think the question, Do would say something like 'Some may wonder about' and state the question I was thinking. When this occurred, I felt as if I were in a tunnel with Do at one end and me at the other. Although I sat in the back of a packed auditorium, it was as if no one else were there."

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Our need to be noticed and feel appreciated cannot be overstated. The opportunity to meet this need can override the greatest intellect on earth and lead one to engage in behavior that may, in retrospect, seem bizarre.

Hidden Addiction #4: People need to be noticed and feel understood.

Hidden Addiction #5:

A man stands before a small group of people and does what he does best. He speaks of things spiritual and profound. Though he holds the attention of his audience, it is his next move that will split the group in two and determine the success of his presentation. Though there are many spiritual teachers in the land, he tells them, there is one thing that separates him from the crowd. He speaks directly to God. Yes, he has been reluctant to admit it until now, but the time has come to speak the truth and the truth is he is God's right hand man. Only he can understand and teach the true nature of the scriptures. Now that you know the truth, to continue to follow others is foolish and will lead straight to your damnation. The time to follow the one true servant of God is before you. As predicted, the crowd splinters in two groups. One heads for the exit, the other straight into his trap.

For many, the opportunity to learn and understand information that few people know is irresistible. Though the above example is an extreme one, the same principle can be found all around us and it can be employed in the simplest of ways.

Earlier we saw how a magician can disarm a heckler by simply asking them to perform a favor and making the person feel important. This is only one of three common techniques magicians use to control the behavior of their audience. The other two are making a confession and sharing a secret. Both of these methods tend to change the very orientation of the audience from adversarial to supportive. Why? Because confessions and secrets are irresistible. And as we learned earlier, regardless of our conscious state at any given moment, when one of our hidden addictions is fulfilled, we are inexplicably drawn to the person who fulfilled it. And, whether it be a guru, a magician, a cult leader or a parent, the person who promises secret knowledge fulfills a very basic need.

Hidden Addiction #5: People need to know things others don't know/things they aren't supposed to know.

Hidden Addiction #6:

A woman waits in line at an automobile inspection station and watches as the three cars directly in front of her fail their inspections. Each of the drivers pleads with the inspector and points out how minor their infractions are, but all are turned away. The inspector turns to our woman and with a grunt gestures for her to drive her car into the station. The woman tells the man it looks like he's been having a tough morning so far and she hopes she doesn't add to his troubles. The inspector gives a quick smile and then begins his inspection. When he jots down a few notes on a notepad she tells him she's sorry if he found something wrong, but she doesn't know much about cars and promises to get it

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fixed right away and return for her sticker. He tells her that won't be necessary, that he's going to pass her vehicle and then gives her a list of things to take care of when she gets the time.

What's the difference between her and the other three drivers whose cars failed inspection? She understood how much people desperately need to be right. The other drivers quarreled with him and tried to minimize the problems he had found with their vehicles. They made him *wrong* for being so picky. Our woman, on the other hand, openly admitting *she* was in the wrong and stressed how sorry she was for her inconveniencing him. In other words, she let him be right, which is what he wanted. And he let her pass inspection, which is what she wanted.

Our vehicle inspector isn't alone in this. Everyone is an addict when it comes to being right. Of course, we can temporarily disable this addiction by simply being aware of it and refusing to defend our positions. But this effort is often in vain as the desire to be right soon resurfaces with a vengeance and with good reason.

We abhor chaos and uncertainty. Being right represents order and stability, two characteristics that are vital for our survival. When we are "right" about a situation, whether our perception is positive, negative or indifferent, the mystery behind the situation has been solved - the threat of disorder and uncertainty has been extinguished and we can move on to something else.

Our addiction to being "right" is not a childish characteristic of the psychologically unsophisticated. It is, however misguided, nothing less than our automatic, instinctual drive to survive a perceived threat to the psychic order and stability our current mindset is providing for us.

Hidden Addiction #6: People need to be right.

Hidden Addiction #7:

I once had a casual conversation with a woman whose twenty-one year old daughter was flirting with joining a group her mother thought was a cult. As the mother discussed the situation, I asked what advice she was giving her daughter. She said she wasn't giving any advice - she had "put her foot down" and told her daughter that there was "no way" she was going to let her get involved in a group like that. Her daughter's response? She had left home several times for extended stays with the group and was threatening to leave permanently. I left the woman with the following thought:

"I have no idea who this group is, but I imagine they're telling your daughter something like this: 'You have to understand that your mother loves you and that she's doing what she thinks is best for you. The problem is, you're not a little girl anymore and at some point you have to make your own decisions. And this is one of those times. We'd love to have you join our group, but if you do decide to join, it must *be your* decision. No one should take your power to decide away from you.' Now, which position is more attractive to your daughter, yours or theirs?"

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I have no idea whatever became of that woman or her daughter, but I do know that at that point in their lives, the mother was totally unaware of the damage she was doing to their relationship by violating our final hidden addiction: people need to feel a sense of power. Notice I said, a "sense" of power and not power itself.

Ultimately, in many of our relationships power is not, and indeed, cannot be equally distributed. Parents *must* have power over their children if they are to exercise their responsibility of raising them. Employers *must* have power over their employees if they are to effectively direct the actions of their organization. And the same is true of any organized effort between people. However, from an individual standpoint, power, like the addiction to being right, represents survival. And when our sense of power is threatened, we often react violently, whether physically or psychologically, in an effort to restore our sense of power, our sense of well-being.

How do we give others a "sense of power" without actually giving up power itself? By giving and emphasizing another's power over a restricted set of options. Options determined by the person with the ultimate authority. And while giving another person a sense of choice in a given situation helps meet their hidden addiction for power, it has another psychological benefit as well as we'll see when we address this addiction a little further.

Hidden Addiction #7: People need to feel a sense of power.

Why are these hidden addictions so powerful? Two reasons.

First, they are at the core of much of our daily activity. Though we tend to think of our activities as focused around more pedestrian issues such as making money, entertaining ourselves, spending time with friends and the like, if we look beneath these activities at what we are trying to obtain by engaging in them, we will often find one of our hidden addictions driving our behavior. Therefore, those that help us satisfy these addictions often become something more than business associates or acquaintances. They become more like family. This is why the bond that cults form with their followers and the situations conmen create for their victims are so difficult to penetrate for those on the outside. Logic has little to do with the relationship. The victim's most basic psychological needs are being met and they aren't quick to give up their source of satisfaction.

The second reason these hidden addictions are so powerful is that a context of reciprocity is generated whenever they are satisfied. The psychologist Robert Cialdini has often pointed out the power of reciprocity in persuasion. It is one of his six principles of ethical influence discussed in his fabulous book, *Influence*. What I am talking about in this section however is a more narrow sense of reciprocity, one generated without anything tangible or ostensibly valuable being exchanged. All that is often needed to generate it is to address the psychological addictions of others for a powerful context of reciprocity to bloom.

I mentioned in the introduction to this course that Bin Laden gave his people a sense of hope. And what did they do for him? They killed and died for him. That is the magnitude of the reciprocity that can be generated by meeting these seven hidden addictions. Of course, when we're striving to meet the many other demands and desires people express every day, it is easy to overlook what are often the most important ones - the hidden addictions. Is it any wonder then how often we struggle to meet every demand another person can make of us, yet somehow fail to gain their favor? This is often why kids leave loving families and join gangs and cults. This is often why clients "inexplicably" abandon one supplier for another. And this is often why cults, con artists and criminals have so much sway over their victims while the rest of us are left wondering why.

Now, given the importance of meeting these hidden addictions, volumes could be written on the application of each of them. But volumes are not necessary for us to employ them. We merely need to consider them in light of our persuasion attempts and more often than not, the "how" becomes obvious. The following section will cover the actual use of these addictions a bit more. Then, in our homework for this session we will strive to identify how these can most powerfully be used in your persuasion endeavors.

Our Hidden Addictions in Practice

Hidden Addiction #1: People need to feel needed.

Need plays a part in every relationship, whether personal or professional, and as a result, is always worthy of our consideration. Perhaps the first thing that should be pointed out is a rather obvious statement, but one that is too often overlooked, and that is that there is an enormous difference between *telling* others they are needed and actually making them *feel* they are needed. The first strategy is simple, direct, and almost never very effective. The second strategy requires more patience and finesse, but is infinitely more powerful. And while every situation and relationship is unique, here is a 6-step process that can serve as a guideline for employing this powerful aspect of persuasion.

1. Explain the situation as a whole. What is at stake? What is the dilemma?
2. Explain the specific role the person can play in the situation.
3. Emphasize the importance of the role.
4. Point out how the person is uniquely qualified for the role.
5. Openly acknowledge that your request will require a sacrifice on their part.
6. Ask if you can count on them to help.

How long does it take to employ this strategy? Hardly any time at all. It can unfold during a brief conversation or be laid out in a few paragraphs of text. Want to get your kids to help out with the chores? Want a friend to give you a hand? Want to recruit people to give blood, donate money or join your cause? Consider your proposal in light of the six steps mentioned above, and watch what a difference it makes.

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Again these steps are merely a guideline and should be adapted according to the needs of a given situation. What matters is the context that is created by such an approach.

Keep in mind that the need the person is to fulfill should seem significant. The more significant the need seems, the stronger the effect. The need doesn't have to *be* significant, but it must seem so. Gurus are often able to get bright, well-educated people to give up everything they have, family, money, career, you name it, to wait on them hand and foot. Why would such people give up so much to serve a guru? Because doing so makes them feel significant. They believe they are playing an important role in life. In short, they are needed.

It is worth noting that feeling significant is very closely related to feeling needed and can often be just as seductive. Fortunately, it is often much easier to create a feeling of significance in another person. And one of the fastest and easiest ways to do this is to illustrate that the person is memorable. Think about it. When someone or something is significant, what do we do? We remember.

Have you ever introduced yourself to someone, then only a short while later, had that person ask for your name again? Or worse, have you ever done this to someone else? We all have. And the reason this happens isn't a matter of memory, but a matter of significance. Or rather, the lack of it. We remember things that are significant to us. And by remembering even the most trivial things about other people and letting them know we remember these things, we communicate the fact that we find them significant.

Hidden Addiction #2: When aware of an impasse, people will do anything to gain a sense of hope.

Consider for a moment how much of our lives are spent looking for answers to our problems. Go to a bookstore and check out the "how to" and "self-help" sections and you'll get a sense of our need for answers, our need for hope.

This is such a basic, obvious drive that it is amazing how little attention we give it, especially in our interpersonal relationships. While marketers and advertisers often address this need by focusing on the benefits their products or services provide, in our personal lives we somehow overlook this powerful addiction to the detriment of all involved. We often become so focused on the execution of our tasks that we lose sight of why we're engaging in the tasks in the first place. And once we've lost sight of this, we treat others with such tunnel vision that we fail to address their need for a sense of hope. And in a context that lacks hope, we are vulnerable to anyone who can provide us with this essential element in our lives.

To harness this power, we must simply stop and ask ourselves, what is it that others are frustrated with? What are the circumstances they are seeking to resolve? How will complying with our proposal help satisfy their need for hope?

The possibilities for meeting this addiction are endless and aren't difficult to employ providing that we don't overlook the need in the first place. Religions offer their followers hope for their spiritual salvation. Cults offer their followers hope for their

problems. Conmen offer their victims the promise of financial gain and opportunity that will resolve their problems. What promise of hope can you offer those you wish to persuade?

Hidden Addiction #3: People need a scapegoat.

Again, this is perhaps the most powerful, yet least understood of the hidden addictions. The term "scapegoat" has taken on such a negative meaning that many people find just the thought of it appalling and refuse to even consider putting it into practice. But again, like our other addictions, scapegoating serves a valid, powerful psychological purpose and to fail to address it is to leave one of the most powerful aspects of communication out of our hands.

The reason scapegoating is so powerful is that it cuts to our most basic, instinctual drive - survival.

Nobel Prize winner, Elias Canetti, in his book *Crowds and Power*, says that one of the most reliable ways of maintaining the existence of any given group of people is in focusing their attention on another group of people whom they see as rivals. And there is perhaps no one more worthy of being our rival than one who is responsible for our problems. In other words, our scapegoat. But not only does scapegoating help ensure the survival of our social groups, it also serves a powerful purpose for us as individuals as well.

When we sense that something is wrong with us, we immediately begin searching for a resolution. Why? Because something "wrong" represents a threat to our psychological stability. Things were going just fine for us and then, all of a sudden, something has changed and upset our circumstances, and until we discover the source of the problem, our psychological stability is threatened. And there is no faster way to regain the stability and sense of security we once felt than to learn that the source of our problem lies outside ourselves. In other words, our problem lies in a scapegoat.

There is a popular sentiment in our society today that encourages people to accept responsibility for their lives - to stop blaming others and expecting other people to solve their problems for them. The enormous popularity of people like Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger and most recently, Dr. Phil, attest to the popularity of this sentiment. I have no problem with this approach and even try to embrace it in my own life. I believe it is the most admirable and effective way to live one's life. But the ugly truth is that this is often an unattainable goal for even the most determined of individuals. Why? Because blaming others is in our very nature and always has been. From Adam blaming Eve and Eve blaming the serpent, the blame game is here to stay.

So given this fact, how can we employ the principle without resorting to the despicable practices associated with it? Simple.

We need to realize that the scapegoat need not be another person or group. The scapegoat merely needs to be an opposing force for it to be effective. For example, it

might be an idea, a philosophy, or an unfortunate set of circumstances beyond one's control.

A couple of television commercials that are currently airing in the United States illustrate this point. Both of them brilliantly and ethically employ the concept of scapegoating and they do so at the very beginning of their scripts.

The first commercial, for an antidepressant medication, starts out with something like, "Feeling depressed lately? It may be the result of a chemical imbalance in your brain." The second commercial, one for a weight loss product, starts out like this, "If you've tried to lose that extra weight and have failed, it may not be your fault. It may be your metabolism."

Can you see their use of the scapegoat principle? If you're depressed, *it may not be your fault*. It might simply be a biological factor beyond your control. And if you're overweight and have failed to slim down, *it might not be your fault*, but simply a problem with your metabolism! What makes the use of scapegoating in these situations ethical is that they are absolutely true statements. Depression *can* be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. And obesity *can* be caused by metabolism. What makes the use of scapegoating brilliant in these cases is that it is used immediately in their pitches and instantly offers the viewer something of value - a scapegoat for their problems. From here, the viewer is much more open to the rest of their message.

A friend of mine who is a landscaper once told me that when he first meets potential clients they are often embarrassed by the condition of their property. When he senses this, he immediately points out how many of the problems with their property are due to such things as drought conditions, bad soil conditions and the like. In other words, the condition of their property doesn't say anything negative about the potential client. It isn't their fault! How important is this subtle change in strategy? He told me that the number of people he secured as clients increased significantly once he realized that people often not only want their property to look nicer, but don't want to accept responsibility for it looking poor in the first place.

If you can uncover how to ethically cast responsibility for your prospects' problems onto something outside themselves, you will have begun to meet one of their most basic needs before you've ever delivered your product or service

Hidden Addiction #4: People need to be noticed and feel understood.

Though not much needs to be said regarding this addiction for us to be able to employ it, it is worth noting that over and over in the literature of cult movements the importance of being noticed and understood makes its appearance. When asked why they joined these groups, cult members regularly cite the fact that for the first time in their lives, they felt fully noticed and understood by others. While I'm sure this type of statement would seem dubious to the families of these followers, the families' opinions make little difference to their loved ones who have to suffer with the feelings of being an outcast. Is it any wonder then that offering them acceptance and understanding would yield such a powerful effect?

Hidden Addiction #5: People need to know things others don't know/things they aren't supposed to know.

Do you want to hear a secret? You're not alone.

The idea of learning something few people know or something you aren't supposed to know is extremely seductive.

Many cult leaders claim to be in possession of secret knowledge. To have a direct line to God if you will. The rest of the world is woefully mistaken as to God's true plan. Only the guru can help you achieve true union with God.

Others claim to have connections to other mystical sources of wisdom. They channel spirits, they communicate with aliens, they have solved the mystery of human cloning. The power these people have is based largely on their claims to possessing secret knowledge. Knowledge that they will only reveal to you if you comply with their demands.

Con artists present secret "opportunities" to their victims that offer windfall gains if they will but act before others discover the opportunity for themselves.

The power of secrecy is all around us and just waiting to be harnessed. And while this addiction requires little explanation, it should never be far from our thoughts when trying to persuade others.

So what is it about your product, service or ideas that has an edge of secrecy to it? When you discover it, you will have discovered another powerful source for persuasion.

Hidden Addiction #6: People need to be right.

Would you walk into someone else's place of worship, change everything around and tell them how *you* think they should worship and expect them to thank you for it? Of course not. All of us recognize the importance a person's religious beliefs and practices play in his or her life and know better than to ridicule or criticize them if we expect to retain the person's favor.

However, when it comes to interpersonal relationships, we often act in just such destructive ways whenever we make someone else wrong. Why does this have such a destructive effect on our relationships? Because one of the most important abilities people must have, and must *know* they have, is the ability to effectively discern reality. Like some of our other addictions, this issue goes back to our survival instinct. How can we expect to survive in our world if we can't effectively understand it?

So being told that we are wrong about an issue often becomes far more important than the situation actually calls for because once again our sense of stability is threatened.

Abraham Lincoln reportedly once posed the following question to his son:

If you call a tail a leg, how many legs does a dog have? The answer, according to President Lincoln, was not five, but four as simply calling a tail a leg does not make it one.

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Now, this is fantastic advice to someone if you are trying to stress the importance of clear thinking. However, when it comes to interpersonal relationships, this advice is disastrous. If a friend, client, spouse, or anyone else in our lives calls a tail a leg, the surest way to lose favor is to point out that he or she is mistaken. Yet this is often exactly what we do, even when there is no real reason for doing so. We often have nothing to gain and the person isn't likely to suffer from the mistake, but still we almost feel an impulsive need to correct it. Why? Because this is *our* side of the hidden addiction coming into play.

Our biggest obstacle to allowing other people to be right is often nothing more than our own desire to be right. There is an old saying, it's better to be rich than right. And while it is no doubt true, it can also be difficult to practice in real life. Especially when the issues in question are the very issues standing in the way of our persuading others.

So how can we change someone's opinion on an issue and still allow the person to be right?

Here are two simple, yet profoundly effective strategies. First, set aside the issue in question without appearing to do so.

I once heard a three-hour talk radio interview with a one-time guru who was attacked by nearly every other caller. You're a conman some would complain. A scam-artist. You're getting filthy rich off your followers. Your philosophy does more harm than good. And these were some of the milder complaints. Now clearly this guru had to dispute these claims or else he would lose face in the eyes of the listening audience. But how could he do it without infuriating the callers more than they already were? He used some magic words. And those words were as follows:

Your point is well taken. I understand your position. You bring up an important point. I'm glad you asked this question. He used these and other such phrases before he ever uttered a word about his own position that was in dispute.

If you look at these phrases carefully you will notice two things.

First, *they do not say the other person is wrong*. Is this a minor point? Far from it. Most of us would start off with phrases such as, "I'm sorry you feel that way but you're mistaken," "You obviously haven't done your research" or maybe simply, "That's categorically not true." And with this position stated, we would have instantly created a context of dispute. You are right, the other person is wrong. The situation has now become a battle of ego and someone must lose. Oftentimes, both of you will lose.

The second thing we will notice is that the phrases almost appear to express agreement with the other person. "Your point is well taken." What does that really mean? Nothing. But it sounds like agreement. Same with "I understand your position." This doesn't say I agree with it or that I accept it, only that I understand it. Yet, again, its effect on the listener is as if we agreed with them and their defenses immediately come down. At this point, and only at this point, is effective communication and persuasion possible.

What was the result of the guru using these phrases? Nearly every angry caller immediately calmed down and began to consider his position. Some even apologized for the misunderstanding before they ended their call. Even those who refused to back off their position seemed disoriented as the attack they were expecting never came and they ending up hanging up without effectively getting their points across.

The second way to help correct another person without making them wrong is to simply employ the power of one of our other hidden addictions in the process. If you absolutely must correct someone, and there will undoubtedly be times when you must, you can often make the correction much more palatable by offering them a scapegoat. In other words, you let them know that even though they're mistaken, it isn't their fault.

By doing this, in effect, you aren't making the person wrong at all. You are making the *other* person wrong, the person from whom they got this information from in the first place. It is always much easier for us to accept that someone else is wrong than for us to have to accept that we are.

Hidden Addiction #7: People need to feel a sense of power.

It has been said that people don't resist change, they resist *being* changed. At the heart of this resistance is our need to feel a sense of power. When this sense is threatened, we will often resist ideas and proposals that we would otherwise gladly accept without a moments' hesitation.

High-pressure sales tactics are one of the best illustrations of this point. We've all experienced these types of repulsive sales tactics and know better than to use them ourselves. However, unless we consciously and intentionally address the issue of power in our persuasion efforts, we run the risk of generating just such resistance without our ever realizing it.

Now, a certain amount of pressure is inevitable in any persuasion situation. After all, if there were no resistance at all, there would be no need for persuasion. We would simply tell people what we wanted from them and they would do it. However, if they aren't likely to comply with such a direct request, a certain amount of resistance, persuasion and pressure are inevitably going to arise.

So the question becomes, how do we balance these in such a way as to provide our target with a sense of power and still remain effective in our attempts at persuasion? Here's how cults do it and how we can to:

Rather than deny the other person a sense of power or choice in your proposal, emphasize it. Make it a point that the person has the ultimate power to decide and that you won't attempt to take that away from them. The decision to join or not, to participate or not, is theirs and theirs alone.

In reality, this is the only ethical way to approach any persuasion situation. Anything other than granting the person the freedom to choose is tantamount to force. And force, as we've already discussed, generates resistance. But doesn't emphasizing that our prospects have choice invite them to reconsider our proposal and reduce our chances of

persuading them? Possibly. And that is a risk that must be taken. However, I mentioned that this is a tactic cults use with potential converts, and given their ability to create devotion beyond what most would consider reasonable, there is another benefit to taking this chance with those we wish to persuade.

When we feel we have voluntarily chosen to do a given thing, our level of commitment is dramatically increased and is much more resistant to change. Cults often take great pains to point out to potential converts that their decision to join the group is voluntary and then take even greater pains to remind them of this fact as time goes on. This way, if the convert ever begins to doubt their commitment to the group, just being reminded of the fact that they joined voluntarily, often makes the doubt vanish.

So while stressing the importance of choice can be risky for the persuader, it is often more effective than the alternatives. Not only does granting our prospect the opportunity to choose make them feel more in control, but it also stands to strengthen their commitment to making the choice that they do.

Wrap-up

At the beginning of this session I asked if there were people in your life for whom you would do almost anything. Think back over your answer to that question and ask yourself if these people aren't the ones who tend to meet your hidden addictions. Though you may not have thought of these relationships in this way before, doing so in light of our hidden addictions can offer profound insights into how to develop similar relationships with others.

As I said earlier, often times the worst way to find out what other people want is to ask them. I wasn't being facetious. Still, the question is an important one to ask. Why? Because their answer will determine the context in which your encounter will take place.

In my pharmaceutical company example I mentioned earlier, their desire to produce a video was the ostensible reason for our trying to do business together. Yet it was my failure to see they were really looking for a break in office monotony that ended our relationship. When I questioned their intent by asking my very "logical" questions, I didn't threaten to "derail them" as they claimed as much as I *made them wrong* for not having given the project more thought. In other words, I denied them their hidden addiction of being right.

A hypnotherapist once told me the only reason he ever needed to learn a hypnotic induction technique was so that he and his clients would have something to focus on while his real suggestions were taking effect. Though I'm sure he wasn't entirely serious, his point is clear. Hypnosis is about distraction and suggestion. Forbidden persuasion isn't much different.

In closing, it is important to point out that these hidden addictions are not components to be added to our interpersonal relationships like ingredients to a recipe. No, these are naturally occurring aspects of our relationships and only need to be recognized and respected for us to be able to utilize them effectively.

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Imagine beginning a conversation by insulting the other person, then, without apologizing or even acknowledging the insult, proceeding to try to persuade that person to do something. Would you expect to be successful? Of course not. Once you've set the stage with the insult, there's almost nothing you can do or say to overcome the damage you've done. Meeting another's hidden addictions is the literal flipside of this hypothetical situation.

When you encounter another, whether in person, print, or phone, and you meet the other's hidden addictions early on, almost anything you say or do is more readily received and accepted. With this in mind, we don't need to focus on every word, action and nuance of our communication as some teachings would have us believe is necessary for persuasion. Instead, we can focus on setting the proper stage for persuasion and allowing communication to occur naturally in that context.

Homework

This week's homework is straightforward, but will take some time to complete. If you will work on it, I promise it will be well worth your time.

