

# Special Report: Conversational Hypnosis

By Philip Callaghan

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**Y**ou may have heard that it's possible to do “conversational” hypnosis – to hypnotise someone in an informal setting using language that sounds like an ordinary conversation.

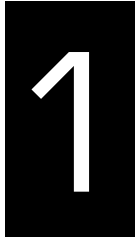
This is completely true.

However, all the approaches I've seen appear to lack something vital. There is a problem with the models they present. A thorough comparison reveals several flaws.

Underlying the existing approaches are *four fundamental assumptions* that are not useful in terms of achieving a true hypnotic conversation.

The purpose of this book is to challenge these assumptions and present a simpler, more effective model of conversational hypnosis.





## Principles And Strategy

The best place to begin is by examining the four assumptions that prevent other methods of ‘conversational hypnosis’ from achieving their full potential.

Understand first that I’m not knocking the existing approaches – many of them are adequate for the task at hand. However, there is plenty of room for improvement, when you know how.

I’m not content to just fine-tune the existing processes, because that only permits a slight improvement in performance and tends to create more complexity.

Instead, I want to give you something more useful – an easy, yet powerful way of creating hypnotic conversations.

Challenging the underlying assumptions of a theory is the best way to create a true leap forward in effectiveness.

The fundamental flaws in the existing models are:

1. Starting with a model of “formal” hypnosis
2. Framing conversational hypnosis as “covert”

3. Heavy reliance on complex use of language
4. Over-reliance on “embedded commands”

Now, let's examine the flaws in detail.

## Flaw #1: Starting with a model of “formal” hypnosis

**A**ll of the approaches I'm aware of begin with a model of “formal” hypnosis and attempt to alter it so it sounds more “conversational”.

Formal hypnosis is the description I give to the sort of hypnosis that can occur when a person is aware they are going to be hypnotised – the sort of approach that is used overtly during a hypnotherapy session, for example. You get them to close their eyes, do some sort of hypnotic induction and lead them to relax while focusing on your voice. Then you make direct or indirect suggestions, depending on your model of hypnosis.

The problem with that method is that the language and behaviours of formal hypnosis are structured very differently from a conversation. It's a bit like using a frying pan as a hammer - they're both made of the same material, but differ greatly in their effectiveness when used in a different context.

The most common practice is to use a formal “*pace and lead*” pattern to induce trance “con conversationally” through building trust in your suggestions.



A “pace” is an instantly verifiable true statement, while a “lead” is a plausible suggestion. You pace a lot near the start to gain their trust (establish rapport) then as you progress, you can lead more.

Here’s how it works in a *formal* setting:

Pace: *As you become aware of your breathing,*

Pace: *you might hear some sounds from outside,*

Pace: *and notice the shadows on the wall,*

Lead: *as you begin to relax*

Pace: *you might feel the softness of the chair,*

Pace: *and notice the brightness of the colours,*

Lead: *as you continue to relax*

Pace: *you can hear the beating of your heart,*

Lead: *as you relax even more deeply*

Lead: *you allow your eyes to close*

Lead: *and your mind takes you deeper into relaxation*

Lead: *while you release all tension...*

And so on, into the main part of the intervention. It's a reasonable structure for a formal session.

However, it doesn't translate easily into a conversational format – it requires some imagination and a lot of practice to make this sort of structure sound anything like a conversation.

Anyone who lacks effort in either of those respects will end up with something like *“well, we're sitting here, and you're listening to my voice, as the seconds tick by...”* As conversations go, it's boring nonsense.

Use that sort of weak approach in a conversation and people will think you're a bit strange in the head. I'm sure that no-one wants to be the Forrest Gump of hypnosis.

The solution is to use the opposite approach - begin with a conversation and interact with purpose while incorporating a loose hypnotic structure. More about how you can do this later on.

**Flaw #2:**  
Framing conversational hypnosis as “covert”

I hear a lot these days about “covert” hypnosis. The word “covert” used to imply secrecy, but also suggests

something furtive and stealthy and has military “mind control” connotations.

The idea of “taking people covertly into trance” is the wrong way of thinking about it. The hidden presupposition is that communicating using hypnosis is somehow dishonest *and you're going to do it anyway*. It's easy to see that the attitude behind that is all wrong.

In the “covert” frame, you're basically trying to hide your intentions. And most people can spot a hidden agenda, even if they don't know exactly which outcome you're after. They just know that something is wrong and the result is that you can lose their trust (break rapport).

The different levels at which you are communicating will not match if you are trying to deceive or mislead with hidden or covert intent.

It's a bit like being in sales. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and then it becomes apparent that they aren't really interested in you but just trying to sell you something? Most people have had that experience at some point in their lives. How does that feel? Not great, I can assure you.

However, you probably don't mind if a person is openly selling you something that you want or need. That's honest, congruent behaviour. All the levels of

communication, all the signals, match. It's straightforward and ethical – and everyone wins as a result.

Successful selling *is* more than giving people what they want. The key to Salesmanship is to *connect with a genuine want or a need* and supply something credible that fits that need at a reasonable cost.

The same goes for Hypnosis, so think win/win when you formulate your intention – when you decide the purpose behind the trance.

The solution is to think about hypnosis differently. Suppose you think of conversational hypnosis as a way of communicating with people in a compelling and interesting manner.

It's the same process but there are important differences in the intention behind it.