First, look for examples from your daily life in which these addictions are either being met, or where there was a missed opportunity for someone to meet them. Keep a list of these and, in the situations where an opportunity was lost, ask yourself which of the hidden addictions might have been applied, how they might have been applied, and what difference they might have made in the given situation. The more we tend to spot the addictions being used, and opportunities to use them, the more natural they will become in our persuasion efforts.

Second, select a personal or professional relationship you currently have, one you perhaps would like to improve, and consider applying what you have learned in this session during the course of your next encounter with the person. Remember, don't try to add something to the relationship that isn't there. Instead, simply listen to the person as he or she speaks and try to spot the hidden addictions at work behind the words. If you can spot them, you can address them. What difference might this make in your relationship?

You might want to practice these two exercises more than just this week. In fact, you might want to develop them into habits. I am constantly amazed at the places I find these hidden addictions being addressed and even more surprised at the conflict and resistance I spot when they fail to be addressed.

Meeting other people's hidden addictions is often the fastest way to develop powerful relationships. But don't take my word for it. Take a look around and see for yourself!

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Till Next Time

Next week we will cover the second and third tier cults use to gain, maintain and exercise control over their followers. Specifically, we will discuss the concepts of isolation and gaslighting. Again, like meeting hidden addictions, these are ideas that can be used for either positive or negative ends. But one thing is certain. If we don't know about them, we can't use them and we can't protect ourselves from them either.

Lesson 3: The Mechanics of Cult Mind Control - Part 2

Welcome to the third lesson in the Forbidden Keys to Persuasion. In our first class we discussed the concept of Attention Capture, and explored Incongruity Theory as a way of achieving this state. But once the move toward this state has begun, what happens next? The three-tiered approach is employed.

Last week we discussed the first tier, meeting hidden addictions. Meeting another's hidden addictions deepens the state of attention capture by creating psychological movement toward that which meets, or even promises to meet, the addictions.

This week, we'll discuss the next two tiers, isolation and gaslighting. Like the other concepts in our course, these sound more sinister than they really are. While some of those I studied may have employed them in questionable ways, they are equally as effective when utilized for positive ends.

Let's get started with...

Isolation

Once a bond has been formed between two parties, the next step is to ensure the bond is not broken. This is no easy task given two basic facts. First, we are all susceptible to persuasion by those who meet our hidden addictions. And second, since these addictions are never fully satisfied, we are forever vulnerable to those who can satisfy them at any given moment. Therefore, if we are to prevent the bonds we have formed from being broken, we are left with two basic strategies.

The first is to rely on the intelligence, good intentions and self-control of those we are attempting to influence. In theory, this is the most respectful and therefore preferred strategy. In reality, it is often a disaster. Remember the quote from Henry Ward Beecher from last week,

All men are tempted. There is no man that lives that can't be broken down, provided it is the right temptation, put in the right spot.

Well, this statement includes you, me and all those we wish to influence as well. And just where do the temptations come from? From sources outside any given circle of influence.

Good kids up and leave loving families to join gangs and cults. Spouses leave stable relationships for people whom they barely know. And in the business world, clients and associates often leave longtime business relationships often without warning. Examples such as these are not aberrations. They are common occurrences.

Whether or not they will admit it, virtually all successful organizations recognize and compensate for this fact. Groups often isolate themselves by drawing rigid distinctions between themselves and everything that lies outside of themselves. Some may wince at this strategy, but we need only look around to see how widespread its use already is among groups of all shades of morality.

Cults encourage their followers to break their ties to those who do not support their views. Race based groups discourage their members from any contact with "inferior" people. Churches encourage their members to socialize with one another rather than non-believers or those of another faith. Network marketing groups have been known to tell their members that associating with those who decline to join the group will only drag them down. To really make it in network marketing you must associate only with those who truly have your "best interests" in mind. Kids in school form cliques in which it is deemed "uncool" to even be seen with others outside the group. And as Jay Haley points out in his fascinating essay *The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ*, even Jesus seemed to recognize the need for isolating those of one mind from others when he said, "Do not think I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; a man's worst enemies will be the members of his own family." Matthew, 10:34 - 10:36

Strip the value judgments from each of the situations just mentioned and we are left with pure social constructs that are subject to the laws and dynamics of all social constructs. And the relationships you and I are trying to form in our lives are social constructs as well. We would be wise to learn from those that yield the most power and demonstrate the greatest resistance to disintegration.

I mentioned last week that Nobel Prize winner, Elias Canetti, in his book *Crowds and Power*, pointed out that one of the most reliable ways of maintaining the existence of any given group of people is in focusing its members' attention on another group of people whom they see as rivals. He refers to this idea as a "double crowd." Specifically, he says,

"Whether the two crowds confront each other as rivals in a game, or as a serious threat to each other, the sight, or simply the powerful image of the second crowd, *prevents the disintegration of the first*. As long as all eyes are turned in the direction of the eyes opposite, knee will stand locked by knee; as long as all ears are listening for the expected shout from the other side, arms will move to a common rhythm." (Italics added)

Of course, we can detest those who employ this technique and set out to expose their methods. However, in this very act, we create an us/them dichotomy that pits the "righteous" (us) against the devious and despicable (them), and the relationships on both sides are strengthened as a result.

This is just another example to illustrate how ludicrous it is to attempt to avoid these concepts and instead, how much better served we would be by trying to understand them. So at this point, let's plunge ahead and discover just how the concept of isolation can be employed in many aspects of our lives.

Inducing Isolation

There are two basic ways of isolating others, physically and psychologically. Of the two, physical isolation is the least common, the least practical, but perhaps the best known.

Psychological isolation, though rarely discussed, is by far the more powerful and practical of the two. Still, both play major roles in forbidden persuasion.

Physical Isolation

When people think of physical isolation, situations like David Koresh set up in Waco, Texas or Jim Jones created in Guyana come to mind. While these are certainly prime examples, this type of isolation, though extremely effective, is difficult to put into practice for obvious reasons. Still, there is another way to physically isolate people that is much more common and much more practical: simply overwhelm them.

Though not as direct as physically removing a person from potential distractions, overwhelming them with frequent tasks can achieve similar results and is more practical in day-to-day life. For example, many groups that some experts have labeled cults thrive even though their members are part of the mainstream public. They work, socialize and even live with people from outside the cult, yet the hold the cult has over their lives remains intact. How does the cult manage such control? The same way strong churches maintain loyal congregations, thriving businesses keep great employees and responsible parents keep their kids from getting involved with the wrong people - by giving them small, but recurring tasks that tend to keep their role in the forefront of their minds regardless of their physical circumstances.

For example, a church may encourage its members to regularly volunteer for small, but essential church activities. Though church leaders can obviously ask this of their members without intending to isolate them from others, the end result is the same as if it had been done for that very purpose. That is, members that regularly volunteer tend to become more committed, and stay more committed, than members who simply attend regular church services.

Businesses who engage in smaller, but more frequent transactions with their clients often enjoy greater customer loyalty than businesses that engage in larger, but less frequent transactions. For example, we tend to be more loyal to a local grocery store or video rental outlet than an automobile dealership.

In short, the more frequently we can get another person physically involved with us or our cause, the more we can expect their loyalty to remain intact.

Several years ago, a series of television commercials designed to minimize teenage drug use played upon this very theme. One such spot showed a teenage boy sitting on his bed, playing a saxophone. After 20 seconds of this simple scene, a narrator finally broke in and said something like, "Studies show that it is scientifically impossible for a teenager to smoke marijuana while playing the saxophone. Keep your kids busy." In other words, overwhelm them in order to reduce the chances of outside influences destroying their character.

What is true in cults, gangs, and brotherhoods is true in all human situations. Isolation is not only powerful; it is oftentimes critical.

Psychological Isolation

The second way we can isolate others from outside influences is by using various psychological techniques. Though their occurrence is common in all strong relationships, they are often employed accidentally since we rarely think of these techniques as performing the function they do. Each of them serves to form a psychological barrier between those we wish to maintain control of and those who would undo that control. Among the most common methods of psychological isolation are fostering and maintaining secrets, predicting the future and cultivating shared experiences.

Fostering and Maintaining Secrets

When group members share secrets amongst themselves a natural sense of bonding occurs. This bonding serves to promote a sense of family and commitment within the group that tends to continue even outside the presence of other members. It also serves to reduce the impact that outside influences may have on those who are "in the know".

Once, while I was waiting in an auto dealership for my vehicle to be repaired, I spent more than an hour engaged in a friendly conversation with a man who was also in the waiting area. The topic of conversation drifted in all directions and was remarkably pleasant given that we had just met. Eventually, he mentioned a building here in San Antonio where a local chapter of a certain fraternal organization regularly meets. A friend of mine happens to be a member of this organization so I mentioned his name to the friendly stranger. When I did, his face lit up and he reached out to shake my hand. I knew what he was trying to do. The organization my friend belongs to has its share of secret words, phrases, and, yes, handshakes. When I failed to give the stranger the "secret handshake" he was expecting, our friendly conversation came to an abrupt end. Suddenly he was no longer interested in chatting about our basketball team or the local rodeo events happening in our town. For the next hour until my car was ready, we sat in silence with only an occasional glance and a forced smile between us.

What this encounter demonstrates is the force that our group identifications can have on us even when we are engaged in unrelated day-to-day activities. Notice that the man in the previous example was social and open *until* the issue of his group involvement arose in his consciousness. At that point, his goal was to identify me as either one of his own, or an outsider. When I failed the test, the group's influence overpowered the social dynamics of the current situation.

Though fostering and maintaining secrets is a favorite tactic of many gangs, cults, brotherhoods and such, it is often a natural outgrowth of people socializing together and not necessarily a sign of anyone intentionally trying to gain or maintain control over anyone else. Still, whether intentional or not, sharing secrets among groups of people and even between individuals does isolate them from others and should therefore never be underestimated.

Predicting the Future

Predicting the future is another common, but more subtle method of psychological isolation. Salesmen who attempt to discourage prospects from going elsewhere to do

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business often use this technique. When a prospect begins to show signs of going elsewhere, a salesman may openly encourage them to do so, but then suggest they'll just be wasting their time as he then "predicts the future" by explaining what they'll find if they do check out the competition. For example, prices will be higher, selections smaller, and terms less flexible. But by all means, feel free to find out for yourself.

If the customer decides to forgo his search, the salesman wins. If the customer decides to shop around and discovers that what the salesman said was true and returns, the salesman wins. If the customer leaves and doesn't return, the salesman is no worse off than before and at least did everything possible to maintain that customer without becoming overly forceful.

Cults use this strategy when they "predict" new recruits may experience ridicule and disbelief from those who knew them before they joined the group. This ridicule and disbelief, which would be understandable to most anyone else, is reframed by the cult leaders as "proof that their old family and friends don't understand or care for them as much as the cult does. After all, if they did care, wouldn't they be glad you found something that makes you happy?"

The following true story is perhaps the best illustration of this I have ever witnessed. Please excuse the questionable nature of the situation I am about to describe and instead, try to focus on the powerful principle it illustrates.

Many years ago I was working on a television show with a group of people who, with the exception of one newcomer, were very familiar with one another. When we learned that one of our assistants was running late, one of my coworkers came up with the most powerful practical joke I have ever witnessed.

To understand how powerful it was, it is important to know something about our assistant who was running late. To put it bluntly, the man can't stop talking about sex, graphic sex. No matter how little he knows someone or how inappropriate the timing, the topic of sex will be raised. You can count on it. Knowing this, my coworker suddenly turned to the newcomer to our group and asked if he had ever met the assistant that would be arriving shortly. When the newcomer said he hadn't, my coworker told him there was something he should know about the assistant before he arrives. "He's gay," my coworker lied. "But he's really worried about others finding out. So, to hide it, he sometimes overcompensates and talks almost nonstop about women and sex. I just thought you ought to know in case he does it today. That way you won't be wondering what's going on."

"Are you serious?" the newcomer asked looking at the rest of us. We all nodded. "Wow. Thanks for warning me," he said before getting back to work.

Soon, our assistant arrived and within minutes, he told his first dirty joke. The newcomer was on the other side of the set but when he overheard the man begin to tell the joke, he began to look around at the rest of us and snickered. Our assistant couldn't figure out what was so funny as he hadn't even reached the punch line yet, but continued on as we knew he would. For the rest of the day the situation continued. Every time our assistant uttered a dirty word, our newcomer grew more convinced he was actually gay. And by

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the end of the day, our assistant was even convinced something was wrong with the newcomer because of the way he kept laughing at the wrong times.

This story demonstrates the incredible power predictions can have over the perceptions of those for whom we make predictions. If our assistant's actions hadn't been framed in advance as being those of a "closet homosexual", his actions would have been taken as proof positive that he was a heterosexual. But since his actions had been framed in advance in this way, *the exact same actions* were now seen as proof positive that he was in fact gay. When we believe a given prediction will come true, we tend to see everything, no matter how contradictory, as evidence of its proof.

Cultivating Shared Experiences

The final strategy for inducing psychological isolation in others is by cultivating shared experiences. Like the sharing of secrets, shared experiences are often a natural byproduct of the social process, but can also be encouraged for the express purpose of increasing a sense of bonding among group members.

Church picnics and spiritual retreats, network marketing conferences, and even high school pep rallies are just a few examples of orchestrated events designed to solidify group bonds through shared experiences.

I once spent a weekend at a Texas ranch working on a video for a group that most people, including myself, would consider a cult. All the trappings of a cult were there. A charismatic leader, bizarre beliefs and rituals governing every aspect of the members' behavior such as where they could walk, when they could talk, and the exact type of diet they were allowed to consume. The weekend was ostensibly designed to instruct the participants in psychic healing techniques, yet over the course of 48 hours, there was less than two hours of actual instruction. The rest of the time was spent observing group practices, rituals and most of all, shared experiences. They walked on fire together. They sat for extended periods of time in a "sweat lodge" together. They chanted and danced together. They broke boards and meditated together. The key aspect of all of this to consider is the word "together".

When I asked one of the more candid organizers why there was so little teaching going on during a weekend designed to "teach psychic healing", he unabashedly admitted that teaching was secondary to the bonding that was taking place between the participants. And when the group got together to discuss all they had "learned" during the weekend, everyone of the participants stressed the fun and camaraderie they had enjoyed and hardly a word was even uttered about the techniques they had come to learn.

It is important to consider that the shared experience need not be positive. Bonding often occurs in the midst of even the most appalling circumstances as well such as war, disaster and crisis. This point is often lost on those who try to orchestrate shared experiences for others and things don't turn out as planned. Consider that perfect date or family outing that was "destroyed" by a flat tire, an upset stomach or some other unforeseen problem. In retrospect, these are often the times we cherish most in our memories. The perfect experiences somehow fade from memory while we often reflect fondly on those that held a bit of the unexpected, even if it seemed less than ideal at the time. Why do we do this?

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Because the point of these experiences is not to experience perfection, the point is to *share an experience*. When we remember this, our efforts, even when marred by the unforeseen problems of life, have more powerful bonding effects than we could have ever hoped for.

The more experiences people share in common, whether wholly positive or negative, the more intimate, involved and therefore, committed to one another they tend to become. This commitment helps serve as another barrier between the individuals of the group and outsiders.

As a final note regarding the inducement of isolation, some people suggest another method exists. Namely, treating people so well they wouldn't even consider going elsewhere. This is obviously the most morally attractive option. It is also the least practical. The ugly truth is that so few people are capable of such loyalty, that if you relied solely on them, you'd be out of business before you knew it.

I have seen companies lose clients they'd served faithfully for decades over a few dollars on the bottom line of a single transaction. I personally lost a client who once proclaimed they'd never even consider hiring another producer. Why did I lose them? "No particular reason," my contact said. It turns out someone in the department suggested they try someone new and nobody had any objections. So just like that, I was out. And I have known people whose children got mixed up with gangs despite a deep and abiding love within their families.

The bottom line is, treating people so well they wouldn't consider going elsewhere is an admirable goal, but it is not enough. Every person, business and organization, if it is to survive, must accept human nature for what it is and make a concerted effort to retain those relationships it deems important. And once the relationship is established and solidified, our third tier of forbidden persuasion comes into play. Gaslighting.

Gaslighting

One of the most pervasive and sensitive aspects of any relationship would have to be the issue of change. Just consider how much of our lives are spent trying to change things about other people:

We try to change the way people behave, not just toward ourselves or others, but the way they behave in general.

Stop looking at me like that when I'm trying to talk to you! I can't stand that noise you make when you eat your food! You're always late, what's wrong with you? You shouldn't let him/her treat you like that. Why can't you be more like him/her or this, that or the other thing? Does any of this ring a bell?

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We try to change what people believe. We want them to accept our religious faith. We want them to believe that we really were stuck in traffic or held up at the office. We want them to believe they can count on us or that check really is in the mail.

We want to change how people feel.

What do you mean you don 't feel loved...I tell you I love you all the time!

Don't be sad. In time you 'll forget all about him, her or it. I wouldn 't be so happy if I were you. Just wait until your father gets home. You shouldn 't be mad. I'm the one that should be mad.

And we want to change the way people think. We tell those who are "too sensitive" to stop being that way and to be more realistic. We tell those who are "too logical" to loosen up and live a little. And the list goes on and on and on.

While the players in our lives will often change over time, our attempt to change the very nature of the players in our lives is a constant struggle. But it isn't just other people whom we have a difficult time changing. We struggle to change things about ourselves, even when we ask others to help us do so!

We hire personal trainers with every intention of following their instructions, only to slough off and fail to do the work. We join organizations out of a desire to make a difference, then get sucked back into our daily routines and leave our good intentions behind. We go to therapists begging for them to help us change, then resist them every step of the way.

Of course, we don't intentionally enter these relationships thinking we will resist or even wanting to resist. But as we're coming to recognize in this course, too often our intentions and our behavior are two entirely different things.

There are three important lessons we can derive from these examples.

First, change is difficult, even when a person wants to change.

Second, given the fact that most people we encounter *do not want to change*, at least not in the direction we want them to, our job as persuaders is infinitely more difficult.

And third, when change becomes the main issue in a relationship, change is often one of the least likely things to occur.

Remember our hidden addiction that people want to be right? The moment they sense that someone is trying to change them, they feel "wrong" and inevitably resist.

We would be wise to remember that there is nothing more demeaning to a person than to be told they shouldn't feel what they're feeling, think what they're thinking, believe what they're believing, or do what they're doing. Yet this is exactly the way too many of us attempt to change other people. We make "change" the topic of discussion and proceed to *tell* them all the reasons they should change. And we've already seen how successful this strategy is.

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So if persuasion is all about inducing change in others, and yet the very issue of change is one of the most formidable obstacles to change, how do we overcome this dilemma?

It has been said that tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy. And while this is an enormous step forward in our interactions with others, we want to do more than simply make a point. We want to induce change. To do that, we must look to something more powerful than tact. We must be able to induce change without appearing to do so. We must be able to correct another person without making them feel wrong. One of the most subtle and powerful, yet least understood, ways of accomplishing this is through a process that has come to be known as gaslighting.

The phrase gaslighting goes back to a classic Hollywood film called *Gaslight*. In it, a husband attempts to make his wife appear to be insane in order to get her out of his way by having her committed to a mental hospital. He does this by manipulating her environment in subtle ways that cause her to doubt her own ability to interpret reality. One of the many ways he does this is by secretly altering the brightness level of a gaslight in such a way that she comes to believe she is imagining it. When others don't appear to notice the light changing in front of them, she begins to question her own sanity. Soon, she is willing to believe anything her husband tells her. After all, if she can't trust her own husband, whom can she trust?

According to Dr. Theo L. Dorpat in his book *Gaslighting, The Double Whammy, Interrogation, and Other Methods of Covert Control in Psychotherapy and Analysis*:

"Gaslighting is a type of projective identification in which an individual (or group of individuals) attempt to influence the mental functioning of a second individual by causing the latter to doubt the validity of his or her judgment, perceptions, and/or reality testing in order that the victim will more readily submit his will and person to the victimizer."

In other words, gaslighting, is what happens when others secretly try to make you doubt your ability to discern reality so that you'll come to trust their judgments more than your own.

While the phrase gaslighting is not commonly used, the practice itself is.

Much of our day-to-day communications involve our attempts to explain how others are wrong and we are right. Why? To get them to see things our way. Many fields of specialty adopt complicated vocabularies and processes ostensibly because of the complexity of their given fields. However, the very vocabularies they develop are often the root cause of much of the complexity. Why might those in a given specialty adopt such complicated ways of speaking about their work? While we may never know for certain, we can make a pretty good guess. Take law for example.

In the classic book, *Woe Unto You, Lawyers*, Fred Rodell, an attorney himself, says:

".. the lawyer's trade is a trade built entirely on words. And so long as the lawyers carefully keep to themselves the key to what those words mean, the only way the average man can find out what is going on is to become a lawyer, or at least study law, himself. All of which makes it very nice - and very secure - for the lawyers."

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Whatever the real reason for much of the complexity in some specialized fields of knowledge, one thing is certain. When we come to need the services of an expert, if we can't understand the exact nature of our given problem, we are at the mercy of those who do.

The point is, while there may be endless ways to establish authority and/or influence over others, at the core of most of them is a simple idea: make other people doubt their own thoughts so that they'll come to rely on yours. In other words, gaslight them.

When the ignorant are taught to doubt, they do not know what they safely may believe.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

Still, just because gaslighting is commonly practiced, doesn't mean it is commonly effective. In fact, just the opposite is true. While people seem to intuitively gravitate toward the technique and often attempt to employ it without being aware of it, it often does more harm than good. Coming right out and trying to make another doubt their own thinking is never a good way to foster positive relationships.

Yet there are ways in which gaslighting can be practiced not only elegantly and effectively, but perhaps most importantly, ethically. In an essay entitled *The Effort to Drive the Other Person Crazy*, Harold Searles says:

"A mode of interpersonal participation which bears all the earmarks of an effort to drive the other person crazy may be powerfully motivated, in actuality, by a conscious or unconscious desire to encourage the other person into a healthier closeness, a better integration both interpersonally, with oneself, and intrapersonally, within oneself."

Therefore, as with the other concepts in this book, the issue isn't whether or not we should practice gaslighting. We clearly already do. The issue is how to do so more effectively.

The Art of Gaslighting

When we recognize that gaslighting is simply a label for a naturally occurring aspect of communication, we quickly realize that it is almost impossible to put a boundary on just what does and does not qualify as gaslighting. The possibilities are endless. Still, there are some basic strategies we can employ to begin to harness the power of this very subtle, very powerful concept. Here are the five most practical and applicable of these strategies I have found in my studies.

Repetitive questioning

Anytime we are repeatedly asked to explain something, or even just feel we are, we begin to doubt our own thinking. And the more certain we were before being questioned, the faster and more powerfully doubt can overtake us.

I once proved this point to a friend by asking him if he knew what country spaghetti and pizza originated from. When he immediately responded, Italy, I raised an eyebrow and just stared at him. After a few moments of silence, he said, "Wait a minute. You did say pizza and spaghetti, right?" I nodded. "And you wanted to know what country they came from?" I nodded again. "It's Italy," he said. When I grinned, he finally said, "Well, at least I think it's Italy."

Without saying a word, I was able to employ this technique by simply causing him to feel as if I was questioning his answer. When I failed to accept the answer he "knew" was correct, I planted a seed of doubt in his mind that caused him to question something he wouldn't have dreamed of questioning just moments before.

The technique of repeated questioning works by destroying the foundations of the psychological positions we hold on the issues being discussed. And unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on the situation, this often isn't very difficult to do. The fact is, the reasons we cite for holding many of the positions we hold cannot bear much weight as we typically form our positions based on the flimsiest of evidence and superficial analysis. This makes sense as the vast majority of our beliefs, opinions and perceptions aren't going to be challenged by others and we only need to find enough evidence to satisfy ourselves. This strategy works just fine, until we happen to encounter someone who forces us to think more deeply about the positions we hold.

It is important to point out that the questioning need not be, and in fact, should not be, threatening or even challenging in nature. This would, of course, begin to generate the very resistance we are seeking to avoid. Instead, the questioning can be based out of a sense of genuine interest or a desire for clarification and still begin to generate the doubt that a more aggressive line of questioning can create.

Pointing out the Invisible

When someone makes us aware of something we feel we should have been aware of, we tend to wonder if there is anything else we're overlooking. Our sense of certainty is suddenly gone and we become more open to the thoughts of others - especially those who were kind enough to have enlightened us in the first place.

Cult leaders employ this tactic by pointing to and exaggerating the significance of personality traits a person may have that they hadn't been aware of, or perhaps hadn't interpreted as a problem, before. But this technique is not limited to cults.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were a number of human potential movements that employed just such a tactic in marathon weekend seminars. One of the main points these groups stressed is that their attendees were often unable to keep their word about even the most mundane of commitments. They would promise to lose weight, then in no time at all, forget about their commitment. They would make promises to themselves not to fight with their spouse over the toilet seat or the toothpaste ever again, only to wake up and attack them with even more fervor. And they would promise their bosses they wouldn't be late to work again. Of course, soon, they would. This point was drilled in for hours on end in the beginning of these seminars in such a way that it was difficult to

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deny. Once the attendees accepted the horror of this notion, they naturally looked toward the seminar leaders to help resolve the pain this realization caused them.

Many attendees inferred that these "problems" were simply the tip of the iceberg and that since only the leader was able to identify them, only the leader can help resolve them.

Of course this technique can also be used to make another person aware of positive qualities about themselves that they hadn't been aware of before. In fact, according to Searles, this may be one of the most important gifts we can give one another.

"..it seems to me that the essence of loving relatedness entails a responding to the wholeness of the other person - including often.. a responding in such a fashion to the other person when he himself is not aware of his own wholeness, finding and responding to a larger person in him than he himself is aware of being." (*The Effort to Drive the Other Person Crazy*)

Psychotherapists often attempt to do just this when patients are locked into a given understanding of themselves and their circumstances that limits their ability to function in their lives. If the therapist can point out aspects of the situation or the patient's behavior that had not only gone unnoticed, but that casts a more empowering light on the situation, they will have gaslighted their patient and left them better off because of it.

But like the other forms of gaslighting, unless we recognize how they work, and appreciate their potential to help others, the only way we can hope to employ them is by accident.

Alluding to the Mysterious

We allude to the mysterious when we point out things another person has yet to, or may not have the ability to, see for themselves.

When a therapist tells his client that his disturbing behavior isn't due to anger but is a result of a mysterious and unconscious "complex," the patient's faith in and dependence upon the therapist grows exponentially. It's no wonder the client hasn't been able to solve his own problems. He doesn't even understand what his problems are!

Years ago I went to a dermatologist to have a wart removed. When the doctor took one look at my "wart" and told me it was cancer, I was understandably shaken. What does this mean? Will it spread? Do I have others I don't know about? In an instant, the doctor became one of the most important and influential people in my life.

When I teach this concept to clients I often tell them to never underestimate the value of nonsense. In any given field there are catch words and concepts that are foreign to anyone on the outside. Even clients. These very words and concepts may sound like nonsense to others but can hold the mystery you need to establish your own credibility and instill doubt in the minds of others.

The recent advances in computer technology have completely transformed the business of television production. Now, any kid with a thousand dollars worth of software and a

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PC can compete with million dollar production studios. And while these newbies lack experience and their work is often less than spectacular, this fact is often lost on those looking to hire a producer. Instead, many end consumers lump all producers in the same group and don't understand how one producer can charge \$500 for a TV spot, another can charge \$5000, and still another \$50,000.

When I first encountered this situation with my own clients, I would try to explain the difference to them and trust they would understand. Too often, they didn't. They went to the lowest bidder and often came away disappointed.

How did I learn to combat this situation? By understanding the value of nonsense.

When the inevitable topic of price would arise and someone would point out that they could get the "same" work done for a fraction of the cost down the street, I would agree. At least at first. Once I disarmed them with this position, I would then offer to help them out by pointing out some of the many things they should ask their prospective producer. Would they need a multi-camera "iso" setup or would a single camera "feature style" setup be more effective? Should they use a standard DV format with "black levels at zero I.R.E." or do they need to use professional gear that "registers blacks at the NTSC broadcast standard of 7.5 I.R.E."? How about "grips" and "gaffers". Would they need them? If so, how many? You get the point.

The truth of the matter is that these are issues that should be considered by a prospective client, but often aren't. They are also issues that people new to the business aren't even likely to understand, much less deal with. When my clients came to understand the complexity of the production business and that I seemed to be one of the few that truly understood the complexities, I found myself losing fewer and fewer clients. And as a side benefit, I found I gained even more respect from those I dealt with.

People who allude to the mysterious tend to become trusted translators in our lives, a role that has enormous power. Gurus who claim access to desirable, but esoteric wisdom can enslave people who desperately want to know. Spiritual leaders who claim to have special insight into scripture can exert a powerful influence over their followers who come to believe there must be more to the word of God than the average person can understand. The same is true of doctors, lawyers, accountants, consultants and experts of all types - if they understand this concept.

It is difficult to overstate the power one can attain over others by simply alluding to the mysterious, and developing a reputation as a trusted translator.

It's amazing what you put up with when you think other people know more than you.

Peter McWilliams

Revealing the Secret Thoughts of Others

If there is one thing that is more disturbing than finding out another person thinks poorly of us, it is finding out that others secretly share the same opinion. There may be no more powerful way to make sure our opinion impacts another person as to claim that others

share the same opinion but are reluctant to admit it. You not only establish yourself as being the only one who cares enough to tell them the truth, but you drive a wedge between your target and the those who may or may not harbor secret thoughts about them.

This is a favorite technique of many gurus, conmen and manipulators. One can clearly see how an unscrupulous person could use this to not only instill insecurity in another person, but to destroy that person's relationships with others. Perhaps it isn't quite as easy to see how the same technique can be used with equal effectiveness to *enhance* another person's self-image and *improve* their relationships with others.

Imagine the impact you could have on another person if you not only pointed out a positive aspect of themselves that they hadn't been aware of, but also revealed that others see them the same way. The impact of your communication would be dramatically increased.

My wife and I have often used this technique with our children.

When my son recently brought home his first straight-A report card, my wife and I were ecstatic and openly expressed how proud we were of him. But rather than leave it at that, a few days later I "revealed" his mother's secret thoughts to him in order to drive the point home even harder. As I put him to bed, I told him once again how proud I was of him for getting such good grades. When he shrugged off my comment, I looked directly at him and said, "Do you have any idea how many people your mother has told about your grades? She's been bragging about how smart you are to everybody. I don't think she wanted to tell you she was doing that because she thought you'd get embarrassed. I just thought you should know how proud she is of you." You couldn't have pried the smile off his face with a crowbar. And the best part was, everything I told him was true. But by revealing it to him second-hand, it took on increased importance.

I have used this concept numerous times to help strengthen existing relationships among those I work with. While others seem more than happy to spread anything negative or controversial that they happen to overhear, I make it a point to spread some of the positive things people say about others. The impact of hearing these things second-hand has a power that can literally transform and strengthen relationships like nothing else.

In a court of law, hearsay may be dismissed as unreliable. In real life, hearsay is often taken as gospel truth, especially if it appears there is good reason for the information to have been kept from us in the first place.

Gang Up On Them

As we've seen, people often have very strong opinions about many things and can be incredibly stubborn in changing them when they feel someone is trying to get them to do so. Even in the face of blatantly contradictory evidence, they will often fail to change their opinions. Even if it would be in their best interests to change their opinions, they will resist. If they're feeling pressured, they will resist. However, there is one type of

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pressure that even the most stubborn of people find difficult to combat. And that is the power of social pressure.

Numerous psychological experiments have demonstrated the power of social pressure on the way we perceive our world. One of the most famous of these was performed in the 1940s and 1950s by a social psychologist named Solomon Asch.

In his experiment, Asch showed groups of people a card with a line of a given length drawn on it. Then, he would show them a second card with three lines of differing lengths on it. One of these three lines would be the exact same length as the line on the first card. The job of those in the group was to select the line on the second card that was the same length as the one on the first card. A series of similar comparisons that varied only in line length were performed with each group of students. These comparisons were not difficult as two of the three lines on the second card were obviously the wrong length and thus the correct line was obvious in all cases. And yet, an average of 38% of the answers given were incorrect and at least 75% of those answering were incorrect on at least one of the line comparisons. What accounted for these people making mistakes on comparisons that were virtually impossible to get wrong?

It turns out that in each group of people, only one subject was the focus of the experiment. The others were confederates of the experimenter and had been instructed to respond with the same wrong answer on two-thirds of the comparisons. Of course, the lone subject was always the last to be asked to give his or her answer, most often in the face of a group of peers who unanimously held an opinion that contradicted the true one. And under this pressure the majority of them buckled at least once, and many of them more often than that.

In the face of the fact that others hold contradictory opinions to our own, few of us have the staying power to go against the crowd.

Though many people are familiar with the concept of social pressure and attempt to employ it, they miss a key distinction that can often mean the difference between effortless success and dismal failure. And that distinction is this: once people have made up their minds, whether they have expressed their opinions or not, the likelihood of them changing their minds approaches zero. So how do we utilize this distinction for our own advantage? By employing the concept of social pressure before the issue at hand has even become an issue.

Establish your credibility *before* your credibility comes into question. Demonstrate how happy your clients are with your work *before* you attempt to pitch your services. Stress the number of people who already support your candidate *before* you ask for their support.

How do we do these things? While each situation is unique and requires its own strategy, the fundamental principle is to change the very nature of your encounters to a benign or at least, off topic, subject until your important points have been established.

The above strategies are just a few of the many subtle ways we may gaslight others. And while we may not want to admit the necessity of doing so, it is often an imperative step in promoting any type of meaningful change in others. After all, until we begin to doubt our own beliefs, we aren't likely to accept anyone else's. And gaslighting is often the most elegant and undetectable way of setting up just such a prerequisite.

Wrap-up

If you study the literature on cults you will discover that there are as many ways of breaking down the methods of cult mind control as there are experts in the field. When I first began my study I wanted to discover the one that was "right" - the one that most fully explained the process. In time, I realized the mistake I was making. It isn't possible to find the "right" method. It is only possible to find the method that best fulfills the purposes of the person doing the research. In that respect, the distinctions made by any given expert must be assumed to be equally valid if they fulfill this purpose.

So I changed my goal from finding the "right" method, to the method that would best help me harness the power cults use in my own persuasion efforts. This made the process much more simple.

While the process of cult mind control can be broken down into an almost unlimited number of steps and analyzed from a multitude of perspectives, for those who wish to develop their powers of persuasion, there is an easier way. The three concepts we've covered in lessons 2 and 3, meeting hidden addictions, inducing isolation and gaslighting are the most elegant and empowering ways for the persuader to harness this power, //the concepts are applied properly.

With that little warning, I want to point out the main obstacle most people have in effectively applying the information in this class - they try to force fit it into situations in which it isn't appropriate. While the concepts we're studying are applicable to a wide range of situations and, as we've seen, are very powerful, they are not *all* effective in *all* situations. We must learn when, where and how to apply them appropriately.

I was recently asked how to apply some of these concepts online without being given any other information. That's like asking how to apply them in one part of the world over another. The question is far too broad.

These concepts can, and are, employed online, offline, in print, on television and radio, on the phone, in interpersonal situations and any other situations in which people communicate with other people. The potential to utilize these concepts is enormous, but again, they are not *all* effective, or even appropriate, in *all* situations.

But the question as to how to use these concepts online is not only too broad, but it is premature as well.

Let's make a quick distinction between two types of persuasion situations - spontaneous interpersonal encounters and all other encounters. In spontaneous interpersonal encounters it simply isn't possible to preplan a persuasion strategy. While we can give advance thought to interpersonal situations in general and entertain different strategies we

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might use, every interpersonal situation will be unique and it would behoove us not to "force feed" a given strategy on another person without first understanding the interpersonal dynamics of the situation. However, all other types of encounters give those of us who wish to persuade others varying degrees of opportunity to plan, to strategize and to rehearse.

It is the time that these situations afford us and how we use this time that will often mean the difference between success and failure.

So to go back to the question I had been asked, if all someone knows about their situation is that it is going to be "online", they aren't even close to being able to determine which concepts would be the most appropriate and effective for them. Who are they trying to persuade? What are the likely points of resistance? Who else "has this person's ear" that might influence them in either a positive or negative direction? What assumptions has this person made that will likely effect how the persuader will be perceived? These are just a few of many questions that should be asked when there is ample time for planning.

In our final class we will discuss a tool I call Contextual Message Analysis and Design that will lead us through the process of asking these types of questions and incorporating their answers into our persuasion strategies. It is a process I personally use to help develop everything from scripts for television commercials to business correspondence and press releases to love letters.

For now though, in our homework, we'll focus on some of the most important specific questions relating to the information we've covered thus far. And again, to avoid asking questions that are too broad, consider the homework in light of some specific situation you wish to improve. It could be a specific interpersonal encounter you're likely to face, an advertisement or press release you're going to write, or a general sales strategy you're attempting to develop. Whatever it is, be specific. You can always consider the homework questions in light of other situations later.

Homework

Given the situation you've selected, ask yourself where you are, or are likely to be, weak in terms of getting the attention of your target. For example, if you're writing a press release, your release is likely to be tossed in a pile with dozens if not hundreds of other releases. How will you make yours stand out? If you're trying to meet that special someone or make an impression on a potential client, how will you make yourself noticed without making yourself ridiculous?

Asking yourself where you're likely to be weak in this area is designed to help you incorporate our concepts of Incongruity Theory and Hidden Addictions. While I stated earlier that not all concepts are appropriate or effective in all situations, these two, Incongruity Theory and Hidden Addictions, may be the exceptions. I can't imagine any communication effort that could not be dramatically improved by considering it in light of these two concepts.

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Next, in order to consider the idea of isolation in your persuasion efforts, consider those areas where you tend to lose your influence over others and identify the sources of this loss. If the source is simply dissatisfaction with you, your product or your service, you don't have a problem with outside interference. You have a problem with the delivery of your product, service or message. However, if you, your product or service isn't the problem and you still tend to lose influence over others, you may, in fact, be looking at a problem with outside interference and need to consider some form of isolation. Review the situation you've selected in terms of the strategies we've discussed. Which ones would be most appropriate given the circumstances you face?

Finally, where do you struggle to have your ideas accepted despite their validity or your authority? Even the greatest ideas delivered by the wisest of messengers often meet with resistance given the nature of human beings and their desire to be right. In these cases, resist the inclination to *tell* the other person they're wrong and then explain all the reasons why. Instead, consider the concept of gaslighting, the art of correcting others without making them wrong, and see what a difference it makes, not only in their acceptance of your ideas, but in the dynamics of the situation itself.

As always, if you feel you're too close to your given situation to see the opportunity to use these ideas, let's explore the situation together.

Till Next Time

Next time we'll explore a concept I call Psychological Ventriloquism. Is it possible to actually place a thought into another person's mind without their awareness? Absolutely. We do it all the time without even realizing it. And it doesn't involve any belief in ESP, telepathy or any other paranormal concepts. It's something we are already doing all the time, but rarely realize that we are. And since we don't realize what we're doing, we have no control over the thoughts we project.

By the end of our next lesson, all this will change. We will not only come to understand the concept of Psychological Ventriloquism, we'll learn how to turn it to our advantage.

Lesson 4: Psychological Ventriloquism

Before we begin I want you to take just a moment and think back and identify an example of a particular type of situation in your life. What I want you to do is identify a time when you were absolutely certain about something, only to discover later, that you were mistaken. Perhaps you "knew" someone stole something from you only to discover later that you had misplaced it. Or maybe you just "knew" you had locked your front door or set the parking brake, only to find out later that you hadn't. The situation itself isn't important. What *is* important is that it be one in which you discovered you were mistaken.

Okay, now that you have a situation in mind, consider this:

Before you realized your mistake, you were certain about a great number of things in your life. You were certain about your name, your address, how many children or pets you had, what you had for breakfast that day and so on. *And* you were "certain" about the situation you have identified for this experiment. Since we now realize our mistake, this gives us two categories of information: absolute certainties and mistaken assumptions.

This distinction appears to be obvious and in and of itself to have little value for us. However, let's make one more distinction that will change everything.

In terms of our own awareness, these two categories, absolute certainties and mistaken assumptions, exist only *after* you realize your mistake. Before this realization, there was no such distinction. There was only absolute certainty. And our behavior reflects this.

Remember our production assistant from last week's lesson? The victim of this practical joke was certain that our assistant was gay and interpreted everything he saw as proof that this was true. When we're "certain" that someone is lying to us, we behave one way. When we're "certain" someone is telling us the truth, we behave in quite another.

Once we "know" something, our thinking and evaluation stop and our newfound "fact" begins to alter our attitudes, our emotions and our behavior without our awareness.

Now, ask yourself, how many of the things that you are "certain" about today will turn out to be mistakes as well?

Not a very comforting thought, is it? Well this is the human dilemma that makes the topic of this week's class so effective.

With this being said, welcome to our fourth class in *The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion*. In our first lesson we discussed three tendencies of human nature:

Tendency #1: People resist unwelcome attempts to persuade them.

Tendency #2: People can't resist what they can't detect.

Tendency #3: People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

These tendencies establish the foundation for this week's topic: Psychological Ventriloquism.

We've all seen ventriloquists who seem to "throw" their voices into the mouths' of dummies. The Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen act may immediately come to mind. While some of these ventriloquists are dreadful and couldn't fool an idiot, others are true masters and are capable of creating illusions so realistic they are uncanny.

Psychological ventriloquists are capable of generating a similar type of effect. However, rather than throwing their voices into dummies and fooling an audience, psychological ventriloquists "throw" their thoughts into others and make their targets think the thoughts are their own. This is not done through ESP, telepathy or some other paranormal phenomena. It is done by simply taking advantage of the limitations of the human mind.

The Secret of Conjurers, Conmen and Comedians

Control the manner in which a man interprets his world, and you have gone a long way toward controlling his behavior.

Stanley Milgram

A skilled magician using the crudest of methods can baffle the most intelligent of audiences. With a few simple props and an intriguing story, an experienced conman can make a fool of virtually anyone. And with the proper delivery, a comedian can pry a laugh from even the most stoic among us.

What skill do these people share in common that grants them their power over others? They are masters of Psychological Ventriloquism. In other words, they have mastered the art of inducing unconscious assumptions in others.

When a magician suspends his assistant in midair he runs a hoop up and down her body "proving" there is nothing holding her up. Of course, he's proving nothing of the sort, but he is leading us to *assume* there is nothing holding her up. When he rolls up his sleeves before performing a trick, he "proves" he's not hiding anything. Again, he hasn't proved that at all. And while this is blatantly obvious when we think about it, as we'll soon see, it is rarely obvious when we see it.

Conmen employ a similar strategy. As we learned earlier, Victor Lustig, the man who "sold" the Eiffel Tower used appropriate clothing and forged documents as "proof of his identity. And if this wasn't enough, he even took his victims on a tour of the Eiffel Tower. While the stated purpose of this visit was to allow them the opportunity to inspect it first hand, it had to have removed any doubt from their minds as to Lustig's legitimacy. After all, no conman would have the guts to go out in public and take them on an official tour of the tower, would they?

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Anyone who can handle a needle convincingly can make us see a thread which is not there.

EM. Gombrich, Art Historian

But while conjurers and conmen might use this tactic to trick us, comedians use it for another purpose.

Several years back my wife and I heard a comedian on television tell the following joke:

"My grandmother has been walking three miles a day every day for the last five years and now we don't know where the hell she is."

The audience erupted in laughter and my wife and I almost choked on our dinner. No matter what state people may have been in before hearing that joke, this comedian was able to utter one short sentence and make virtually everyone laugh. But why? What is it about this joke that makes it funny?

It is the fact that by the time we have heard "My grandmother has been walking three miles a day everyday for the last five years," we have unconsciously made an assumption that sets us up for the punchline. We assume that her grandmother has been *exercising*. We can almost see her shuffling down the street in her gray sweats, head down and her clenched hands swaying back and forth like she's tapping on a punching bag. In fact, I bet if the comedian stopped with those words and asked us to describe what she'd said so far, most of us would say she was telling us about her grandmother who exercises a lot. We wouldn't even realize that *we* added the concept of exercise to the situation and not the comedian.

Once the comedian leads us to make this picture in our minds, she explodes it with the punchline, "now we don't know where the hell she is." In a matter of seconds, she set us up and knocked us down. And we love it.

Let's look at one more quick example to illustrate just how quickly and invisibly these false assumptions enter our minds. The following joke is one that was recently making its way around the Internet. I was unable to determine its original source.

A couple of hunters are out in the woods when one of them falls to the ground. He doesn't seem to be breathing, and his eyes are rolled back in his head. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls 911. He gasps to the operator, "My friend is dead! What can I do?"

The operator, in a calm and soothing voice says, "Just take it easy. I can help. First, lets make sure he's dead."

There is a silence, then a shot is heard...

The hunter says, "OK, now what?"

Once again, the humor is a direct result of our being led to make a false assumption and then having our mistake revealed to us. In this case, we knew what the operator meant by the words "First, let's make sure he's dead" and without ever realizing it we assumed that

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the caller would as well. But surprise, surprise, we soon find out the truth and laugh, or at least smile, as a result.

Now while conjurers, conmen and comedians all utilize this aspect of our nature, only the comedian *reveals* this fact in his or her work. For comedians to create humor in this way, they must lead us to make false assumptions and then reveal them to us at the proper time. For conjurers to create magic and conmen to create cons, they must also lead us to make false assumptions but never let us realize the part our own thinking played in the process.

As I said earlier, these assumptions often seem silly to us in retrospect, but go unnoticed and unquestioned in reality. We take in information so quickly that we are constantly, and more significantly, unconsciously, making assumptions about what we see and in thinking back, fail to distinguish between what we "saw" and what we "assumed."

But it doesn't take others to entice us to make assumptions. We eagerly make them all by ourselves.

Consider a typical day of your life and how many assumptions you make.

When a friend says "let's meet for lunch" we assume that lunch means noon or that our friend will be picking up the check. When we see strangers at our front door we assume they're trying to sell something. When we enter a room and others suddenly stop talking we assume they were talking about us. When someone from our doctor's office leaves a message on our voice mail saying they need to speak with us right away, we assume it isn't good news. Assumptions play a profound role in our lives and, too often, an invisible one as well. And it is this "invisibility" that causes many of our problems.

Werner Erhard, the creator of the 1970s human potential phenomenon known as the est training, once discussed a similar concept using the idea of superstition in our lives. He pointed out that a simple superstition such as "a black cat crossing your path is unlucky" is extremely powerful not when it lives in your mind as a superstition, but when it is accepted as a truth. That is, a black cat crossing your path *is* unlucky. When you hold this thought in this way, it has enormous power over your behavior, especially when it comes to encountering a black cat. However, the same thought, held as "the thought that a black cat crossing your path is unlucky is a superstition" has no power to affect your behavior, even in the face of numerous black cats. The important thing to take from this, as Werner pointed out is, "A superstition has enormous power only when it is not a superstition. A superstition only has power when it is an 'is'."

The same is true of assumptions. An assumption only has power when it is not an assumption. An assumption only has power when it is held as a fact. And this is exactly how people hold their assumptions the vast majority of the time.

While people clearly entertain thoughts that do not rise to the level of "fact" in their minds, this is the exception. The reality is that the line between "assumption" and "fact" is hazy at best. And for most of us, as we saw earlier, the line is actually non-existent until an outside force makes us aware of this fact.

And even then, we often fall victim to the seductive power of our assumptions.

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There was an article in the Wall Street Journal on January 31, 2003 that had an excellent and even frightening example of this very point. The article, entitled *Videocameras, Too, Can Lie, Or at Least Create Prejudice* discusses the work of G. Daniel Lassiter, a professor of psychology at Ohio University. Dr. Lassiter studied the effect that video camera angles have in confession situations and discovered a fascinating fact.

When the camera angle shows only the person giving the confession and not the interrogator, viewers of the tape interpret the confession as more voluntary, and thus the confessor more likely guilty, than when the camera angle shows both the confessor and the interrogator.

Just how much of an impact might this little "assumption" on the part of the viewer mean in a court of law? Well, according to Dr. Lassiter, "In one instance, the simple change from an equal-focus confession to a suspect-focus confession doubled the 'conviction' rate."

That's right, the conviction rate doubled from just one seemingly insignificant aspect of the interrogation - the camera angle. But that's not the most frightening part.

You would think that pointing this out to viewers, that is, explicitly making them aware of this effect and asking them not to make this mistaken assumption would prevent them from doing so. And if you think this, you would be wrong. According to the article:

"The results were the same for confessions of manslaughter, rape, burglary, drug trafficking and shoplifting. They were the same *even when volunteers were told to note the prejudicial effect of camera angled* (Italics added)

So awareness of the potential problem assumptions play in our lives is not enough to counteract their effect. To compensate for this flaw in our nature, we must strive to remain aware of its potential in our lives and discipline ourselves to spot our own assumptions before they become "facts" in our minds. This takes three things - time, self-discipline and awareness. The vast majority of people have none of these.

We are in too much of a hurry to question our own thoughts and so we cannot spare the time. Our lives are in such disarray that self-discipline isn't possible. And the circumstances in our lives demand too much of our attention for us to be able to maintain an awareness of our own psychological limitations. And as a result, we continue on in our same error prone way and delude ourselves that we are not.

In our first lesson we had to face the fact that we may never know our attention has been captured until after it is released. And in this class we must face another uncomfortable fact about human nature:

Just as we cannot know our attention has been fully captured until after it has been released, we often do not know the difference between a fact and an assumption until something outside of us makes us aware of our error. Assumptions enter our consciousness unevaluated and unlabeled as such and as a result, appear indistinguishable from fact.

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While some may dismiss the ideas we've discussed thus far as trivial, they are anything but. Some psychologists and philosophers have built their entire careers studying and researching concepts such as these and yet have made little difference in the day-to-day existence of society as a whole. We cannot "reason away" these ideas through study. Nor can we dismiss them as insignificant and expect their impact to go away. We can only understand and appreciate them. But as persuaders, we can do one more thing. We can profit from them.

Before we go any further I want to address a concern some people have when it comes to Psychological Ventriloquism. While it's clear that assumptions play an enormous role in our lives, is it really possible to control the assumptions that other people will make?

The self-help writer Wayne Dyer relates a story in his book *Your Erroneous Zones* that speaks to this question. He tells the story of a man who went to a church to preach against the evils of alcohol. To dramatically illustrate his point to his audience, he put a worm in a glass of water and the congregation watched as it gently squirmed about. Then, the man dropped the worm in a glass of pure alcohol and the congregation gasped as the worm disintegrated before them. Certain he had made his point, the man asked for someone to share what they had just learned. One person quickly responded and told them, "I see that if you drink alcohol, you'll never have worms."

The point is, leading someone to draw a specific conclusion can be harder than it looks. The possibility for miscommunication is always present and should always be considered when we try to communicate. But the truth is, we are more alike in how we arrive at the assumptions we do and less original in our thinking in general than we may care to admit.

If we were not more alike in our thinking than different, it would be impossible for the comedian to get the majority of people to make the assumption he needs us to make for his joke to work. It would be impossible for a songwriter to write a song that touches millions of people in the same way. And it would be impossible for a screenwriter to write a movie that misleads the majority of its viewers in such a way that the ending of the movie is a total shock.

In reality, while we are all *capable* of individual thought, we often take shortcuts and accept cues that we have been socially trained to accept in an effort to get through our lives as efficiently as possible. And when you couple our reliance on psychological shortcuts with our belief in our own rationality, you not only have a society that is easy to fool, but one that believes it *can't* easily be fooled. This is why those who understand this dichotomy and compensate for it in their communication are often not only our most popular entertainers. They are often our most powerful masters.

An Ad That Changed History

One of the most powerful television commercials of all time is a good example of the effect this type of understanding can have on our communication and our lives. Even though the commercial only aired one time, it helped change the course of American

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politics and to this day, almost forty years after it was made, is considered by many to be one of the most effective television commercials ever made.

In it, a girl about four years old is shown standing in a field picking petals from a daisy she is holding in her hand. She counts each petal as she pulls it off and drops it to the ground. One, two, three, she counts just as cute as can be. One can't help smile at this innocent little child. But just before she reaches the count often, she looks up and the camera freezes as it captures her suddenly worried expression. Then the camera quickly pushes in toward her face as a man's voice takes over the counting. *But he counts downward from the number ten.* When he reaches zero and the camera has pushed all the way into the eyeball of the child, the commercial abruptly cuts to a series of atomic bomb mushroom clouds. Only then, do we learn what the commercial is about as President Lyndon Johnson's voice speaks to us over the images of a nuclear catastrophe.

"These are the stakes," he says, "to make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must love each other, or we must die."

An announcer completes the spot by encouraging us to, "Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home."

The spot only aired once before being pulled from the airwaves because of an outcry led by supporters of Johnson's political opponent, Barry Goldwater. The thrust of the complaint centered around the picture the spot paints of Goldwater: if elected, he would lead us into a nuclear disaster. Yet, *the spot never mentioned Goldwater!* Still, there was little doubt in anyone's mind as to how people would perceive the commercial. Why? Because the man who made the commercial knew in advance what people would think after watching it. How? Because it was the same thing they thought *before* they saw the commercial. The commercial simply amplified their current thoughts on Goldwater's nuclear position.

By setting up the viewer to make the assumption they wanted him to make, the producers of this commercial, according to some political analysts, assured Johnson's victory over Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election. Goldwater's image was tarnished by a commercial that never even mentioned his name.

"The reason people read Goldwater into the Daisy commercial was because everything in that ad is speaking to their fears about nuclear weapons and everything in the campaign was magnifying Goldwater's stands about nuclear weapons. And so you naturally invest that into an open message that invites those fears. That makes that the most powerful ad of that campaign. It also makes it the cleanest ad of the campaign, because to the extent that Goldwater is in the ad he was invested there by the audience. The audience isn't going to indict itself for dirty campaigning." Kathleen Jameson, then Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication

Imagine the self-restraint the makers of this commercial must have had. Given the cost of political advertising, the temptation to pack the ad with reasons why the viewer should vote for Johnson had to be enormous. What about his position on civil rights? What about his accomplishments in the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination? What about his

plans for the country? Yet, none of these, or countless other important issues, are even addressed. Instead, the makers of this commercial showed enormous self-restraint and confidence in their ability to lead people to make the desired assumption. Goldwater is trigger-happy. Vote for President Johnson. It worked.

People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

Learning Psychological Ventriloquism

Before discussing how to learn and apply the concept of Psychological Ventriloquism, I want to point out a common misconception many people have about powerful communication in general.

The late entertainer Steve Allen, who was an extremely prolific comedian and writer, once talked about his inability to create jokes using formulas. He said,

"There are formulas for comedy just as there are formulas for any kind of fiction, but in my own experience I've never been able to start from a formula or a device and create a funny idea. And believe me, I've tried."

And what is true of comedy and fiction is also true of any type of communication that is designed to touch people in a powerful way. This type of communication doesn't originate in formulas, tricks or strategies. It originates out of an increased awareness of human nature. And like the other concepts in this course, Psychological Ventriloquism is aimed at increasing this very awareness. To do so, we must concentrate on four specific areas: self-restraint, triggers of assumption, saying versus conveying information and finally, exploring various examples of the concept itself in action.

Self-Restraint

Self-restraint is perhaps the most important personal quality we can develop in order to employ psychological ventriloquism. Why is this so important? Because without self-restraint we tend to be too direct, too blunt, too mater-of-fact about our communication.

We tell our spouses we love them, and expect them to feel loved. We tell our clients we appreciate them and expect them to feel appreciated. And we fill our ads with impressive sounding information about our products and services and expect our clients to be impressed. While this is certainly the fastest way to express our thoughts, that is all we are doing - *expressing* our thoughts, as in *getting them out of our heads and off our conscience*. We did what we felt we needed to do and we can move on to the next order of business. Unfortunately, we often don't recognize that in the process we have somehow failed to actually communicate the information to the other person. They don't come away feeling loved, appreciated or impressed. They come away feeling "talked at" rather than communicated with.

With the exception of a few areas of communication, such as legal, medical or other technical arenas, there is probably no more /[^]effective way to communicate with impact than to rely on direct statements of our thoughts and feelings. Yet rely on them we do,

and then we wonder why we don't have much impact on others. To harness the full power of communication, we must fight our instinct to come right out and say what we think.

There is no big secret to doing this. We only need to remember to do so. And once we have stopped to consider our situation, we are then ready to move on to our next aspect of psychological ventriloquism.

Saying versus Conveying Information

If we are to maximize the impact our communication will have on others we must break our communication into two different categories. Information we can "say" versus information we must "convey".

For example, if you tell me your business is located ten miles north of town and has been in operation for over twenty years, I will probably believe you without giving it a second thought. If you tell me your business provides the finest service of its kind and will dedicate itself to my needs, I'll probably dismiss it as fluff. Both statements were direct, so why the difference in response? In the first case, you are communicating a verifiable, non-controversial fact, so I'm apt to accept it. However, your second statement is really an opinion. Your opinion. And being the "rational" being I am, I like to form my own opinions, thank you very much. In fact, I might not only dismiss your opinion, but depending on the circumstances, might also resent your trying to force it on me.

Here are two quick examples to illustrate how this resistance might be overcome:

How can one convey he or she is an expert without coming right out and saying it?

Joe Sugarman, one of America's top copywriters and entrepreneurs, occasionally includes seemingly out-of-place technical information in his ads. While this information is often over the heads of his readers, it is placed there for just that reason. In his brilliant book, *Advertising Secrets of the Written Word*, Sugarman writes:

"Providing a technical explanation which the reader may not understand shows that we really did our research and if we say it's good, it must be good. It builds confidence in the buyer that he or she is indeed dealing with an expert."

Given the extensive research Sugarman conducts, he could rightly, honestly and directly tell his reader's he's an expert. But why say it and risk resistance when he can convey it and allow his readers to arrive at the conclusion themselves?

How about trying to convey one's level of commitment to a client without coming right out and saying it?

I once heard of a company that provides its sales force with mobile phones, not to use for making calls, but to use for making a point. Each salesperson is instructed to openly turn his mobile phone off and place it in his briefcase shortly after beginning a meeting with a prospect. Rather than saying he's committed, the salesman conveys it by openly shutting off communication with the outside world and then turning his attention to the prospect.

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What looks like a spontaneous act is actually a calculated move to help communicate what might otherwise be dismissed as fluff.

How do we go about determining what is best said and what is best conveyed? While there is no sure-fire way of doing so, by far the biggest impediment to implementing this idea is simply *remembering* it and then taking the time to analyze our communication in light of it.

Depending on the situation, this analysis might take mere seconds or could extend to hours if not days depending on the importance of the encounter. Clearly, trying to persuade someone to hire you as a consultant will involve a different approach than trying to persuade someone to loan you money or go out to dinner or even getting your kids to do the dishes. The more important the communication, the more time and effort you will want to give this analysis.

One of the best ways of analyzing our communication is to consider it along two different dimensions. First, the *quality* of the information. That is, is it objective or subjective? Fact or opinion? The second aspect to examine is the issue of resistance. How likely is it that it will be accepted or rejected by the other party?

While these two aspects, quality of information and resistance, appear to be distinct, they are, as we'll soon see, so intertwined that we cannot address one without quickly bringing the other into the discussion.

Earlier I mentioned the importance of communicating opinions indirectly. From this, we could easily infer the following general rule: facts can be stated directly while opinions should be communicated indirectly. As a *general* rule, this is fairly accurate, but to rely on it exclusively is foolish because determining just what is a "fact" is more complicated than it may at first appear.

First, there is the obvious issue of the credibility of our facts themselves. Are they believable in and of themselves? Are they believable coming from us or would they be more believable coming from another source? Are they believable at this time or do we need to establish other facts first?

And second, we must recognize the role that resistance plays in our perception of information. While we might like to think that the differences in how each of us sees the world are solely related to experience, education and intelligence, this just isn't the case. Resistance plays an important role in how we interpret the "facts" of our world.

If our communication supports someone's current mindset or promises to fulfill a need they currently feel, our "facts" are more likely to be perceived as "facts". If our communication works against them in some way, our most undeniable facts will quickly be perceived as mere opinions, falsehoods, or worse yet, completely misinterpreted by our prospects. In other words, resistance plays an important role not only in the process of persuasion, but in the process of *perception* as well.

Many years ago I tried to talk a friend out of buying a new car and discovered this first hand. At the time he had a very low paying job, tons of debt and very little credit so it was obvious to everyone that he couldn't afford a new car. Obvious, at least, to everyone

but himself. He didn't care about being able to make the payments or the effect the purchase would have on his family. All he cared about was getting his car.

I explained to him how quickly the car payments would become a burden and how much higher his insurance premiums would be. We discussed how that money could be better spent by paying down debt and by performing some basic repairs to his existing car. Surprisingly, he seemed to be getting the message. As our discussion drew to a close, I left him with the following piece of advice, "Believe me, once you get sucked into the cycle of always wanting to have a new car, you might as well just accept the idea of making car payments for the rest of time." He nodded his head in agreement.

A week later he came over to my house to show off his brand new car. I was stunned. How could he agree with everything I said and yet still go out and get in debt over his head? Easy. He never agreed with everything I said.

His first words to me as he got out of his car were, "Well, I took your advice. How do you like it?"

Excuse me? He *took* my advice?

You can't imagine the conversation that took place after he made that statement. While I won't go into the gory details, I will explain his reasoning. Or, at least, what he claimed to be his reasoning.

He said he thought I was trying to discourage him from buying the car until I made my final statement. That's when he realized I was actually encouraging him to buy the car. That's right. He took my statement, "Believe me, once you get sucked into the cycle of always wanting to have a new car, you might as well just accept the idea of making car payments for the rest of time" to mean he might as well do it now because there was no getting out of making payments.

How's that for twisted logic? And, believe me, he was dead serious when he said I had advised him to buy his new car.

This is just one example of how easily our prospect's mindset can alter their very perception of our communication. Had I recognized at the time that the strength of my logic was irrelevant as long as my overall message was being rejected, I would have a much better chance at producing a very different outcome.

Learning from the Masters

The triggers that cause us to make the assumptions we do are dynamic and subject to an untold number of influences such as our personal histories, our intentions and desires, our immediate circumstances and the like. This is the reason that "formulas" like the ones Steve Allen was talking about earlier are so fruitless in producing powerful communication.

Still, while we may not be able to "nail down" these triggers and just pick and choose the ones that suit us in any given situation, there is another way we can improve our

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awareness of them and as a result, increase our power over them. To do this, we must study the masters of the art and their work is all around us, albeit in disguise.

Many people today complain that entertainment has no real educational value. And while I understand their complaint, when it comes to harnessing the power of psychological ventriloquism and increasing our skills of persuasion, nothing could be further from the truth.

From films and TV shows, to comedians and magicians and everything in between, the world of entertainment is the greatest school of psychological manipulation ever devised. And the best part is, it is all around us all the time. We only need to recognize this fact and the secrets of these masters are ours for the taking.

In his fascinating book, *Which Lie Did I Tell? More Adventures in the Screen Trade*, William Goldman discusses a brief portion of a screenplay by Raymond

Chandler. The scene, which he offers as an example of great screenwriting, is as follows:

FADE IN ON

A married couple in an elevator. They stand silently. The man wears a hat.

The elevator stops.

A pretty young woman gets in.

The man takes off his hat.

That's it. That's the entire scene. Do you see why Goldman thinks it is such a well-written scene? I didn't the first time I read it. In a moment, I'll let Goldman explain for himself, but first, take a look at the scene again and try to uncover its magic.

FADE IN ON

A married couple in an elevator. They stand silently. The man wears a hat.

The elevator stops.

A pretty young woman gets in.

The man takes off his hat.

Did you catch it that time? If you did, you're doing better than most because the magic is just below the surface. Goldman explains it this way:

"With that shot, you know *everything*. You know it's a crappy marriage, you know he wants better, you know there is sexual energy in that rising room now. And you can do that in what, ten seconds?"

I believe what Goldman is saying is that in no time at all, the writer was able to communicate a world of information about the characters, their relationship, and their circumstances, simply by showing a man removing his hat for a stranger but not his own wife. For screenwriters I can see how this would be important. But for those of us who wish to increase our understanding of human nature, it is powerful almost beyond belief.

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There are two fascinating things we can learn from this scene if we but take a moment to consider it. First, in reality, the writer didn't "communicate a world of information" - *we* did. The writer simply wrote 32 words on a piece of paper. That's it. Nothing more. We read these 32 words and *added everything else* to them, our assumptions about the characters, their relationships, their circumstances, everything.

And second, *the screenwriter knew exactly how we would fill in the blanks*. While it appears we have a choice in the matter, and perhaps even in theory we do, in reality, we don't. No, the screenwriter isn't putting a gun to our heads and forcing us to make any given interpretation. He is simply presenting information in a way that he knows will lead us to interpret things a certain way: *his way*. He controlled what we were thinking. This is the real secret behind the magic of this scene. This is the essence of psychological ventriloquism. And this is what makes studying dramatic, comedic and other forms of entertainment one of the most powerful ways we can develop this skill.

Films, plays, novels, jokes, magic acts and countless other forms of entertainment are literally loaded with opportunities for us to discover the secrets behind, and become more sensitive to, the way people think. Why? Because these opportunities are *intentionally* put there by the artists who create these bodies of work. These artists know, perhaps better than anyone, how to trigger specific thoughts, feelings and assumptions in our minds.

In addition to the fact that these triggers are intentionally placed in a lot of entertainment, there are at least two other reasons that make this type of material ideal for the persuader to study.

First, this type of material is *streamlined* for the express purpose of affecting those who encounter it. The writer of a joke has a few lines to generate the effect. A songwriter a few minutes, a screenwriter a couple of hours - at most. There is no room for fluff. They must generate an impact in this amount of time or they will have failed. So while most everyday communication is designed to *make a point*, entertainment is designed to *make an impact*.

The next reason that makes this type of material ideal is that the triggers used are often the most universally applicable ones around. Think about it. Films, songs, jokes, whatever, to be successful must not only generate the desired effect, but must do so in the largest number of people. If we want to understand what impacts the greatest number of people in the most powerful way possible, again, we'd be hard pressed to find a more apt body of research material.

When I have shared this idea with clients, occasionally one will complain that since entertainment is just "make believe" it couldn't possibly teach us much about "real life." By now, you can probably imagine that I agree with them in their concern. After all, they do make an interesting point. However, one need only consider the effect that entertainment has on us to discover where its value lies. In other words, how about the tears you shed, the fear you feel, or the laughter you share with your fellow audience members? Is that real or are you making it up? Case closed.

The next time we find ourselves laughing at a joke, crying at a film or being surprised by a detective novel, if we would but stop and retrace the steps of the artist, we could uncover the underlying psychological secrets that made that reaction not only possible, but almost inevitable.

The man behind the Daisy ad mentioned earlier, media expert Tony Schwartz, says in his book *The Responsive Chord*,

"A listener or viewer brings far more information to the communication event than a communicator can put into his program, commercial, or message. The communicator's problem, then, is not to get stimuli across, or even to package his stimuli so they can be understood and absorbed. Rather, he must deeply understand the kinds of information and experiences stored in his audience, the patterning of this information, and the interactive resonance process whereby stimuli evoke this stored information."

There is no more powerful skill we can learn than to give others the illusion of choice while predetermining that which they can choose.

People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

Psychological Ventriloquism in Action

The final area we must cover in order to better learn the art of Psychological Ventriloquism is real life examples. It is one thing to recognize the principles being used in the entertainment industry. It is quite another to see them being used in our daily lives. In our homework for this lesson we'll seek out some of these very examples, but for now, let's explore a few that will help bring the concept more to life. One is from the world of cults, another from psychotherapy and a final one from the world of business.

Example 1

In our last lesson I mentioned that I once worked on a video for a group of people here in Texas that many would consider a cult. If you recall, they were the ones who assembled for the purpose of learning psychic healing techniques. Given the way they talked about their upcoming class, I expected them to select a very spiritual facility. When I first saw it, I was seriously disappointed. To put it nicely, it was a dump. And given the looks on the faces of those who had paid for the weekend, I wasn't alone in this assessment. Yet, within 24 hours the leaders of this group had everyone, including myself, treating and respecting this facility as if it were the Vatican.

Did they do this by attempting to paint a pretty picture of the facility or telling grand stories about miraculous things that had gone there in the past? No. They never even discussed the disappointing facility or its surroundings. Instead, they chose to do something that would lead us to believe the place was special without ever saying so directly. How did they do this? Simple. They implemented strict rules about how we were to behave in each and every room.

Upon entering the facility for the first time we were instructed on how to conduct ourselves inside. Among our instructions were the following:

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In the main meeting room we were told to remove our shoes before entering and to only speak in the room when official sessions were being conducted.

In the bathroom, we were instructed how to fold our towels, where to put them, how to store our personal items and what to do with our dirty clothes when we were finished cleaning up.

In our bedrooms we were told where we could sleep, how far apart the beds should be from each other and how we should go about entering and exiting the room.

And of course, there were even a couple of "forbidden rooms" at the ranch that we were told to stay away from at all costs.

As one of the video crew there simply to record the events of the weekend, I assumed the requirements were only for participants. As you've probably already guessed, I was wrong. When I complained, I was given the option to leave, but not the option to ignore their rules. At the urging of the man who had hired me, I bit my tongue and chose to stay.

Soon, before I had even realized what happened, I had gotten so caught up in work and so used to the rules that I hardly noticed them, even though I was complying with every one. But even more interesting was the effect this compliance had on my opinion of the group and its facility. By treating the facility with respect and observing the rules handed down by the group's leaders, I no longer viewed the facility or the group in a poor light. They had somehow transformed themselves and their facility from ridiculous to legitimate. And judging from the behavior of the rest of our crew and the participants themselves, I was not alone in this observation.

I have since learned that many others employ similar tactics. Some psychics will set up mysterious and almost religious looking props around their tables in order to instill a sense of respect in their customers. Some palm readers use expensive looking magnifying glasses and consult convoluted charts and graphs, not to provide a more accurate reading, but to lead their customers to have a greater belief in the legitimacy of their services. And, of course, our churches needn't do much more than burn incense, play their organs and surround themselves with stained glass to lead us to accept their structures as holy.

These people don't have to tell us how they want us to think. All they have to do is use the triggers we have been conditioned to accept as signs of legitimacy and we will gladly, and unconsciously, do the rest.

Example 2

A client visits a psychotherapist who specializes in Brief Therapy - a form of therapy that, as the name implies, attempts to compress the therapy process into as short a time as possible. In this case, the therapist tells his client that their time together will be restricted to no more than ten sessions. Upon hearing this, the client expresses concern that his problem is too complicated to be resolved in just ten sessions. The therapist knows that the client's concern is unfounded and yet, cannot directly tell the client this

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without invalidating the client's belief and damaging their rapport. How can the therapist get the patient to change his mind without making him wrong?

Psychotherapist Richard Fisch, himself a practitioner of Brief Therapy, once suggested that the therapist could say something like this,

"Given the length of time you've had this problem, and the failure of your previous therapy, obviously it is a very difficult, very serious, very tenacious problem so it's likely you will require all ten sessions"

With that one response, the therapist has not only agreed with the patient that his concern is valid, but also made his client believe that ten sessions was no longer brief therapy, but in a way, long term therapy.

Example 3

An ad agency is going broke due to having too few clients. The word is out that the firm is going under. How do those involved convince others in their industry, in the media and especially their potential clients that the firm is still viable and worth hiring? How do they turn it all around before it's too late?

Do they lower their prices in an effort to expand its client base? Do they take out ads or issue press releases explaining their credentials and highlighting their past successes? Do they psych themselves up and hit the streets in a last ditch effort to round up clients? No. They decide to throw a party and as a result, save their firm.

This is the situation painted by [Jurgen Wolff](#) in his excellent book *Do Something Different - Proven Marketing Techniques to Transform Your Business*. The situation and result are both true.

As Wolff points out, the owner of the agency, Jerry Delia Femina, spent everything he had left throwing a lavish Christmas party for competitors, potential clients and journalists in an effort to make them see the firm as a success. What was the result? According to Wolff,

"The party had the desired effect. Wanting to be part of such an obviously successful new venture, several clients signed up immediately, and the agency went on to great success."

Can you just imagine the risk and the faith this strategy involved? When most of us have trouble getting our messages across, we not only tend to move toward "tried and true" methods, but more direct ones as well. When our advertising doesn't work, we do more of it. When our pitch doesn't work, we *strengthen* it. And when our argument isn't convincing our business partner, our spouse or our children, we repeat it and often do so in louder and louder tones of voice.

Perhaps we could learn something from these three examples and rather than push harder the next time we wish to communicate with power, we take a step back and use psychological ventriloquism instead.

Wrap-up

Let's take a moment to summarize the four most important ideas we can take away from this discussion.

First, it is impossible for us to go through our lives without making assumptions.

As we said earlier, while we are all *capable* of individual thought, we often take shortcuts and accept cues that we have been socially trained to accept in an effort to get through our lives as efficiently as possible. While we may not make assumptions about *everything*, you can bet we make assumptions about *most* things. This serves us well most of the time. But it also provides the mechanism that can often lead us astray.

Second, given our previous point, it follows that it is impossible for us to avoid causing others to make assumptions. While we may never *intend* to mislead others, we simply can't help doing so. Since everyone we encounter is consciously or unconsciously looking to streamline the way they understand their world, they will make assumptions about the things we say and do. And many of those assumptions will be mistaken.

Third, we rarely distinguish between things we assume to be true and things we know to be true until something outside of ourselves makes us aware of our mistake. Or, in other words, to paraphrase Werner Erhard once more, our assumptions are only powerful when they are not assumptions. They are only powerful when they are held as the "truth". And since this is exactly how we tend to hold them, they are more powerful than most people would ever believe.

And fourth, since we cannot avoid making assumptions ourselves, inducing assumptions in others, and often struggle to know the difference in our own minds, we are only left with two possible solutions. We can either ignore it and hope it goes away or we can accept it and utilize it.

For those who may lean toward the first option, I would remind them of our quote from Dr. Paul Watzlawick which we first saw in lesson 1:

"...we are all at the mercy of influences of which we are unaware and over which we have virtually no conscious control. What is even more frightening is that we ourselves, no matter how careful and discreet we believe ourselves to be, are constantly influencing others in ways of which we may be only dimly or not at all aware. Indeed, we may unconsciously be responsible for influences of which we consciously know nothing and which, if we knew them, we might find totally unacceptable."

In light of this, our second option is our only real choice. And as we've seen, this second choice is what lies behind the concept of Psychological Ventriloquism.

Homework

Since increasing our awareness of this concept is the most critical aspect to actually using it, this is the focus of this week's homework.

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There is no better way to increase our awareness than to identify the concepts being used around us and then attempt to apply what we learn to our own efforts. With this in mind, try to identify at least a half a dozen different examples of Psychological Ventriloquism in practice. Remember to look not just at the people and circumstances of your daily life, but at any films, television shows, jokes, magic acts and other areas of entertainment you come across as well. As we discussed earlier, entertainment is one of the best places to find examples of Psychological Ventriloquism in practice since they're literally planted there by the creators of the material, the material is streamlined and the triggers used are universal in order to achieve maximum impact on the greatest number of people.

You might spot examples being used in riddles. For example, just today I stumbled across the following riddle on the Internet:

A big Indian and a little Indian are sitting on a log. The little Indian is the son of the big Indian, but the big Indian is *not* the father of the little Indian. How can this be?

If you get the answer right away, congratulations. You didn't make the assumption that most people do. But if this little joke tricks you, even for a moment, you can blame Psychological Ventriloquism for your trouble as you have unwittingly made an assumption that lies at the heart of your trouble. An assumption that was planted there just for you. Do you know what that assumption is?

You might also spot examples being used in music. The other day I heard a classic country song called *He Stopped Loving Her Today* by George Jones that contains an excellent example of inducing listeners to make an unconscious assumption. Of course, in the end we are made aware of our assumption and many of us get tears in our eyes. If you haven't heard this song before, I won't spoil it for you. It's worth finding a copy and experiencing it for yourself. For those of you who have heard the song before, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

The point is, there are examples all around us and if we would only stop long enough to attempt to uncover them and learn from them, we can literally transform our ability to communicate and persuade. The more we become familiar with the concept of psychological ventriloquism itself and the many ways in which it is employed, the more we are able to defend ourselves against it and implement it in our communication with others.

Till Next Time

Next week, we'll discuss the critical role that attitude plays in persuasion. We'll talk about a mindset I refer to as a "God Complex" and explore how to develop it and profit from it by playing games we cannot lose.

Lesson 5: Persuasion and the God Complex

There is a common belief that to become a master persuader one must hone their speaking skills, polish their appearance, project credibility, master the art of nonverbal communication, and develop dozens of other important personal qualities and abilities. This is not true. While there are many important areas one can work on to improve their persuasion skills, there is only one that is truly essential. And that one is the subject of this, our fifth lesson in the Forbidden Keys to Persuasion.

In our previous four sessions we've covered concepts that can clearly improve our persuasive abilities, concepts that increase our awareness of human behavior in general. In this session, we'll get more personal and turn the spotlight on our own persuasive mindset. Specifically, we'll discuss a mindset that is shared among the most persuasive individuals in existence - a mindset that is understood by few, but available to anyone who truly understands it and seeks to practice it. By the end of this lesson, perhaps our most important lesson, you will be one of these few who will understand and be able to employ the power of a god complex.

By "god complex", I do not mean one must become a megalomaniac. Nor, do I mean that it is necessary to develop delusions of grandeur like an Adolf Hitler or Jim Jones. And I am not simply referring to developing an extreme level of confidence. These are simply shadows of the quality I am about to describe. By "god complex" I am referring to something more versatile and more powerful than any of these by themselves.

To give you a sense of what I'm talking about, here are a few examples of the god complex in action:

Example 1

Not long ago I witnessed a very successful client of mine pull off a miracle. He was about to call a man with whom he'd been trying to finalize a deal for months. Every time it seemed they were close to coming to terms, the man would hesitate and put off making a decision. My client was out of patience. Just as he picked up the phone and dialed, he turned to me and said, "There are only two ways this phone call is going to end. He's going to agree to my offer or he's going to hang up on me. I don't care which. When I hang up this phone, this problem will be behind me." With those words, he made the call. Thirty minutes later, he had the contract.

Example 2

In his book, *Seven Simple Steps to Personal Freedom*, the world-renowned attorney Gerry Spence talks about the importance of developing what he calls the spirit of the invincible. He describes this attitude while recalling a run-in with a childhood bully:

"Only by killing me with an ax could he have beaten me, and then he would not have beaten me. He would only have killed me. Such is the indomitable spirit that lies at the bedrock of every person."

Example 3

A few years back a friend of mine was trying to secure a contract with what would be his largest client ever. The deal was just about done when he received a devastating message from his contact at the company. The deal was dead. There would be no further negotiations. And to add insult to injury, no explanation was given.

Needless to say, my friend was devastated. It took nearly a week for him to drag an explanation out of his contact. It turns out his contact's boss was furious that my friend had lied to them about the cost of the proposal. The deal was supposed to be funded by another partner and be a no-cost deal for the client but according to the last proposal my friend had sent, suddenly the proposal would cost them nearly \$100,000. Given this, their behavior was understandable.

The only problem was that my friend had never lied. The boss had simply misread and misinterpreted the proposal. It was, indeed, to be a no-cost deal just as they had discussed since day one of their negotiations.

Rather than trying to explain how the boss was "wrong", my friend sent a letter that stated a couple of key points. First, he stated that there had been a misunderstanding and that it was entirely his own fault. My friend accepted full responsibility for the confusion and blamed himself for not making the point more clearly in his proposal. In other words, he corrected his potential client but did so by providing a scapegoat. In this case, himself. Next, he apologized for all the trouble the confusion had caused and hoped that they would reconsider the proposal but *would understand if they didn't*.

Within days, they were not only back at the bargaining table, but the boss actually admitted that the confusion had actually been his own fault and hoped there would be no hard feelings.

Each of these examples illustrates a different aspect of what I refer to as a god complex. In a moment we'll discuss some of the finer points of this complex, but first, it's important to realize that while it is purely an internal state, this state affects our every encounter with others since it manifests itself in our attitudes. And it is our attitudes, not the words we use, the strategies we employ or the tricks we pull, that play the most critical role in our communication with, and persuasion of, others.

Communication does not depend on syntax, or eloquence, or rhetoric, or articulation but on the emotional context in which the message is being heard.... attitudes are the real figures of speech.

Rabbi Edwin H. Friedman

The Nature of the God Complex

As I said earlier, the god complex I am referring to is more versatile and powerful than what many people might first think of when hearing the term. Forget the megalomania of long-dead dictators and cult leaders. And forget the egocentricity of some of our more

notorious politicians. The mindset I am referring to is more than these misconceptions would have us believe. The mindset I am referring to not only reflects the power of force, but the power to yield as well.

Think of dragsters at a racetrack. Many of them can easily run a quarter mile in less than 10 seconds hitting speeds of over 150 miles per hour. Now that's some serious power. Run it up against any other type of automobile and there'd be no contest. However, if we take this same dragster, put in on an oval track and run it up against a VW Beetle, we'd have quite a different outcome. All the power in the world won't do us any good if we can't maneuver around the obstacles we encounter.

While a dictator or cult leader might be able to get away with simply overpowering their followers with their charisma and tyrannical style, few of us are likely to find ourselves in such restricted circumstances.¹ We will encounter people who look up to us, who despise us, who perceive us as equals, who have never heard of us, and everything in between. And if we are to be effective in such a broad range of situations, we must have more than sheer force on our side. We must have a mindset that is powerful not only in its ability to powerfully convey our messages; we must have a mindset that is powerful enough to allow us to step back and focus our attention on others when it is appropriate to do so.

Before moving on I want to point out that the god complex I am referring to is *not* necessarily something that one has at all times in all situations. While this might be preferable, in my opinion, it isn't even remotely possible. I don't know anyone, nor have I studied anyone, who is equally confident in all areas of their lives at all times. No, we all have our own personal inner struggles that seem to follow us around wherever we go. And while we may not be able to permanently eliminate these, we don't have to in order to increase our powers of persuasion. Instead, we can overcome these weaknesses as they arise by mentally preparing ourselves and adopting a mindset appropriate to both our intentions and our circumstances.

Let's take a look at the different aspects of this mindset, see how each of them plays an important role in persuasion and most importantly, how we can begin to develop them in ourselves.

Conviction

It is easy to look at charismatic leaders and attribute their power to some mystical force or hidden methods of psychological manipulation. There is just something so profoundly different about the way they carry themselves than the way most of us do that the explanation for the difference must be equally profound. While there may in fact be

¹ While these leaders may get away with this hard-line approach once their following is established, in order to establish their following, even they often resort to a more yielding approach to persuasion. More on this in just a bit.

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mysterious aspects of some charismatic individuals, there is one thing that is common among all of them. They believe what they say.

Whatever else you can say about these individuals, you cannot call them liars. While lies and deception may indeed be part of their behavior, they feel fully justified in doing what they do. They don't simply believe they are right. They *know* they are right. In other words, they have the power of conviction.

And just how much of an impact can conviction have on our lives?

David Seabury, in his book, *The Art of Selfishness*, says, "If you believe you have the forces of truth on your side, you have the strength often. If you doubt your decisions, the greatest wisdom is useless."

And Gustave Le Bon, author of the classic book on mass psychology, *The Crowd*, says, "The men of ardent convictions who have stirred the soul of crowds.. have only exercised their fascination after having been themselves fascinated first of all by a creed. They are then able to call up in the souls of their fellows that formidable force known as faith, which renders a man the absolute slave of his dream."

The type of power these men speak of is not a result of education, sophistication or mere self-confidence. It is a result of a person's fervent conviction in the Tightness of their actions.

Of course, at times we've all experience such conviction. Perhaps we fought valiantly for a charitable cause, sought to right a wrong from our past or were determined to find a home for that stray dog or cat that showed up on our doorstep. It is in times like these that we not only experience some of our greatest joy in life, but experience our most profound impact on others as well. Without ever realizing it, we had harnessed the powerful charisma and energy that only conviction can provide.

So what is it about these situations that cause us to feel such conviction? And what is it about the way charismatic leaders relate to their messages that gives them such a sense of conviction?

The answer is that in each of these situations our relationship to our message and our situation rises to a much higher level than our day-to-day circumstances usually warrant. In other words, our communication is no longer simply communication. Our communication has become a mission.

The key to harnessing the power of conviction then is to relate to our communication at a different level than most of us are accustomed to. If we're honest with ourselves, it is no secret that while we expend tremendous time and effort trying to communicate our messages, few of us spend much time considering the very nature of the messages we're trying to communicate.

A great example of this is the story from the introduction to this course about my friend who was struggling to sell insurance. If you recall he was totally focused on "how" to sell his product, on "how" to get his message across. While he believed in what he was

selling, he failed to see it in a larger perspective. He was selling insurance. Period. But "selling insurance" doesn't rise to the level of a mission.

What if he had come to truly believe that rather than simply selling insurance, he was selling security, an investment or maybe peace of mind for his prospects? Now don't misunderstand me here. He *mentioned* all of these things in his sales pitch. After all, he had been trained to do so. He explained how his product was a great investment and could provide peace of mind, etc. What was lacking, however, was his *belief in* these statements. Rather than "coming from" this position and having his enthusiasm come through naturally, he was simply throwing in these buzzwords as a band-aid and hoping they would perform a miracle. But buzzwords and gimmicks can never match the power of true conviction.

Cult leaders and spiritual teachers often see themselves as part of an important mission and this gives them a source of power that the masses can't imagine. Conmen often see themselves as being much smarter than their victims and feel this distinction somehow gives them the "right" to swindle the common man. It is almost as if the conman is doing his victims a favor by "educating" them to the ways of the world. This "right" these people feel grants them a power that is foreign to most of us.

To tap into this power we need only stop and consider our communication in a new light. How does our product, service or proposal serve a higher, nobler need than might first appear? What others think in this regard is irrelevant. You're not looking for talking points and buzz words. You're trying to discover your own most powerful beliefs surrounding your message. When you do, you will have discovered the beginning of conviction.

Do you feel a strong conviction for what it is you are trying to communicate? If not, your prospects won't either no matter how many tricks and strategies you try to put over on them. It all starts with us.

Concern

While conviction is critical in persuasion, it is only part of the god complex mindset. Even the most powerful of communicators cannot rely solely on their ability to project power. They must be able to project concern for the other person as well. Why is this so critical to the persuasion process? The answer is simple once we remind ourselves what is actually happening when we communicate with others. Consider the following situation depicted in Figure A:



Figure A. Communication as understood in our day-to-day lives.

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This depicts how most of us approach our communication in our daily lives. We have something we want to say or express, as does the other person. Given this, we begin to exchange communication at this level and only at this level. When we encounter hostility, confusion or some other unexpected reaction, we tend to look back and focus on the words that were exchanged and analyze them to see where we went wrong. This approach is nearly always futile as it is leaving out a huge component of the communication process. See Figure B:

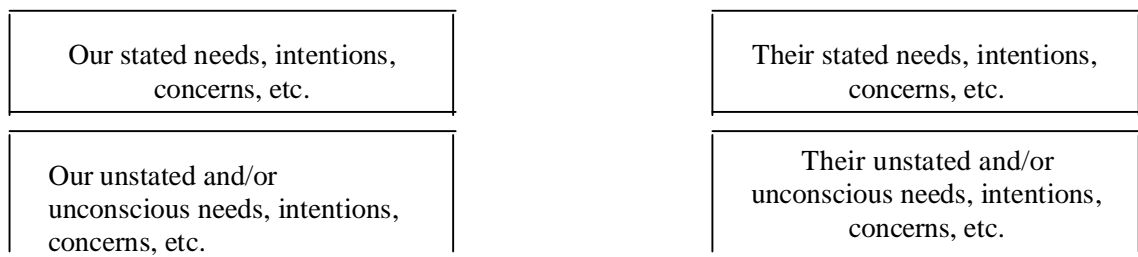


Figure B. Communication as it occurs in our day-to-day lives.

In actuality, whenever we are engaged in communication with others, there are two levels of communication going on simultaneously. The second level consists of everything we intentionally hide from our communication partner as well as those things we even hide from ourselves. Among other things, this is the realm of our ulterior motives and our hidden addictions.

Notice, as with Figure A, the communication on both levels is bi-directional. That is, not only are our prospects lower level characteristics impacting our communication behind-the-scenes, but ours are as well. This is why when we fail to consider this level of communication, we leave what is perhaps the single greatest influence on whether we succeed or fail with others solely in the hands of chance.

Those who attain what I call a god complex, however, are able to communicate in a more powerful and effective way. They do this by not only recognizing that communication actually occurs like that represented in Figure B, but by adjusting their own mindset, are able to make a shift and communicate in an altogether different mode. Consider Figure C:

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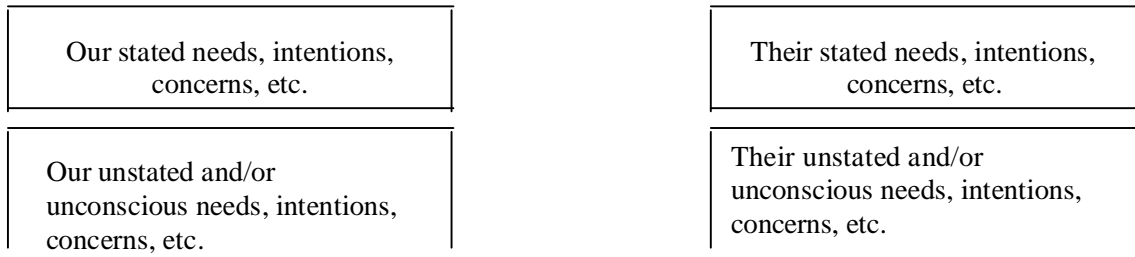


Figure C. Communication as viewed and practiced by one with a God Complex.

As this diagram illustrates, those who utilize the god complex mindset have, in a sense, shut off access to their lower level needs, thus minimizing the chances of being unknowingly influenced by them. It isn't that their lower level needs no longer exist, but that, for a period of time, they are able to suspend them and instead focus all their attention on the other person. Rather than two people battling it out to see who's hidden addictions or other unconscious or unstated needs get met, those with the god complex mindset willingly give up these desires in an effort to not only satisfy the other person, but also to maximize their chances of their own direct goals being met.

Once, during an extremely hectic day at our office, a coworker of mine repeatedly interrupted my work, my clients and me with what I perceived as absolutely unnecessary questions. Each time he entered I rushed him out of my office as quickly as possible only to be interrupted again twenty or thirty minutes later.

At lunch that day I was able to spend some time alone and soon found myself stewing over my "incompetent" coworker. After a few minutes, I suddenly remembered this part of the god complex mindset and went back to my office determined to handle the next interruption differently.

The next time my coworker interrupted my clients and I, I excused myself from the room, then followed my coworker to his office and said something like, "You seem especially frustrated today. Are you okay?" My coworker was taken aback. He had thought I was going to lash out at him, which I probably would have before remembering my own philosophy. But now, he suddenly began apologizing for being such a nuisance that day. I motioned for him to stop.

"No need," I told him. "I should have given you more attention earlier. Let's take care of these problems right now so neither one of us has to get interrupted later."

Within five minutes I had him making progress and didn't hear from him again all afternoon. The funny thing was that in these five minutes I didn't answer a single meaningful question. I don't think he really had any questions in the first place. I think he just wanted to touch base with me and let me know what he was doing. After I heard him out, my problem was solved. Had I not set aside my own lower level needs and turned my attention toward his, I might still be back at the office answering his questions.

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This concept is also just as useful when preparing planned communication materials such as press releases, reports and even commercials. Recall our example of the antidepressant commercial from lesson 2 where the advertiser provided a scapegoat to its potential customers with the phrase, "Feeling depressed lately? It may be the result of a chemical imbalance in your brain." The power of this phrase has absolutely nothing to do with it being true. The power lies in the fact that it is absolutely directed at the viewer's likely sense of shame about their depression.

If we think about it, there are any number of more self-serving statements this advertiser could have used to lead off their commercial. Perhaps they could have talked about the cost-effectiveness, the gentleness or maybe the reliability of their medication. Maybe they could have mentioned how many years they've been in business or how they are the market leader. Any of these would be of more interest to the pharmaceutical company and might even have a valid place in their advertisement. But they didn't choose to begin with any of these. Instead, they placed their own interests aside and focused on the lower level concerns of their potential customers.

Those who are able to do this and focus all their attention on the other person have the ability to touch other people in ways most of us can't imagine. Here's how a man named Fritz Peters, who was once a follower of the early 20th century Russian guru Gurdjieff described the impact this type of focus can have,

"Whenever I saw him, whenever he gave me an order, he was fully aware of me, completely concentrated on whatever words he said to me; his attention never wandered when I spoke to him. He always knew exactly what I was doing, what I had done. I think we must all have felt, certainly I did, when he was with any one of us, that we received his total attention. I can think of nothing more complimentary in human relations."

Not exactly the same level of attention we tend to give to those we encounter, is it? Nor is it the type of attention we tend to get from others. Yet, this is one of the most seductive ways we can treat another human being. While we often think of cult leaders as having an almost tyrannical hold over their followers, there is another side to their power and it is this enormous capacity to focus their attention on others - especially potential converts. Once some people are exposed to the type of seductive attention they can receive from a charismatic cult leader, some people will spend their entire lives basking in the warmth it gave them and attempting to regain that level of compassion from their "guru".

It is amazing that so few people appreciate this fact. We want to look at those we lose to gangs, cults, etcetera and blame it on their stupidity, or mind control or brainwashing. The last thing we want to do is accept that it might boil down to little more than the fact that we failed to meet the emotional needs of the other person. Remember in lesson 2 we talked about people for whom we would do almost anything? Dollars to donuts says these people are often those who give us a level of attention we don't get anywhere else. And this is one of the greatest gifts one can ever receive.

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For a man to help another is to be a god.

Pliny the Elder 23-79 A.D.

How do we develop this ability to "shut off" our lower level needs in order to meet those of another? Well, the first thing is to realize that this isn't an either/or proposition. Given the enormous complexity of our inner desires, fears, concerns, and such, we all have to tackle this task in our own way and not be afraid to stumble in the process. The next step is simply to maintain a steady focus on just what is driving you at any given moment.

Are you frustrated with another and unable to make your point? Have you made a "strong logical case" for your proposal yet can't get another to consider it, much less accept it? Is your copy or promotional material strong on fact, logic and emotion, yet somehow it fails to pull for you?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, there's a good chance your own lower level needs are unwittingly affecting your communication. Perhaps the frustration you feel isn't being forced on you by the other persona but is arising out of your own lack of awareness of your own goals. Perhaps the "strong logical case" you made is only strong and logical in your own eyes and is actually irrelevant to others. And perhaps the facts, logic and emotion you packed into your copy have more to do with your desires than those of your prospect.

Focus

One of the most important qualities a person must have in order to succeed at anything in life is focus. The ability to remain undeterred in their pursuit of their goal. This is especially true in persuasion since it is so easy to lose sight of our true goals in interacting with others. As we just saw there are so many levels of communication occurring at any one time that we continually run the risk of getting distracted from our goals and losing our momentum.

Remember in lesson 1 when we tried to determine how long it would take for us to lose ourselves in a movie by pressing a button at the moment we were fully engaged? While this statement was initially posed to show us a way into another's mind, it applies to us as well. The Achilles heel of the human mind cuts both ways and unless we fully appreciate this fact and strive to counteract it, our ability to focus will, at best, often remain outside of our control.

We've already discussed a number of issues that affect our attention such as incongruities, hidden addictions and such. However, there is another aspect of human interaction that presents an enormous opportunity for us to lose our focus, yet few of us pay it any attention. Perhaps this is simply because it is so prevalent that we don't even recognize it any more. Like water to a fish or air to a bird, it just isn't noticed because it is all around us. What is this trap? Our never-ending quest to obtain the goodwill of others.

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We are raised to seek the goodwill of those around us, first that of our parents, siblings and immediate family members. And later, our friends, teachers, coworkers and eventually even total strangers. This quest is behind so many of our actions that it is amazing we pay so little attention to it. We buy things we don't need so as to avoid looking bad in the eyes of someone else. We donate money for fear of being seen as insensitive. We make commitments we never intend on fulfilling just to save face with those who ask for our help. And the list goes on and on and on.

Again, all of these distractions not only provide us with a way into the minds of others, but also present us with the biggest threat to our ability to succeed when trying to persuade others. If you've ever entered a negotiation determined to achieve a given outcome and yet, somehow discovered that you have unintentionally settled for less, you have fallen victim to these distractions. Somewhere along the line you traded your initial goal for another that arose during the negotiation. If you've ever tried to persuade a family member to do something and promised yourself you would keep your temper in check beforehand only to fly off the handle within minutes, again, you allowed a distraction to knock you from your course. In nearly every case, the person with the greatest focus, who is the least deterred by these social triggers, is the one who will come out on top.

At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door and say, - "Come out unto us." But keep they state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy me I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Leni Riefenstahl, the director of the film *Triumph of the Will* that we discussed in lesson 1, once said that it was absolutely impossible to distract Adolf Hitler when he was speaking. Anyone who has ever seen film footage of him on a podium knows what she was taking about. But what was Hitler's secret?

While I work I gather renewed strength from the glowing eyes, the applause, and the enthusiasm of my listeners, the audience, the entire mass, and I concentrate it on myself for the sole purpose for which I happen to be present or which I am pursuing.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler did not allow himself to get distracted by the attention he gained from his audience. He did not bask in the sense of satisfaction it might have given him or allow it to turn his attention elsewhere. Instead, he used it to refocus his attention on just what he was trying to do. As a result his communication resonated with a power that is extremely hypnotic even to those who do not speak German and can't understand a single word he said.

Until we fully appreciate the insidious nature of distractions and contrast this with the enormous power that focus can bring, we can't begin to tap into this power. Once we have arrived at this insight, we need only maintain it in our awareness and be ever vigilant in our communication to profit from it.

Something I do virtually every evening is review my activities for that day and identify those times when I lost focus and try to estimate what price I have paid for allowing those distractions into my life. I then try to discover just why each particular instance derailed me and I imagine how I might handle similar situations in the future. I have found this practice to be invaluable in helping me maintain focus on my own goals. Though it only takes a few minutes per evening, it performs three valuable functions. By determining the price I am paying for these distractions, it keeps me motivated not to allow them to happen again. By imagining how I might handle them differently in the future I find myself avoiding similar traps in the future. And finally, by doing the process itself each day it simply ensures that the dangers of distractions are never far from my mind.

Playing Games You Can't Lose

In addition to the three characteristics just mentioned, conviction, concern and compassion, there is another aspect of the god complex mindset - an aspect that can automatically lead to greater confidence and success in our persuasion efforts. I call it, playing games you can't lose.

Is this really possible? Yes, but only if we come to think of our persuasion efforts in a new light.

"Playing games you can't lose" has more to do with our own attitudes than anything going on in our outside world. It is a way of approaching our persuasion situations with a different outlook, more realistic expectations and, as a result, a greater sense of power and confidence.

The first step we must take in this effort is to accept the fact that no matter what anyone promises you, there aren't any secret techniques that will give you the ability to "get anyone to do whatever you want whenever you want them to do it." Not even a gun to the head can give us this type of power over another human being. A person always has the ability to choose not to comply if they're willing to accept the consequences of their decision. Of course, we *can* make vast improvements in our persuasive skills, but we cannot realistically expect to hone them to the point where we can have our way with everyone we meet. This type of power is a wonderful fantasy. But that is all it is. A fantasy.

If you're still not convinced, just consider the fact that while gurus and other charismatic leaders often exert a powerful influence over their followers, *they don't have a powerful influence over everyone*. In fact, the majority of people pay them no attention whatsoever. If this type of power existed, Hitler would have used it to covert FDR and Churchill to his side and truly taken over the world. Or David Koresh would have simply stepped out of his compound and spun his magic on the ATF agents at his door and saved

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everyone a lot of time and trouble. No, this type of power does not exist and accepting this fact is the first step in being able to truly play games you cannot lose.

The reason this is critical is that behind this fantasy lurks the primary cause of our frustration and failure in trying to persuade others. And that cause is this:

We often define success so narrowly and specifically that we literally guarantee our own failure.

When you absolutely lock onto one specific outcome in one specific situation and absolutely refuse to accept anything else, you have almost certainly sealed your fate and not for the best. While some may think that accepting the possibility of failure is pessimistic and might actually increase the odds of failure, the exact opposite is almost always the case.

As soon as you give it all up, you can have it all. As long as you want power you can't have it. The minute you don't want power, you'll have more than you ever dreamed possible.

Ram Dass

A good example of this can be seen in the phone call I referenced at the beginning of this lesson. My client didn't tell himself he was going to "get the deal no matter what." I know for a fact that he'd try to psych himself up with that thought many times before and yet had failed to put the deal together. And each time he came away more discouraged than before. This time, however, instead of refusing to accept nothing less, he came to another decision. A more powerful decision.

He told himself, "There are only two ways this phone call is going to end. He's going to agree to my offer or he's going to hang up on me. I don't care which. When I hang up this phone, this problem will be behind me." In that instant, he gained more power over his situation than 20 years of studying persuasion techniques could have ever given him.

How did this mindset give him so much power?

First, he accepted the possibility that he might lose the deal forever - that the client might hang up on him. It wasn't that he wanted this outcome, but that he *accepted* it as a possibility. In other words, he gave up the fantasy we talked about earlier. But then, he took it one step further. He saw *either* outcome as moving him toward a positive outcome. If he got a commitment, great. If not, he was still better off since he would have one more problem behind him.

This is not semantics and this is not Pollyanna positive thinking. This was his true state of mind and this is what gave him the confidence to make the call and the endurance to bring the negotiation to an ultimate conclusion. He "played a game he could not lose" and his entire demeanor conveyed this in his communication.

Is this really practical and possible in real life? Absolutely. Let's take a look at a few examples of just such games in action.

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Group Recruitment and Maintenance

Many groups ensure their survival (i.e. play a game they can't lose) by dividing people into three distinct categories: insiders, outsiders and undecideds. By creating this categorization and teaching their people to embrace it, a game with a sure-fire result has been set into motion.

As the group attempts to recruit new members, its strategy is to categorize those who are currently in the undecided category into either insiders or outsiders. It doesn't really matter which. While it's obviously preferable to move as many as possible into the insider category, those who reject the group and become defined as outsiders still serve an equally valid function to the group - they increase its cohesiveness as they become a more clearly defined enemy. Remember Elias Canetti's concept of the "double crowd" from lesson 3:

"Whether the two crowds confront each other as rivals in a game, or as a serious threat to each other, the sight, or simply the powerful image of the second crowd, *prevents the disintegration of the first*. As long as all eyes are turned in the direction of the eyes opposite, knee will stand locked by knee; as long as all ears are listening for the expected shout from the other side, arms will move to a common rhythm." (Italics added)

This is why the most basic goal of many groups is to get its members to buy into its definitions of just who is an insider and who is an outsider. Once this is done, they have set up a game they can't lose. Since every group knows it can't convert everyone, this fact works in their favor. Those they don't convert serve as vital a role to the group as those who actually become members.

This mechanism is true of many cults, churches, fraternal organizations, multi-level marketing organizations and other groups that promote this three-category system of seeing the world.

Enlightenment

The 1970s human potential seminar known as the est training mentioned in last week's lesson provided another great example of a game that can't be lost. The two-weekend seminar promised attendees that by the end of the training everyone in the room would get "it". While "it" wasn't specifically defined, it was understood by most to be enlightenment. In two weekends participants would get what some people spend their entire lives searching for. Could they deliver?

It turns out that, in fact, virtually every one of the approximately 500,000 people who took the training did get "it". While most were quick to claim they'd gotten "it", there were some who complained they hadn't. They were frustrated, angry or depressed, but they weren't "enlightened." How did the trainer turn these people around?

Simple. The fact that "it" was never clearly defined gave the trainer enormous latitude in working with these people. While the following explanation is extremely condensed, it illustrates their basic strategy. The trainer simply explained that enlightenment doesn't necessarily guarantee happiness, satisfaction or peace of mind. Then he or she would

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illustrate how the person's current state of mind, however uncomfortable, was just another "pattern" that would fade in time and that if the person could see and accept that fact, that their acceptance was "proof that they had in fact gotten "it" after all. Sound preposterous? It didn't to the majority of those who had complained. With few exceptions, the majority of those who had complained now saw themselves among the "enlightened."

For the record, I am not trying to belittle what the est training delivered at all. I took the training in the early 1980's and found it extremely valuable. My only reason for pointing out this aspect of the training is to illustrate how they set up their game so they couldn't lose. They knew going into the training that not everyone would come away elated with what they had learned, yet the trainer had to somehow be able to deliver on their promise. To do this, they simply had to point out the common misconception that enlightenment equates to happiness and their problem was solved - they were now playing a game they couldn't lose and judging from their enormous success, many who participated agreed.

Direct Marketing and Advertising

Smart direct marketers and other advertisers play games they can't lose by utilizing the concept of testing. When one uses the concept of testing to refine and improve their advertising and marketing materials, every campaign can be construed to be a success. If it is profitable or meets its other primary objectives such as lead generation or public awareness, great. If not, that's fine, too, as long as valuable information about the elements of the material can be derived from the latest campaign. Regardless of the outcome, a savvy marketer or advertiser will move ever closer toward their goal.

A related idea that some advertisers and marketers can use is a concept I call Peripheral Benefit. This is a concept I use with some of my clients who are first venturing out into the world of television or radio advertising. Given the expense involved, many who enter this realm are rightly concerned about the risks involved. There's no getting around it, even local radio and television can be expensive for a small business owner. While the payoff can be great, the probability of failure is high and can often be too much to bear for some. The way we get around this is by devising a campaign that will be beneficial to the advertiser even if the advertisement itself fails to deliver as hoped.

For example, with a client who is particularly worried about venturing into television advertising, we might have them announce to all of their current distributors their plans to show how they'll be driving traffic to their stores. As a result, distributors will often give additional and more prominent shelf space to our clients. We might also have the client use some of their best clients in their commercials not only to boost credibility, but also to help solidify their relationship with these customers. After all, being on television is very exciting for most people and our client can make this happen for these special clients. During the course of videotaping their commercials we might overshoot so that we're able to produce a longer version promotional tape at virtually no extra cost. This can be given away or sold as a premium or played at trade shows. This tape alone could easily cost over \$ 10,000 to produce if it had been produced on its own. By wrapping it into this package, they could get it for less than 1/10¹ the price.

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Once we set up our proposal in this way, our client's confidence level soars as it becomes obvious that they'll benefit even if their direct response is less than anticipated.

In each of these examples the process is the same. They accepted the possibility of failure and then discovered a way that even an undesired result would carry them toward a positive outcome.

Upon hearing this strategy, some people struggle with the idea that such a simple change can have such a profound effect on our communication and persuasion. In talking with these people I inevitably find that the reason for their doubt is that they see the process as little more than positive thinking. In other words, they believe no matter how much you try to convince yourself otherwise, failure is failure and thinking alone can't change that.

I can relate to these people because for years I shared their opinion. Even though I have read hundreds of self-help and psychology books and have tried to embrace their philosophy, I just somehow couldn't break the hold my own perceptions had over me. As much as I tried to convince myself that something I saw as negative was actually positive, I just couldn't do it. At least not long enough to have any real impact on my life. Still, I kept reading, studying and trying without much success. Then I stumbled across an idea from a most unlikely source that changed everything for me.

A few years back, as I was shopping in a used bookstore, I discovered a cheap little paperback book that had mistakenly been placed in the mystery section. I glanced at the title as I was moving it out of my way. It was called *Why Man Explores* and was not really a book, but a transcript of a symposium held in 1976 at the California Institute of Technology. Why I stopped and even opened the book I'll never know since at the time I had absolutely no interest in its subject matter. But open it I did. And I opened it directly to page 31 where the following statement by novelist James Michener awaited me:

"I have always believed that an event has not happened until it has passed through the mind of a creative artist able to explain its significance. I suppose that is why from the earliest times we have had the narrators who sat around campfires at night to recount the heroic adventures of that day. Because those adventures really did not happen until they were crystallized into words and comprehensions."

I must have read those words a dozen times as I stood there in that bookstore. Michener wasn't merely stating what self-help books have been telling us for years, namely that we have the power to *interpret* the events in our lives. He went further. Much further. He said the event *has not happened* until it has "passed through the mind of a creative artist."

How could he speak such nonsense? Because it is anything but nonsense. It is one of the most powerful statements I have ever come across in my life. There are two major lessons we can learn from his words.

First, an "event" as Michener is using the word, is different than facts, occurrences or circumstances. An "event" is a story we tell about these things. It is the meaning we assign to the otherwise chaotic happenings of our lives. Until meaning is assigned to

these things, they truly have no significance and in a very real sense, have not yet happened.

And second, the very meaning of the events in our lives is assigned by human beings, and all too often, *other* human beings. Consider how automatically and unconsciously we accept "meaning" from other people. Is something tragic, happy, ominous, auspicious, significant, meaningless? We often look no further than to those around us to tell us. The media, experts, authorities, friends, etc. Even our own "opinions" are often simply those these people have conditioned us to accept. And since these "opinions" arise so effortlessly in our minds, we mistakenly think they're our own.

Once we accept the meanings others give to us or those we have been conditioned to believe, the world is no longer one of possibility, but one of iron clad "truth". Things *are* the way we think they are and have no power over them.

But the *instant* one comes to realize the hold this cycle has over us, the instant we realize the truth of Michener's words, is the instant we regain control of our lives.

Is something a success or failure? Is it moving us toward our goals or is it a sign we should give up? The answer to these questions is not written in stone. It is up for each of us to decide.

Wrap-up

The god complex mindset isn't something that one attains and then has forever. It is a state of mind that one strives to develop at given times in order to enhance our ability to communicate and persuade. There is perhaps no greater source of interpersonal power than the proper mindset for everything we say or do flows from this. Enthusiasm, charisma, sincerity and even success are not goals we can obtain from the outside world, but are simply results of the proper state of mind.

Dr. Gene Landrum, who has studied the personal traits of some of the most powerful and successful people of all time, says in his book, *Profiles of Power and Success*, "The only true powers that seldom are lost and are never taken away are charisma and will. These are personal powers that emanate from within."

While it is tempting to look for secrets "out there" that can give us power, this is a fool's game as Landrum points out when he says, "Power accedes to those who take it." He doesn't say power accedes to those who *ask* for it, those who *wish* for it or even those who try to *earn* it. He said it accedes to those who *take* it. And how do we take it? By looking within and developing the proper state of mind.

Once we are there, we do not have to be loud or brash to convey this sense of power. One can be passive, silent and respectful and still project it. Consider the power that Martin Luther King, Jr. conveyed in his thunderous speeches and the simple power Ghandi conveyed in his silence. The power is not in the expression. The power is in the state of mind.

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Work on developing the conviction, concern and focus we have discussed in this lesson and begin to play games you can't lose, and this power will never be far behind.

All of the significant battles are waged within the self.

Sheldon Kopp

Homework

This week, reflect on the major themes we've covered and discover how you might apply them in your own life and work. Again, it is tempting to think the keys to increasing our persuasive power are "out there" and we simply need to discover the secret techniques to do so. But as we've already discovered, this is only part of the story as our own attitudes play an enormous role in every interpersonal encounter we will ever have. With that in mind, here are some ideas to help guide you in this effort:

Conviction

As we learned earlier, the key to harnessing the power of conviction is to relate to our communication on a different level than most of us are accustomed to. Remember my friend the insurance salesman? In his mind he was selling insurance. And while he used the right buzzwords in his pitch, he couldn't hide his own lack of conviction from his prospects. He needed to step back and place his goals in a new, more empowering context. And once he could bring himself to do this, everything he would communicate from that point on would take on this new sense of purpose.

So if conviction is a problem for you, ask yourself how your product, service or proposal might serve a higher, stronger need than might first appear. One of the best pieces of writing on just how to do this is found in a chapter called "Reveal the Business Nobody Knows" from Joe Vitale's book, *The Seven Lost Secrets of Success*. While in this chapter Joe is specifically addressing how to see your business in a larger context for marketing purposes, it is equally helpful in strengthening our own sense of conviction toward our work. When you read the chapter you'll know exactly what I mean.

Rather than simply referring you to the book, Joe has been so kind as to allow me to include the full chapter as part of this course. (You'll find it at the end of this lesson.)

Concern

Since a person who is struggling to meet their own lower level needs isn't likely to be able to show much concern for other people, the key to being able to project concern is for us to first turn inward and be honest with ourselves.

With this in mind, take a look at some situations where you felt certain that your propositions made sense, no-brainers if you will, but they were rejected nevertheless. Of course, the reasons for your failure may be related to your prospect's situation and have nothing to do with you. But while this *may* be the case, it certainly isn't *always* the case.

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So if we are to learn from these situations, we must first be ruthlessly honest about our role in them.

In each of these situations, ask yourself what role your own hidden, or lower level needs, concerns or intentions, played in your failure to persuade the other person. Did you get defensive when your prospect showed concern about your price, credentials or reputation and turn your attention to your own bruised ego? Did you go into the situation knowing exactly what you wanted only to come away accepting something else entirely only so that you could maintain your image as being someone who is reasonable? These are just a couple of possibilities you might want to consider. Only you can discover what is truly driving you and even this might require you slow down enough to dig below the surface.

Focus

For the next week keep a list like the one I mentioned earlier. Review your activities for the day and identify those times when you lost your focus. What was it about these situations that distracted you? How can you eliminate them in the future? And if you can't eliminate them, how can you minimize their impact on your concentration?

And don't forget to also consider just how much of a price you're paying for allowing these distractions into your life. This is critical to keeping you motivated in your effort to increase your ability to concentrate and focus on your work. While the total elapsed time of your interruptions might amount to just a few minutes a day, how much damage do these interruptions do to your sense of momentum and how long does it take you to get back to the same level of focus you enjoyed beforehand? If you're honest about this, you'll be astounded.

As I said before, I do this exercise virtually every night and have done so for years. I have never found a better way to keep the problem of distractions in the forefront of my mind and my desire to eliminate them at its maximum level.

Games You Can't Lose

The two steps to applying this concept are simply to accept the possibility of failure and then discover a way that even an undesired result can carry us toward a positive outcome. While others can help you try to uncover this new way of seeing your situation, until you come to believe it yourself, its impact will be minimal.

If you find yourself struggling to really adopt this new belief, remember James Michener's quote from earlier and start telling a different story.

Will you allow others to give the happenings in your life meaning or will you take this responsibility on yourself? The first option is by far the favorite of most people. But it is the second that can give you true power.

Can you accept the possibility that you might not get exactly what you want in a given situation? If so, can you then see how even this might carry you one step closer toward your ultimate goal? If so, you can move forward with confidence and truly play a game you cannot lose.

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Till Next Time

Next week it's our final lesson. In it we'll cover what I call the "third arm" of communication, it's a powerful concept of persuasion that is deceptively simple, but overlooked by almost everyone. We'll also look at the way I use many of the ideas we've discussed in this course with an approach I call Contextual Message Analysis and Design. And finally, we'll take a look at some of the questions and concerns that have arisen during my teaching of this course.

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from The Seven Lost Secrets of Success by Joe Vitale -*

An Excerpt from Joe Vitale's Seven Lost Secrets of Success

Note: I first came across The Seven Lost Secrets of Success shortly after it was published in 1992. At the time I didn't know Joe or his work. After reading this book, however, all that changed. I have since not only devoured virtually everything he has ever written, published or recorded, but have become his friend as well. The following chapter will give you valuable insights into increasing your level of conviction about your work and will also give you some idea of just why Joe Vitale is regarded as one of the most powerful and inspiring writers alive. For more information on Joe, visit his website at <http://www.mrfire.com>

SECRET #1: REVEAL THE BUSINESS NOBODY KNOWS

"In the long run no individual prospers beyond the measure of his faith. "

- Bruce Barton, 1921

A Nation Of Steel

Bruce Barton dug deep to find how a business served a global need or contributed to the growth of the country.

When he and Roy Durstine landed the United States Steel Corporation account in 1935, Barton helped whip up an ad that made history. He said Andrew Carnegie **"...came to a land of wooden towns...and left a nation of steel."**

This type of strategy changed the perspective of everyone. People were no longer buying a product called steel; they were supporting a mission to improve the lifestyle of a nation.

How does your business serve life? How do you contribute to the improvement of lives?

You have to look past the obvious. You may be running a hamburger stand. But are you just selling burgers? Aren't you doing something more—maybe keeping people alive and healthy so they can enjoy their lives and be happier?

How You Can Live Forever

I help people write books. But books aren't my only product. I am in the business of giving *immortality*.

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Let me explain:

A book is a way for you to live forever. When you write a book, you put yourself in that book. And you also create something that will live beyond you. Just look at the man we are talking about: Bruce Barton. He died in 1967. But his writings have touched me (and now you) from beyond his grave.

Barton used this tactic to help him write his most famous book.

The Man Nobody Knows made Jesus alive for millions of people. Most people thought (and still think) of Jesus as a sad, wimpy type of savior. But Barton said Jesus was physically strong from being a carpenter, healthy from walking in the open air every day, popular because He was invited to parties and attracted little kids, and a wise leader because He took 12 unknown men (fishermen!) and made them "salesmen" for His organization—a business that has spanned the globe and touched everyone for thousands of years.

Barton wrote in 1920, "**He (Jesus) was at a wedding party...The wine had given out. So He performed His first miracle. Just to save a hostess from embarrassment—and He thought it worth a miracle. Just to save a group of simple folk from having their hour of joy cut short—it was for such a cause, He thought, that His divine power had been intrusted to Him.**"

Nobody ever told ME that before! I now see Jesus with new eyes because of Barton's explanation. Barton revealed the man I never knew.

The Advertising Nobody Knows

Barton also used this strategy on his own profession.

When people complained that advertising was misleading or corrupt, Barton responded by "revealing the business nobody knows."

The late John Caples, author and friend of Barton's, once wrote in his diary:

"...(Barton) took the profession of advertising and told what wonders it is accomplishing in improving living standards—how it is forwarding the progress of the human race—how it is really a noble profession."

Barton himself said, "**If advertising is sometimes long winded, so is the United States Senate. If advertising has flaws, so has marriage.**"

Elsewhere Barton said, "**As a profession advertising is young; as a force it is as old as the world. The first words uttered, 'Let there be light,' constitute its character. All nature is vibrant with its impulse.**"

What Barton did was "reframe" the way people viewed his profession. And it worked. His agency became one of the largest in the world.

The President Nobody Knows

When Barton was nominated as a candidate for the U.S. Presidency, he wrote an article for *Cosmopolitan* magazine. (1932) which "revealed the President nobody knows."

Most of us consider the President's job to be high-risk, high-stress, high-profile; a controversial and demanding position. Not Barton. He said one of his first official acts would be to buy a horse and join two golf clubs. He wrote:

"The President should never be tired or worried. He should be fresh, clear-minded, full of power and decision. Thus, when his two or three big opportunities arise, he will be prepared to speak the word or perform the act that will fire the imagination of the country."

Bruce Barton went on to say that our Presidents have never been very relaxed. Barton revealed a new President—one nobody ever imagine before—a President who was human.

Though Barton was not elected President, his unique campaign strategy made him more real-and more memorable and endearing—to thousands of people who never knew him.

What People Really Want

The way to perform this first strategy is to think of what people really want.

Cosmetic companies don't sell lipstick; they sell romance (and sex). They know women want to love and be loved. Lipstick is a device to attain it. To "reveal the business nobody knows" a cosmetics firm would focus on the romance and sex derived from using their product.

People want:

* security	* sex	* power	* immortality	* wealth
* happiness	* safety	* health	* recognition	* love

How do you (or your business) deliver any of those essential needs?

I mentioned a hamburger stand earlier. Instead of focusing on hamburgers, what if the owner started selling "health"? He could bill his business as the first hamburger stand that caters to you health. He could say, "Our burgers will give you energy and vitamins" or something to that effect. He could "reveal the business nobody knows."

Most people sell what they have in front of them. In other words, if you're selling a shirt, you show the shirt. But a way to "reveal the shirt nobody knows" is to show how the shirt satisfies a more deep-seated desire. Maybe the shirt is made of special material

that allows your skin to breathe, thereby giving you health. Maybe the shirt is so attractive that it draws members of the opposite sex, thereby giving you romance. You have to look deeper than the obvious.

Take baking soda. Arm & Hammer has us putting their product on our toothbrushes and in our refrigerators. They are clever people. They keep revealing other uses for their baking soda. But Bruce Barton would have gone further and shown how the powder served the world. Had Barton handled the Arm & Hammer baking soda account, we'd be crop dusting the planet with the stuff to clear the air of pollution.

When Bruce Barton was handed the Steel account, he could have written a relatively good ad that said "Carnegie Steel is the best in the business."

Instead, Barton looked deeper. He wanted to reveal how the steel business served the more basic needs of people. As a result he came up with the now famous ad (listed in the book, *The 100 Greatest Advertisements Of All Time*): Andrew Carnegie "...came to a land of wooden towns... and left a nation of steel."

The War Nobody Knows

Barton hated war.

He lived through our country's worst wars—from both World Wars right up to the Vietnam War. He knew it was a hopeless activity. "**Nobody can win,**" he said.

In 1932 he created a series of advertisements to "reveal the war nobody knows." He wanted to drive home the costs and pains of war. He wanted to awaken people to the tragic reality of war. Barton knew that future wars would involve airplanes, big business, and even chemicals. And he wanted to stop it by advertising "this HELL!" One of his ads read:

SO THE LUSITANIA WENT DOWN

Well, what of it?

"What of it?" you cry. "The whole world was shocked. For days the newspapers talked of nothing else."

Well, but what of it? After all, it was a little thing.

How many Lusitanias would have to go down to carry all the dead and missing soldiers and the dead civilians of the great World War?

One Lusitania a day.

For a year. For ten

years.

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For 25 years.

For 50 years.

One Lusitania a day for 70 years, or one a week, beginning nearly a century before the discovery of America by Columbus and continuing to the present hour.

That is the number of Lusitanias that would be required to carry the dead. The dead of all nations who died in the war.

That ad and four others were used as illustrations in Barton's 1932 article (*before* World War II) in *American* magazine. But the ads never ran. And the country's failure to listen to Bruce Barton's plea to "reveal the war nobody knows" allowed further horrors of history to occur.

The Gasoline Nobody Knows

At a 1925 talk to the American Petroleum Institute, Barton told his audience they weren't selling gasoline at all.

"My friends it is the juice of the fountain of eternal youth that you are selling. It is health. It is comfort. It is success. And you have sold it as a bad smelling liquid at so many cents a gallon. You have never lifted it out of the category of a hated expense."

Barton explained his shocking position with a story about Jacob, who's poor immigrant parents had no gas and had to live in a dingy neighborhood under the shadow of ugly smoke (coal) stacks.

"Not so with Jacob. He works in the smoke of the city to be sure, but he lives in the suburbs and has his own garden. His children are healthier; they go to better schools. On Sunday he packs up a picnic lunch and bundles the family into the car and has a glorious day in the woods or at the beach..."

"And all this is made possible by a dollar's worth of gasoline!"

What Barton did was show gasoline to be a miraculous agent for making life better for all of us. He simply "revealed the gasoline nobody knows."

The Business Nobody Knows

When big league companies such as Sears & Roebuck or Hallmark Cards sponsor television programs (an idea created by Barton), they are revealing themselves to be caring. "Brought to you by Hallmark" lets you know Hallmark is human—while also planting its name in your mind.

Bruce Barton began a book in 1928 designed to reveal business as a major force for positive change. Many people fear or flee business because they think it's corrupt. Sometimes business *is* corrupt. But Barton saw business shaping society and helping it

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grow. Barton's book was going to "reveal the business nobody knows." (Probably due to the Great Depression of 1929, Barton shelved the project.)

In 1957 Barton offered to help Du Pont. He said he would create new advertising that "**...would dramatize the company's research, its dependence on and interrelation with smaller businesses, its success in managing to get along all these years without any strikes, the home life of its employees, and the tremendous contribution to the comfort and health of the American people as a result of what has gone on in the laboratories.**"

In short, Barton wanted to "reveal the Du Pont nobody knows."

Teach Them Why

Revealing your business means educating people about what you do.

Most businesses tell a partial story. They run a series of short ads because they believe no one will read any single long ad. But as the great copywriter Claude Hopkins declared in his famous 1923 book, *Scientific Advertising*: "People are not apt to read successive advertisements on any single line. No more that you read a news item twice, or a story...So present to the reader, when once you get him, every important claim you have."

In 1952 Barton advised the NY Stock Exchange to "**...find some way to translate their story into terms of human life and the reader's self-interest.**" He also suggested that the Exchange reveal their business by pointing out they have 600 firms and 1,300 members in 73 cities; and that they are a money-saving institution.

What Barton was encouraging his clients to do was tell their whole story. He knew people would be understanding if you explained your business. Reveal the business nobody knows by telling people what you are all about. You still have to be brief, and simple, and interesting, of course. But if you tell your story, you will win more loyal customers than if you don't.

Look at it this way:

If I tell you I charge \$200 an hour for my services, you might wince.

But if I explain that I require that fee because of my education, experience, and expenses; and because of the personalized rare service I deliver, and because of how much money I can help make for you, then you would feel better about my fee.

Why? Since you now have a reason why I charge what I do, you are more likely to accept the fee.

People are logical *and* emotional. You have to provide both to capture their loyalty.

The YOU Nobody Knows

Your business does more than provide a service.

Once you reveal the business nobody knows—to yourself and to your clients—you discover how business transforms life itself.

Another Barton example (from 1925):

"The General Electric Company and the Western Electric Company find the people in darkness and leave them in light; the American Radiator finds them cold and leaves them warm; International Harvester finds them bending over their sickles the way their grandfathers did and leaves them riding triumphantly over their fields..."

And here's Barton describing how the automobile made us lords over the earth:

"The automobile companies find a man shackled to his front porch and with no horizon beyond his own door yard and they broaden his horizon and make him in travel the equal of a King."

"I have been out of a job three times in my life. Each time I made a survey of my surroundings and discovered that there was work to be done, though not the same kind of work I had been doing."

-Bruce Barton, 1941

"Bruce Barton; Here is a man who knew Lincoln, who shook his hand, and heard his voice, and watched him laugh at one of his own funny stories. Did you feel, as you talked to him, 'I am in the presence of a personality so extraordinary that it will fascinate men for centuries...?'"

"Russell Conwell; Not at all. He seemed a very simple man, I might almost say ordinary, throwing his long leg over the arm of his chair and using such commonplace, homey language...So it was hard to be awed in the presence of Lincoln; he seemed so approachable, so human and simple..."

— Conversation between Bruce Barton (age 34) and Russell Conwell (age 78), author of *"Acres Of Diamonds,"* 1921

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*You can order your own copy of *The Seven Lost Secrets of Success* at [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or get it as a bonus when you order Joe's bestselling program *The Power of Outrageous Marketing* from Nightingale Conant. Their website is: <http://www.nightingale.com>*

Lesson 6: Context and Persuasion

About thirty years ago a couple of novelists went around trying to secure publishers for their novels. Though the two novels were very similar, they met with two very different fates. One was accepted by a major publisher and went on to gain national recognition. The other was rejected by numerous publishers, including the one that published the first writer's novel. What made the difference? Was it subject matter? Style? Length? Nope. It was none of these things.

Remember, these two manuscripts were very similar. In fact, they were so similar that only two words differentiated one from the other. That's right, only two words. Other than that, the manuscripts were *absolutely identical*. How could just two words make such a dramatic difference in the fate of these two novels?

The difference was due not to the words themselves, but to the *effect* these words had on the context of the situation itself. And with this change in context, these "two little words" profoundly changed the perceptions of everyone involved, not to mention the fate of our two novels. This power, the power of context, will lead off this, our final lesson in *The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion*.

In addition to exploring this concept, we'll look at a process I call Contextual Message Design and Analysis that will help us utilize the power of context as well as many of the other concepts we've covered thus far. We'll discuss the application and ethics of using this material in everyday life. Since ethics is clearly a subjective area, I just want to leave you with a few key thoughts to consider when utilizing this information in your work with others. And finally we'll address a few of the more common questions I've heard from some of my students. Let's get started.

The Power and Perils of Context

Let's return to our two novelists for just a moment. By now you may have already guessed that the two words that distinguished one manuscript from the other weren't *in* the manuscripts themselves, but *on* the manuscripts. The two words were the name of the author. A well-known author named Jerzy Kosinski submitted the first novel which ended up being published by Random House and winning the National Book Award. When the *exact same novel* was resubmitted a few years later with the pseudonym "Erik Demos" on it, it was rejected out-of-hand by dozens of publishers, including Random House, the very publisher that accepted it in the first place. And to make matters worse, no one, not even the folks at Random House, recognized the manuscript as having been previously published despite the national acclaim it had received.

While a number of years had passed between the "two" novels being submitted and thus it isn't a perfect test, it clearly illustrates the enormous power that just the name on a manuscript had for those who encountered it. Two words and the entire context of the situation was altered. I'm certain that if we could travel back in time and ask those

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involved why one manuscript was accepted and the other rejected, few would point to such a "superficial" difference. Instead they would point to other "more important" factors such as subject matter, length, style, etcetera without ever realizing the impact that the author's name alone had on their very perceptions of reality.

I tell you this story for one reason - to help illustrate the enormous power that context alone can have on our lives. The success or failure of these novels had absolutely nothing to do with content or quality and everything to do with context. When it was seen as coming from a well-known writer, it was thought to have more merit than when the exact same manuscript was seen as coming from an unknown. And given the fact that no one even recognized the second manuscript as having been previously published, we can also assume that it probably wasn't even evaluated by those who received it. All this based solely on the perceived context itself.

Of course, this is only one example, but it clearly illustrates what most of us already know and that is that context plays a key role in how we see our world and as a result, in our relationships and effectiveness with others.

Yet it is one thing for us to know this and quite another for us to remember this. Yes, context is very powerful but it is also very slippery as well.

Context, while it is always present in our lives, is rarely present in our awareness. Why? We need look no further than our previous discussion of the Achilles heel of the human mind and our experience in the movie theater for the answer. How long would it take us to press the button and signify that we were totally absorbed in the film? Forever. Why? Because as we pointed out before, we may never know our attention has been captured until after it is released. And this little quirk applies not just to the context of movie theaters but to contexts in general.

Think about it, we are never more aware of a given context than at the moment we enter it. But as we become more and more engaged in the specifics of the context, we begin to lose our awareness of everything else - including the context we find ourselves in. It is as if there is nothing else in our world except for what is before us. When this happens to us, we leave one of the most powerful influences to our communication, that is our awareness of context, solely in the hands of chance. For us to be able to have some control over it, we must not lose our awareness of it.

But awareness is not enough, for even when we are aware of things at the level of context, we rarely pay proper attention to it because we forget one of the most fundamental concepts of all.

According to the dictionary built into my word processor, context is "the circumstances or events that form the environment within which something exists or takes place."

If we leave our understanding of context at this, we will have gained little in terms of our ability to understand and manipulate it. In reading this definition it is easy to conclude that context is something that exists *independent from our own thinking*. That is, it is somehow physical in nature and it is up to us to observe it. And, of course, in some respects this is no doubt true. Context as we understand it *is* made up of the physical

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environment and events that surrounds a given event or object. However, context as we *experience* it is psychological in nature. In other words context isn't an objective phenomena, it is a subjective one.

To see this we only need to look at the fact that since each of us interprets the "circumstances" and "events" of our lives in our own way, our sense of context will be unique as well.

This is why two people can witness the exact same event and yet come away with two completely different interpretations for what they witnessed. It isn't just that their opinions would be different, but that their very understanding of the circumstances themselves would be different. In other words, their contexts would be different. Now, if context is wholly a subjective phenomena, which person is right? The answer? Neither.

Context may exist independent of our thoughts, but we do not experience it that way. Why is it important for us to remember this? Because when we do, we can avoid one of the biggest causes of frustration there is when it comes to trying to persuade another and that's mistakenly thinking that what is "obviously so" to us is "obviously so" to others as well. Too often these "little misunderstandings" aren't simply about points of fact but matters of context.

Consider a person who is trying to sell a luxury automobile to a person who is ignorant of the reputation of the automobile. If the salesman tries to sell his "luxury" car to this person, they'll both go away frustrated. First, he must sell the context of luxury before he can sell the product itself. And, of course, if he doesn't recognize this beforehand, he will end up doing neither.

Keeping these two points in mind, that context is easily overlooked and subjective in nature, is crucial to effective persuasion. It actually allows us to work with context as a form of communication rather than simply an arena in which communication will occur. Context becomes, in a sense, our third arm of communication.

Recall my story from last week about my "interrupting coworker." When my communication with him came from a context of annoyance, I got one result; when my communication came from a context of concern I got quite another. I didn't focus on my verbal or nonverbal communication in the situation; I focused on the context of the situation and when I did, my verbal and nonverbal behavior changed automatically and effortlessly. In a very real sense, context became a form of communication as manageable as any verbal or nonverbal behavior I could have focused on.

The person who keeps sight of the larger picture of a given frame of reference will always have more power than the one who is locked within that frame of reference.

In a bit we'll explore a process I call Contextual Message Analysis and Design that can help us consider contextual issues in designing our persuasive communications. And while this process is specifically geared toward preplanned communication such as copywriting, press releases, letters, etcetera, in time you will find that its questions become second nature and begin to impact your interpersonal relationships as well.

But before we get to that, there is one more distinction we can draw from our discussion on context. It is a distinction that will reveal where many of our gurus, gods and experts get their power and authority over the common man.

This is clearly important since we can study persuasion all our lives and master all its intricacies and nuances, but if we do not become seen as people of authority, we are dead in the water. When we become seen as authorities, virtually anything we do or say will take on new meaning and power.

The Context of Power

Many years ago during a radio interview the writer/psychologist Sam Keen pointed out that when a person goes to a guru, by default almost anything the guru does is seen as being profound. If the guru drops his fork or remains silent, speaks gibberish or whatever, those around him will see his actions as meaningful and important. The question is, why? And to expand this question, why are the actions of so many of society's experts seen as profound by those who turn to them? Psychotherapists? Priests and pastors? Media commentators? Psychics? What grants them their power?

Is it something they "do"? Is it an attitude they project? Is it due to the psychology of their followers? Perhaps these contribute to their power, but it is not where it originates.

In studying these types of people to discover the source of their power I arrived not at some secret tricks, techniques or methodologies, but at the conclusion that context itself plays the most prominent role in their power over others. In other words, it isn't something these people "do" as much as it is who we think these people "are" that makes the difference.

In other words, the reason everything a guru does is seen as profound has absolutely nothing to do with the guru's behavior. It has to do with the fact that we see him as a "guru" and, by definition, a guru's actions are profound. The reason the advice a psychotherapist gives us seems profound has less to do with the value of the advice than it does the fact that it is coming from the mouth of a psychotherapist, someone we've been trained to think has the answers.

The fact is, once we have been trained to accept a label as signifying power and profundity and then attach that label to another person, the next step is easy; we forget the power resides in our label and interpretation and instead attribute it to the other person outright. And voila, we have an instant god to look up to.

Now, clearly there are those whose knowledge and/or ability to affect our lives is independent of our belief in them. Surgeons can remove and exchange our organs or repair our joints and muscles whether we believe they can or not. Law enforcement officers can arrest us and lock us up whether we believe they can or not. And with the stroke of a pen our government officials can affect our lives in ways we can't even begin to imagine, and all without our belief or consent. But this type of power is the exception. And even this type of power isn't as "absolute" as it may first appear.

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Doctors must often take into account the patient's state of mind before beginning a procedure. If the patient doesn't believe the doctor can cure them, it's often a sign of trouble. According to Dr. E. Fully Torrey in his wonderful book, *Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists*, "Internists and surgeons know well the problems of trying to cure a hopeless patient. Some surgeons will not even operate on a patient who does not expect to survive the operation - too often they do not survive."

And our government and law enforcement officials may be able to lock up our "bodies" but they cannot control our minds as witnessed by those who refuse to acknowledge the authority of our law enforcement officers, our courts and political leaders.

For these authorities, our belief is required for their powers to be maximized. For the other types of authorities we've mentioned, gurus, psychics, psychotherapists and such, our belief is required by *their powers to exist at all*. Without our belief in them, they have no more power than a complete stranger.

I am not pointing this out to demean any of these types of people as they often serve important roles in our lives. I am, however, trying to illustrate just where their power originates because if we can understand this, we can learn to make it our own.

Since their power is largely attributed to them from ourselves, we need only look at those things that trigger our respect to discover just how to create our own context of power.

Developing a Context of Power

Many of those who command a strong sense of respect and power tend to share a number of traits that establish much of their context of power. The following five traits are often what set people of power apart from the masses.

They Attribute Their Knowledge to Mysterious Sources

Virtually every cult leader, guru or expert begins his or her rise to power by claiming to have access to knowledge that is unattainable to the common man.

Some claim to have a direct connection to God. Others claim special insight into the scriptures or maybe they received "new" scriptures from angels or other messengers. Some claim to be able to read tarot cards, tea leaves and the palms of our hands. Others say they can discern hidden meanings in handwriting, eye movement or the planets and stars. Some may channel the spirits of wise men and women from other realms. And, of course, others may claim access to more widely accepted sources of wisdom such as advanced degrees or maybe lengthy apprenticeships with already established experts.

The source itself is often less important than the fact that the information isn't readily available to the general public. This alone helps create a sense of power given our fifth hidden addiction:

People need to know things others don't know - things they aren't supposed to know.

I have encountered many extremely intelligent people who fail to command much respect in their fields for the sole reason that they fail to attribute their knowledge to a mysterious

source. Those who claim to be brilliant often meet with scorn whereas those who claim to understand the brilliance of others meet with ready acceptance.

They Are Pattern-Finders

Another trait that sets these individuals apart from others is that they establish themselves as pattern-finders. Chaos, confusion and uncertainty are among the most disconcerting experiences a person can face, so it only follows that those who can clear up this confusion provide a valuable service for mankind. One of the most reliable ways for people to relieve our discomfort is to demonstrate that there is actually a pattern or order behind apparent chaos. In other words, they become pattern-finders.

While teachers often attain a degree of authority by teaching their students to discern patterns in a given field of knowledge, it is the one who initially discovers or codifies the patterns that attains the greatest power.

In the world of psychology, it is the Freuds, Jungs and Maslows that become godlike figures more so than the armies of wannabes that follow in their footsteps. They are the ones that proclaimed to study the darkest recesses of our minds and extract the structures and components that had heretofore gone undiscovered. In the world of religion, it is figures like Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha who bring us patterns by which we are to live our lives. And in the world of business it is folks like Tom Peters, Peter Drucker and others who break down the world of business into understandable parts that assume the status of gurus.

They Are Label-Makers

A trait similar to pattern finding and just as powerful is label-making. Those who generate the labels for the experiences, circumstances and events of our lives wield enormous power as they provide us with a sense of understanding and security that we so desperately desire. Whether or not the label is actually new is irrelevant. All that matters is that it is new *to us*.

To go back to the world of psychology for a moment, it was Freud who created and/or popularized labels such as ego, neurosis, the unconscious and psychoanalysis and in doing so became one of the most powerful label-makers in history. His labels not only granted him power, but have provided great comfort for many. According to John Heaton, author of *Wittgenstein and Psychoanalysis*,

"The writing and teaching of most psychoanalysts...invite one to enter a world of secure moorings. They are reports of facts, meanings, interpretations, and theories that they or their master have discovered - a dominant and endless discourse that soothes and keeps us in line."

Label-makers in every field enjoy a similar power. The Certified Public Account or the attorney who looks into the mountains of incomprehensible documents, laws and codes and not only discerns the relevant information but labels it as well. The doctor who peers

into the mysteries of the human body and is able to explain and describe to us what is going on inside. The psychic or astrologer who can look into the great beyond or the cosmos and explain to us the mechanics of what we cannot see. And the list goes on and on.

Those who provide us our labels not only gain an aura of power, they set our mind at ease because they tell us that our world can be understood. And the labels they provide us are often the only proof we need.

They Give Others a Sense of Power

Given the incredible hold that some leaders have over their followers it may seem paradoxical that many of these people actually cultivate a sense of free will among their followers. They are well aware that we all need to have a sense of power in our lives and by catering to this they often create the exact opposite effect.

As I pointed out elsewhere, it's been said that people don't resist change, they resist *being* changed. In other words, if they don't feel like they have some choice in the matter, they will often resist regardless of the merits of the proposed change. The irony is that people often don't want to exercise their free will, they just want to feel like they are able to do so.

Recall the conversation between myself and the woman whose daughter was considering joining a cult that we discussed in lesson 2. While this woman had given her daughter an ultimatum not to join the group, I told her to imagine that the group was telling her something like this,

"You have to understand that your mother loves you and that she's doing what she thinks is best for you. The problem is, you're not a little girl anymore and at some point you have to make your own decisions. And this is one of those times. We'd love to have you join our group, but if you do decide to join, it must *be your* decision. No one should take your power to decide away from you."

Now I'll ask you the same question I asked her - which position do you think is more attractive to this woman's daughter? Her mother's or the cult's?

While it may appear to be exactly the opposite, those who give us the greatest sense of power often command greater loyalty than those who demand loyalty outright.

They're Difficult to Reach, Understand or Make Contact With

The marketing consultant Dan Kennedy once remarked that there is no long line to get to the wise man at the *bottom* of the mountain. This trait shouldn't be a shock to anyone. Those who are the most difficult to get to are those we revere the most. What is shocking is how simply knowing about this trap does little to avoid us from falling into it.

I once spent three years searching for a copy of a book called *The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ* by Jay Haley before I finally tracked one down. It was a beaten up old paperback copy with bent pages and highlighting throughout that was selling for an outrageous price

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of thirty dollars. Given my three-year quest to track down a copy, I snatched it up and was glad to do so. To my horror, within a couple of weeks I stumbled across a much nicer copy of the same title in the discount section of my local used bookstore. The asking price? Fifty cents. I bought it, too.

A few days later I decided to give one of my copies away to a friend. Can you guess which one I gave away? That's right, the nice one. Why? I wish I could say it was only because I was trying to be a good friend, but that's not true. The reality is that given the heroic mission I underwent to find my beaten up copy, I wasn't about to part with it - even though it wasn't nearly as nice as the other copy. The real irony is that / *was aware of this* when I decided which copy to give away and yet I still couldn't shake this irrational thought from my mind. My old beaten up copy was worth more to me than my better copy solely due to the difficulty I encountered in acquiring it.

This "difficulty" doesn't have to be financial or physical in nature. It can be psychological as well. According to Baltasar Gracian, a 15th century philosopher, in his book *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* translated by Christopher Maurer,

"Don't express your ideas too clearly. Most people think little of what they understand, and venerate what they do not. To be valued, things must be difficult: if they can't understand you, people will think more highly of you."

If it can be had now, it must not be worth having. If it can be had cheap, it must not be worth buying. And if it can be understood easily, it must not be worth learning. We can laugh at these ideas or we can profit from them. But either way, we cannot eliminate them from the human condition.

While we like to think our power and reputation is based solely on our own merits, this is rarely the case. Remember our two novelists from earlier. The difference between success and failure was one of context, not content. The same is true of us. If we are to maximize our power in our relationships with others we must give at least as much time to our context as we do our content.

And while establishing a context of power obviously benefits us, it also benefits those with whom we work as it helps them see things in a new light. How?

We pointed out in our lesson Psychological Ventriloquism that once we "know" things, we stop evaluating them and simply allow them to exist in our minds. If these "facts" ever become challenged, rather than re-evaluating their validity, we often defend them for the simple reason that we have already tagged them in our minds as "true".

Given this, it isn't any wonder that many of the problems we seek to resolve are caused, at least in part, by our own distorted thinking and not something external to ourselves. Yet our own thinking is often the last thing we will attempt to change.

So how do we overcome such self-inflicted blindness? By encountering things with which it *seems* we aren't familiar. When this occurs we are often forced to abandon our

closed-minded categories and attempt to understand our situation in new ways. And as a result, we often come away actually seeing the "same old things" in "brand new ways."

And where do we often encounter these things with which we aren't familiar? In our dealings with those who have designed just such experiences for us. In other words, those who have created their own contexts of power.

Contextual Message Analysis and Design (CMAD)

Earlier I promised to introduce you to a tool to help incorporate the idea of context as well as a number of other concepts we've covered in this course. The process, which I call Contextual Message Analysis and Design (CMAD), was inspired by a concept from the field of computer system design called the Systems Development Lifecycle which I first used while working as a systems analyst a number of years ago.

In a nutshell, the Systems Development Lifecycle is simply a way of partitioning the design process for a computer system into formal stages such as project definition, systems study, requirements analysis, etc. In working with this method on systems both large and small, two things stood out to me. First, by having a formal process such as this one, it was possible to break the most complex information system into highly manageable parts and coordinate the efforts of a large number of participants. And second, though the vast majority of the participants in the process were specialists, that is, they had little if any understanding of the system as a whole, it didn't matter. The process itself ensured that the overall context of the system was never lost.

After working in such a concise and rigid environment, I was in for an enormous shock when I entered the world of television production where virtually nothing is rigid or concise. The motto was, and is, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants. While I loved the creative aspects of television, I longed for the systematic way I had approached my work as a systems analyst and tried to incorporate some of the concepts from that field. And while I said in an earlier lesson that it isn't possible to create powerful communication using a formulaic approach, that doesn't mean a systematic approach can't be a valuable tool for helping shape, polish and deliver powerful communication.

Over the course of the last few years I've been tweaking the process I had used as a systems analyst to the point where now it bears little resemblance to the original. In creating the flow and questions that make up the model I have incorporated concepts and insights from a variety of fields including filmmaking, magic, and of course, systems design. But don't let this scare you. In a sense it is simply a series of questions and comparisons that can help guide your communication design or evaluation process. But it is also a structured way of conducting such a process that is comprehensive and multi-faceted. Though the example we'll step through in a moment is basically the one I use for writing and/or evaluating advertising copy for print or television, it can be adapted and used for virtually any purpose.

As you'll see the questions are exhaustive and wide-ranging and in many cases I don't take the time to completely consider each one. Instead, I pick and choose based on the

project I'm currently working on and streamline the process as much as possible. You may want to do the same with your own projects as well.

Finally, keep in mind the process is to be used to help you analyze and design your communication and not meant to carry you all the way through the development process. In other words, it will help you define and determine the most important aspect of your communication - its context.

Contextual Message Analysis and Design

Step 1. Fully define your product, service or proposal

In this step you want to gain as clear and broad a picture of your product, service or proposal as possible. Do not simply write down an answer such as "consulting services" or "wonder widgets." This will be of little help. Instead, try to look at what it is you are selling in as many different levels as possible. Remember Joe Vitale's book excerpt from last week? The petroleum people weren't selling gasoline they were selling health, comfort, success and freedom. What a difference.

But don't stop here. This is the time to really explore your proposal before you get so bogged down in minutia that you forget the larger context of what you're trying to communicate. Remember, it is the context of what it is we are selling that often makes the biggest difference in whether we succeed or fail.

Consider the key areas Joe mentioned and see how what you're selling might satisfy one or more of them: security, sex, power, immortality, wealth, happiness, safety, health, recognition, love.

Ask yourself:

How will your product help them?

Will it help them do something they couldn't do before?

Will it teach them something they didn't know before?

Is it something they need?

If so, do they already *know* they need it, or must you sell them on this first?

This last question is especially critical. I can't tell you how many people I work with falsely assume the need is already felt and make the fatal error of selling the product before selling the need.

If possible, ask a partner or friend these same questions for an even broader perspective.

Summarize your findings from these questions. Are there opportunities for framing your message in ways you didn't see before? If you did this step properly there certainly should be as few of us know everything about our own product or service no matter how familiar we are with it. Uncover new insights about it and you just might uncover a new market for it as well.

Step 2. Determine how you will measure success

One of the most valuable things we can learn from the field of computer systems analysis is the idea of preparing tests *before* you ever begin to build your system. Not only did this help us ensure our system would eventually work properly, but it helped us anticipate problems and identify additional requirements in advance. The same is true for our persuasive communication.

While this may seem obvious when we consider it, it is often anything but. Remember back in lesson 2 when I told you about the pharmaceutical company that wanted to produce a video yet had given no thought to its ultimate purpose? This is a classic example of the failure to consider this aspect of developing a message. And if you remember the reason they didn't want to consider this important issue you already know why most people don't take the time to do this either. They were afraid of losing their *momentum*. Even though they had given little, if any, thought to the reason for producing their video, they were caught up in the process and didn't want to jeopardize their "progress."

It's funny when it's someone else doing this, but when you or I make the same mistake, it somehow loses its humor. And this is exactly what too often happens when we rush into our copy before we know how we'll be measuring its success.

How are you going to know it is a success, a failure or something in-between? How will you measure it? Is it possible to test the message in phases in order to minimize risk? Now is the time to ask.

Step 3. Explore the context of your prospect

Now that we have a better idea of the nature of our message and how we will determine its success or failure, it's time to step back and consider our prospect and the context in which they will encounter our message.

This is another key area to consider and one that too few people pay enough attention to. Again, we tend to get so focused on our message, polishing it and perfecting it, that we often fail to give much consideration to our target audience. To drive this point home with clients I often ask them to write down every important fact they want to communicate about their product or service. Once they do, I tell them that now we know exactly where *not* to start the process of writing their copy. In other words, it's time to get outside our own perspective and into the mind of our prospect.

With this in mind, ask yourself:

Who is your audience?

What do you want the person to do, think or believe that they wouldn't have done so before encountering your message?

What are they doing, thinking or believing *now*?

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What do they want to hear? (Not what *you* want them to hear)

What *will* they hear - what will stop them in their tracks?

This isn't necessarily the same as what they want to hear. This question is directed at those things they aren't consciously seeking but will respond to if presented within the message. Note: this is the place to consider the prospect's hidden addictions.

What do they *expect* to hear?

This question is designed to help you consider any preconceived notions that could affect your ability to communicate with them. For example, do they already "know" all about you or your pitch? If so, what do they "know"? Do they view you in a positive or negative light? How will these preconceived notions affect your ability to get your message across?

In what context will they likely encounter your message?

For this question, try to put yourself in the shoes of your prospect and imagine where they might be, what they might be thinking, and who they might be with when they encounter your message.

Will they be alone? Will they be with friends or family? Will they be distracted or focused? These are the types of question to consider at this stage of the game.

Is it possible to somehow change the context identified above to improve your chances of getting your message across?

Can you change the timing of your message? The medium? The source? Etc.

Finally, take a moment and ask if you are overlooking any of our ugly truths or human tendencies we discussed in the beginning of this class. Since these were some of our most basic concepts in the course, it is clearly important for us to consider our communication in light of them.

Step 4. Determine the Major Components of Your Message

At this point we should have more than enough information to begin identifying the points we will attempt to get across in our communication. We have a broad understanding of the nature of our message, how we'll test it, and an excellent overview of our prospect and the context surrounding our prospect.

Up to now our task has been largely analytical. At this step and in our next one, our creative abilities must come into play using the data derived from our earlier steps. It is best to think of this data as both raw material from which to build a message *and* a set of questions and considerations to help guide your efforts.

Since every communication is obviously unique, I can only address some general points you might want to consider when determining the major components of your message. In that regard, the key things to focus on in this step are comparing the more promising ideas regarding your message gained in step 1 with potential opportunities and problems

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identified in step 3. For example, does your prospect have specific preconceived notions about you or your product that can either be utilized to your advantage or that might need to be overcome? Do you need to illustrate the need for your product before you can sell the product itself? And so on.

This is also the time to consider some of the concepts we've covered earlier in the course. For example:

If the prospect isn't currently seeking the information we wish to convey, how might we employ the concept of Incongruity Theory to help capture their attention? Here we would specifically look at the answer to our earlier question "what do they *expect* to hear?" Naturally, if we act against their expectations we are more likely to gain their attention.

Is there an opportunity to address one or more of the hidden addictions? Are they looking for a sense of hope? A scapegoat? A sense of power? Etc. These are clearly areas that will not only help gain attention but will help draw them in closer.

In answering these and other questions that may come to mind based on the previous 3 steps you will begin to derive a shape and focus for your message. Again, this is a creative step and as such, there are no hard and fast rules you can use to avoid the thinking required here. Still, one does not have to be a creative artist to create powerfully persuasive communication. I routinely find that the biggest mistakes people make in creating persuasive communication has less to do with the mechanics or creativity of their materials as it does a lack of objectivity on the part of the communicator. In other words, people become so focused on their message that they fail to consider the overall context in which the message must do its work.

As a result of this step you should have the most basic components of your message. You will not have a script, an outline or even a brief summary. You will have the major themes you must communicate and that will help guide you in creating the specifics of your material.

For example, a number of years ago I produced a marketing video for a meat processing facility. In working with them through the steps up to this point we came away with three major points they wished to communicate. They wanted to demonstrate to the viewer that their company was a true meat processing plant as opposed to simply a company that buys products elsewhere and privately labels them. They wanted to establish that their facility was large and capable of delivering even the largest of orders. And finally, they wanted to establish that their facility was exceedingly clean. That's it. We had our main points. They're a real company, they're big and they're clean.

These three points may seem obvious when stated outright, but they were anything but obvious at the outset of this project. We could have gone in any number of different directions. We could have focused on the quality of their product, their customer service or their wide variety of products. At one point we even discussed detailing the specifics of each product they produced, sort of a video catalog if you will. Any one of these approaches could have made sense, but given the understanding of their purpose and their

prospects we focused our attention elsewhere. We focused on our three key points: Real, big and clean. We were now ready for our next step in the process.

Step 5. Determine How to Convey Your Message

At this point, we know the major themes we wish to communicate and it becomes a relatively simple task to structure them in an appropriate manner. Again, given the fact that every situation is unique, there are numerous ways we might tell our story. However, this is where many people go awry in their communication; they try to *tell* their story.

Recall our lesson on Psychological Ventriloquism and the importance of conveying rather than saying something. This is what separates communication that makes sense from communication that makes a point.

Let's go back for just a moment to the video project we were just discussing. Given the three main points we wished to communicate, most people handling this project would have addressed these points in their script. Perhaps they'd say something like,

"XYZ Meats is a real processing plant, not simply a firm that privately labels someone else's product and tries to pass it off as their own. And with a 10,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility, they are not only one of the largest plants of its kind in North America, they are also one of the cleanest having received near perfect scores on every inspection."

From there, they might revisit these three themes toward the end of their video in order to reinforce their points. But let me ask you this, while they may have *stated* their three major points, do you think they would have *communicated* them? In other words, do you think the viewer would have come away really believing them or not? I didn't think so.

Here's how we communicated the same three points in our video. First off, we never directly mentioned any of the three points in our script. That's right. Never. Instead, we looked for ways to *convey* the exact same information visually so that when viewers arrived at these three points in their minds, they were their ideas and not ours.

We did this in a number of ways such as showing the exterior and interior of the processing plant with prominently displayed signage and logos to demonstrate that *this* facility was producing *this* company's products. To illustrate how large the facility was we used wide-angle lenses on many of the interior shots and even rented a crane for the exterior shots to show a birds eye view of the facility. These shots combined with several well-composed shots of their enormous inventory and storage lockers helped convey their size. And to show how clean the facility was, we avoided showing the floor in any interior shots as its scuff marks and other normal wear and tear might detract from the freshly painted white walls and stainless steel benches and tables that we prominently displayed in much of the video.

The point is, we deliberately avoided coming right out and telling the viewer any of the major points we wished to drive home. This allowed the viewer to come to these conclusions naturally and with less resistance than had they simply been told these very same things.

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To help you discover opportunities to convey your main points it's helpful to think of your message in the way filmmakers or magicians might look at their work.

In our class on Psychological Ventriloquism I pointed out that a magician rolls up his sleeves in what might look like a casual move but is really trying to convey to his audience that he isn't hiding anything. Or he might run a hoop up and down his assistant's body to "prove" there aren't any cables or wires holding her suspended in the air. Only the crudest of magicians would say, "Look, there's nothing up my sleeve" or "Notice, there isn't anything holding up my assistant. She's really floating!" Would this impress you? Me neither. But by orchestrating events so that we will *naturally* arrive at these conclusions, the magician has pulled off perhaps the most critical aspect of his performance.

Filmmakers also employ a similar concept as evidenced by their "show, don't tell" rule. For example, when the "bad guy" walks into a room and you instantly know he's the "bad guy", ask yourself how you knew it. Rarely will it be in the dialogue. Instead, it will be in the subtle change of background music, the quality of the lighting or maybe the reaction of other characters. But it will almost never be so blunt as "Oh no, it's Black Bart!" To help drive this point home, try this sometime. Either watch part of a movie with the sound turned off, or listen to part of a movie without watching the picture. Then go back and watch the same portion of the movie with both audio and video and notice how much more information comes across and how dramatically different your experience is.

Given this, consider each of your main points and determine how you might best convey that information to your prospect in your message. Remember how Joe Sugarman conveyed expertise by talking above the heads of his readers. How Victor Lustig conveyed legitimacy by having the gall to take his victims on a tour of the Eiffel Tower. And how Tony Schwartz conveyed to viewers that Barry Goldwater was trigger happy with simply a young girl picking petals from a daisy. The opportunities are endless if you focus on finding them.

Once you identify your strategies for conveying these points, you've completed all the steps and all that remains is the mechanics of putting your message together. Since the greatest opportunity for empowering your message lies at the contextual level, you've already done the hardest part. The rest is just details.

In closing this section on Contextual Message Analysis and Design, I want to point out that while it has taken a lot of time and effort to go through it, the process itself is quite simple. And while you can obviously spend a lot of time going through it, it isn't always necessary or even appropriate to do so in order to benefit from it.

One of the greatest skills you can develop is the ability to know how much time and effort to put into a given piece of communication. Far too many people become obsessed over every detail of their communication and invest enormous amounts of time into something that will likely have very little payoff.

This point was drive home to me a number of years ago when I was asked to write a press release for a client. After getting the basic information from him, I asked how long he would like the press release to be. I was expecting him to say something like 1 or 2 pages, or possibly 400 words. Instead, he said he wanted it to be one hour long. I was confused. A one hour press release? Then he explained.

"I want you to write the very best press release you can, but I want you to do it in one hour. No more. It simply isn't worth any more of your time. Once that's done, we'll move onto more important things."

I never forgot the lesson this client taught me. Figure out how much time it is worth for you to spend on a given communication before you begin, otherwise you are liable to become lost in the process and waste enormous time and energy in the process. The process we have just covered can be used for everything from major campaigns or onetime proposals. How much time you spend using it should be relative to your task.

Applying the Forbidden Keys to Persuasion

When I began studying persuasion many years ago I began in the obvious place - with the existing material on the subject. While there is no doubt there is some terrific material out there, much of what I studied turned out to have little impact on my ability to persuade others. It wasn't that the material was wrong or misleading as I could clearly see how it could be used, but for some reason I wasn't able to apply it in my daily life. So if the material wasn't wrong, why was it ineffective? In time I arrived at an insight that answered this very question:

The person I am when I am studying, when I am contemplating, or when I am preparing for life, is not the same person I am when I am simply living my life.

Please read this again.

The person I am when I am studying, when I am contemplating, or when I am preparing for life, is not the same person I am when I am simply living my life.

What does this mean? It means simply that all the great intentions, positive attitudes, "fool proof plans, strategies and theories I learn, develop and arm myself with before I face the world almost invariably vanish from my awareness once I am actually in the world. At that point, I am all on my own.

Does this sound familiar? From what I hear from almost everyone I work with on persuasion, this is a universal phenomenon. Once we've left the seminar, closed the book or shut off the tape, the material just doesn't seem to have much of an impact on our daily lives. Remember in lesson 1 when I mentioned a colleague of mine who had read a book with 30 persuasion strategies, found them fascinating, yet couldn't recall a single one? This is the dilemma we all face.

So if simply learning theories, techniques and strategies isn't going to help us be more effective, what will? Take a moment and try to remember a time when you found yourself in a situation similar to one of the following:

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Your computer locks up at the worst possible time and you begin to yell at it as if it were out to get you. And yet, you somehow fail to realize that the computer doesn't care.

You look at yourself in the mirror in the morning and tell yourself that enough is enough, you're going on a diet. You mean it with all your heart, yet somehow by lunchtime you forgot your plans and don't realize it until you've already finished your second serving of dessert.

Or maybe you're about to go into an important negotiation and you've told yourself that no matter what, you aren't going to let the other person get you off track. Of course, the next thing you know, not only did they get you off track but they got you to accept something you never would have anticipated beforehand.

You may already recognize the dilemma at work here as being the Achilles Heel of the Human Mind, or our need for mental engagement. Another way of putting this same concept is to say that more often than we'd like to admit, we simply fall asleep. We forget the computer doesn't care what we think. We forget our diet when the menu is placed before us. And we even forget our most important requirements in negotiations when we step away from the strategy table and sit down at the negotiating table.

Okay, if you can relate to any of these situations, relax. It's normal. However, it can also be tragic.

The mystic, teacher and lecturer P.D. Ouspensky put it this way in his book, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*:

"All the absurdities and all the contradictions of people, and of human life in general, become explained when we realize that people *live in sleep*, do everything in sleep, and do not know that they *are asleep*." (Italics in original)

Of course, he isn't referring to physical sleep. He is referring to something more common, yet rarely acknowledged by most people. E.F. Schumacher, in his book, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, wrote:

"It is not physical sleep that is the enemy of man; it is the drifting, wandering, shiftless moving of his attention that makes him incompetent, miserable, and less-than-fully-human. Without self-awareness.. .man merely imagines that he is in control of himself, that he has free will and is able to carry out his intentions."

On that cheery note, let's return to the question I posed earlier. If simply learning theories, techniques and strategies isn't enough to help us become dramatically more persuasive, what will?

Schumacher just gave us the answer. Self-awareness. Or, to put it even more simply, awareness. We must strive to remain aware of our own motivations and intentions as well as those of others. We must give up the fairy tales we discussed in our first lesson and accept the ugly truth about human nature. We must strive to remember our three tendencies of human nature and not kid ourselves that *he* or *she* is somehow different. They're not. And neither are we - except when we are aware. When we remember the

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concepts we have studied, we can utilize them. When we forget them, we will be subject to them. Awareness is the only answer.

At this point I want to caution you about something. In learning this information it is exceedingly easy to make the mistake that our new mission in life is to wake people up, especially those we care about. Before you try this, let me tell you a quick story.

A couple of years ago as I was driving home from work I noticed a woman in another car driving toward me. Though she was still on her own side of the road, she was fixated on her rearview mirror and sure enough, eventually began to creep into my lane. I quickly honked my horn to get her attention and when I did she immediately swerved back into her own lane and promptly flipped me the finger. That's right, rather than say she was sorry or just speed off in embarrassment, she basically said "screw you" to me for waking her up to what she was doing.

While this is a somewhat humorous example, it illustrates something we covered back in lesson 3 and that's the fact that there is nothing more demeaning to a person than to be told they shouldn't feel what they're feeling, think what they're thinking, believe what they're believing, or do what they're doing. What I didn't point out then is that this is true *even if they're obviously wrong or destructive in what they're doing*.

In other words, even though we all need others to wake us up from time to time, especially if we might harm ourselves or others, we aren't likely to thank those who do the waking. All things being equal, people prefer to wake up in their own time and in their own way. That's why one of the quickest ways to *destroy* our ability to persuade or even just relate to others is to try to wake them.

Given this, I haven't shared many of these concepts with some of my closest family and friends. This isn't because I like to keep secrets per se, but because I like the people in my life to be happy. And I've learned that telling them they're asleep is not likely to make that happen.

So if I don't share this material with many of those closest to me, why was I willing to share it with you? Because in signing up for and sticking with this class you demonstrated your significant desire to learn and your willingness to confront some difficult material. If you recall, I said in the introduction to this material that the fundamental source of power the cult leaders, con artists, gurus and others that I studied came from a brutally honest understanding of human nature. And second, that if we could stomach some ugly truths about ourselves, we might be able to use this same understanding to improve lives and relationships, as opposed to destroying them. I hope you take what you learned and prove me right.

But before you do, it's a good time to touch on the issue of ethics. Clearly this is a subjective area and no single approach is going to satisfy everyone's sense of ethics. Still, I do believe there is one question we must ask ourselves before ever employing the information in this course. One question, which if answered truthfully, can steer us in the right direction. And that question is this:

How would others respond if our true intentions were unexpectedly discovered?

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Would they feel outraged? Cheated? Betrayed? If so, these techniques would clearly be inappropriate. Or, would they be thrilled? Excited? Amused? Though these reactions may seem unlikely, people are often flattered when they discover someone has gone to great lengths to impress them, please them, or even surprise them. Or perhaps upon learning of our true intentions, they wouldn't be surprised at all. All things considered, this is probably the most likely response. Why? Because in most interpersonal encounters, though our intentions may never be directly stated, they don't need to be. They are known to all. When this is the case, these techniques are not only expected, they are often *appreciated* because, used properly, they can turn an ordinary encounter into a magical one.

So, how would others respond if our true intentions were unexpectedly discovered?

While we can never predict exactly how someone would respond, by simply considering this question before acting, more often than not, we will act in appropriate and powerful ways. But for those times we remain in doubt, perhaps we should stop and consider what writer/philosopher William George Jordan said almost a century ago:

No person in the world ever attempted to wrong another without being injured in return - some way, somehow, sometime.

In closing, I'd like to address two of the most interesting complaints I have heard about this information. The interesting thing about these two concerns is that they are polar opposites of one another, yet both seem valid.

One complaint suggests that to teach people to use these indirect strategies of influence to circumvent the intellect of others is going too far. People are capable of rational thought and nothing good can come from treating them otherwise. The other complaint is that these ideas are so transparent that they couldn't possibly be put to practical use in the real world. In other words, they're either too powerful and shouldn't be used or else they're too obvious and can't be used. Which one is right? Let's see.

I once found myself working approximately 80 hours per week for nearly two months. It was tough on everyone in my family, but my son, Zachary, who was seven-years-old at the time, took it especially hard. Despite my schedule, I tried to spend as much time with him as possible, but it wasn't enough and he resented it. Soon, he resisted any attempt I made to spend time with him. Even after my workload went back to normal, he was angry, and rightfully so. I was at a loss, so I decided to employ some of the strategies I had learned while researching this material.

One evening, he and I were home alone. I was cleaning the kitchen and he was watching television in the living room; we weren't talking. Then my dog woke up and changed everything.

Our Labrador, Patton, had been locked up in the house all day and was desperate to go outside. My son hadn't walked the dog with me for weeks and I knew if I asked him straight out, he would have declined. So rather than ask him to walk with me, I simply pointed out that Patton had been locked up all day and really needed to go outside. I left it at that. It wasn't long before Zachary asked me if *he* could take the dog for a walk. "I

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wish you could, but I can't let you go outside by yourself," I told him. Then he asked me to come along.

As we began our walk I took us to an area of our neighborhood we'd never walked in before and after about ten minutes pretended to be lost. I asked Zachary if he knew the way home. He looked around for a moment, then pointed the way back. But around each corner, he had to think about where we were headed. Our ordinary walk became an adventure. Zachary forgot he was angry with me and instead held my hand and worked with me to get us home. When we finally got there, he wanted to stay outside. He asked if we could sit in the bed of my pickup truck, look at the stars and tell stories. We did. After more than an hour, he asked me if I'd put him to bed that night. For months that had been Mom's job, but that night, it was going to be mine.

Just before we were to turn out the lights for the evening, my son unexpectedly made a confession. Not long before I'd found some trash stuffed under our couch, but couldn't get a confession from my kids. Remembering how little I'd been around lately, I decided not to "grill" them and let it slide. But as my son and I were about to go to sleep after our big adventure, he suddenly admitted to it. When I asked him why he was telling me right then, he said he didn't know, but felt like it was the right time to tell me. Then, he waited for my response. "That's okay," I said. "I have to tell you something, too. We weren't really lost tonight. I was just pretending." Without a moment's hesitation, he placed his head on my chest and said, "I know. So was I."

So back to our dilemma. Are these ideas so powerful that nothing good can come from them, or are they so obvious that they won't work? Both sides present valid arguments, but both sides are missing the point.

This information *is* powerful. Very powerful. But this power is, in and of itself, neutral and therefore can be used for both good and ill. And yes, this info can at times be transparent and not "fool" anyone. But then, perhaps "fooling" people was never the intent in the first place. If you notice, as my son's final words illustrate, he never really believed we were lost. I hadn't "fooled" him into believing anything. What I had done is interact with him in a way that touched him and brought magic back into our relationship. Perhaps this is what many of the cult leaders and conmen in the world do as well and perhaps this is why so many people are drawn to them. Not because of their methods, but because of the magic their methods create.

It's time to create some of your own magic. Take this information and use it - this is what will make it your own.

If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself...All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience.

Mao Tse-Tung

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on those I've received from students during the Forbidden Keys to Persuasion E-classes. I've only selected questions that were asked by more than one student and that I felt would be of interest and benefit to others. The questions as posed below are composites of the actual questions I received.

Q. What's the best way one can master these strategies so that they're being utilized unconsciously?

A. In one sense, we've already addressed this question in other parts of this class - the way we master these strategies and make them habitual is we practice them. While I can bring them to your attention and help you understand them in this class, I can't ensure you actually practice them. That is up to you.

However, as for utilizing these strategies *unconsciously*, I would like to point out that anything we do unconsciously is, by definition, done without our awareness. That is, it is done when we're "asleep" as we just discussed, and is, therefore, out of our control. If we're relying on our unconscious reactions in our relations with others, then we're leaving our success to chance. Of course, if our reactions are appropriate, this is great. If they're not, we're going to pay the price. When we practice using these ideas *and* noticing them being used by others, our awareness of them grows and our ability to use them in our daily lives increases as well.

Q. What's the best way to use this information in preparing for a negotiation?

A. Aside from having a good basic understanding of the principles we've covered, the best thing you can do is review the material in our lesson on developing a god complex and playing games you can't lose. If you approach the situation from a position of fear or need the other party will sense this and your ability to negotiate effectively will be reduced. If you address your own psychological needs in advance you will reduce the chances of being distracted by these should they arise during the course of the negotiation. And, if you develop a broad enough set of goals for the negotiation, that is you truly accept the possibility that you won't get exactly what you want and see how even that might move you closer to a larger goal, you will automatically feel and project a sense of confidence that can often mean the difference between success and failure.

Q. What would you say is the most common cause of communication failure - the biggest reason a message doesn't get across?

A. This is a difficult question since no two communication situations are alike. However, in general, I would have to say that the most common problem I witness is simply a lack of focus in the message itself. In other words, the reason a message doesn't get across is because there wasn't a focused message projected in the first place.

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One reason this happens is that people too often fall in love with their messages much like parents fall in love with their children. When this happens we lose all sense of objectivity and as a result, not only do we fail to create powerful communication, but also we're stumped as to why we can't. After all, if we think our kids are cute, why doesn't everybody else?

Q. I'm in a field that has a lot of competition. How do I set myself apart from others doing the same work I do and increase my chances of success?

A. I know of no better way to set oneself apart from the competition than to create a context of power as we discussed earlier in this lesson. Review the five components and see which might apply to your own work. Even if you can't utilize each one, the more you can utilize the more you'll set yourself apart from others.

Q. How do you know when the use of these ideas is going to be the most effective approach in persuading another?

A. First off, the biggest thing to keep in mind is that the ideas and concepts in this class aren't meant to be a comprehensive list of all persuasion techniques. These are simply the most common and powerful of those I discovered being used by cult leaders, conmen, and others I research for this course. Remember the question that drove my research:

How does one convince other people to willingly act against their own self-interests while others struggle to convince people to engage in acts that would clearly be in their own best interests?

This class has focused on the ideas that came directly from attempting to answer this question. Of course, I also attempted to illustrate how each of the concepts we covered could be used in ethical ways as well.

With this being said, there are two things I try to look at when applying these concepts. First, how much resistance am I likely to face? The more resistance I expect, the more likely I am to turn to the ideas in this class. And second, how strong of a bond am I looking to form with the other person? Many of the ideas we covered in this class can have a very strong effect on others, especially the hidden addictions. I am more apt to use these ideas when seeking to build long-term relationships with others.

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Select Bibliography

/ was studying persuasion material long before I knew I was going to write The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion. As a result, I can't recall all of the early works that help shape my thinking in this area. The following list is therefore incomplete. Still, it represents a significant portion of the material I researched during the development of this course. I learned something of value from each and every resource listed below.

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