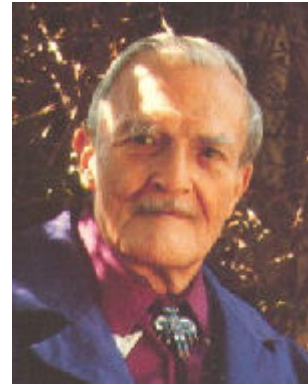
### **Flaw #3:**

**Heavy reliance on complex use of language**

**A** long time ago, there was a man called Milton Erickson.

Erickson learned how to use his language and behaviour to create profound trances through *indirect methods*.

He is considered to be the “father of modern hypnosis” due to his development of these new methods.



The core of this “Ericksonian” hypnosis is the highly structured use of *artfully vague* language, ambiguity and metaphor.

While Ericksonian “language patterns” are designed to influence you indirectly, that doesn’t immediately make them sound like a normal conversation. Erickson used his hypnotic language patterns in the context of *therapy*, which has different boundaries and rules.

In short, what would be acceptable within a therapy session differs greatly from what would be acceptable in a conversation.

For example, Erickson told a lot of stories and *appeared to* ramble and go off on tangents. In reality, his communication was highly structured in a very specific way. However, you might tolerate apparent rambling and apparently nonsensical sentences from a respected therapist within a session, but not with a friend over coffee.

So you need to incorporate these methods differently in the context of a conversation.

Another part of Ericksonian language is the use of ambiguity and double meanings to convey multiple levels of information and commands indirectly. However, some people get the wrong idea from this and end up feeding their egos instead through the *overuse* of puns and witty wordplay.

Those who indulge in this silliness trade the entire effectiveness of the Ericksonian language for recognition of how “clever” they are. The purpose of ambiguity in hypnosis is that it acts as a *subtle* communication to the unconscious mind, while the point of *double entendres* is that you notice the double meaning consciously.

It's also possible to weave complex patterns with Ericksonian language in a way that is both deliberately confusing and highly ungrammatical. That's really not necessary in a conversation and it doesn't actually *sound* very conversational. How long would *you* converse with someone who doesn't seem to make much sense?

It's possible to be a bit *too* clever for your own good. My advice is to take it easy on yourself and keep it simple.

There are only two things you need to be able to do in order to use hypnotic language effectively within an ordinary conversation. I'll explore these thoroughly later.

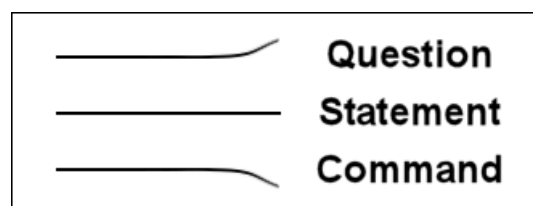
## Flaw #4: Over-reliance on “embedded commands”

One pattern in language that Milton Erickson used is known as an *embedded command*.



An embedded command is a phrase within a conversation which acts as a hypnotic instruction because it is *subtly* highlighted – usually by a variation in voice tone.

When your voice tone goes up at the end of a phrase, it sounds like a question. If the tone is level, that is a statement. When the tone drops at the end, it sounds like a command.



Embedded commands are usually “marked out” by using the tone pattern of a command *for that phrase*.

On the surface, that seems reasonably straightforward. However, most people that attempt to use embedded commands completely misunderstand how they work.

Many people just issue commands within the surface structure instead of actually embedding them within that structure:

<b>X</b>	I'd like you to <u>feel very relaxed</u>
✓	Relax only as deeply as <u>you're comfortable doing that.</u>

The first example above is just a command. It isn't really embedded in anything and it's quite consciously apparent what the command is.

In the second example, the surface meaning is *to relax only as deeply as their sense of comfort will allow*. The command is essentially *to feel comfortable relaxing deeply*. It's interpreted only by the unconscious mind because it isn't explicit.

Secondly, many people only use single suggestions instead of using *multiple similar* suggestions.

<b>X</b>	What's it like when you <u>begin to relax</u> ?
✓	What do you think of when your mind decides to <u>let go of all tension</u> ? You might decide to relax only as deeply as <u>you're comfortable doing that</u> , because you know <u>deep down inside</u> that it's okay.

In the first example, the command “begin to relax” is hidden within a question. However, it’s only one suggestion.

In the second example there are three suggestions, all of which move the subject in a similar direction. They act as *a second level of communication* and set up a *sub-context* for the unconscious mind to follow.

Clever stuff, isn’t it? And it works really well as a form of hypnotic suggestion *when used artfully and with skill*. It does take some practice to make this approach your own. Consequently, the two misuses of this technique shown above are usually a result of laziness or poor understanding of the purpose of the tool.

The previous attempts at ‘conversational’ hypnosis show a general over-reliance on embedded commands. They’re treated as though they were the *piece de resistance*, while in actuality, they’re only one of 28 (twenty-eight!) effective hypnotic structures. Why rely on them so much?

Think about this: **laziness**.

*It’s easy to revert to just telling people what to do, pretending they don’t notice and expecting your ‘hidden’ suggestions to magically work.*

Please note that the tonal emphasis is meant to be somewhat subtle when these structures are used in speech. If you embed commands in written language (especially advertising copy) it's a bit over-obvious to underline or bold type your suggestions.

Have you ever seen supposedly hidden commands marked out in bold type in a sales letter? What did you think? Were you awed by their skill, or did you find it clumsy and funny instead? Enough said, I think.

Also note that while these are examples drawn from a "formal" hypnotic context, it *is* possible to use these patterns of suggestion in a more "conversational" context. It just takes some effort and some common sense.

However effective that can be, it's hard work when you compare it to the methods I'm about to show you.

If you look at the basic structure of hypnosis in a more flexible way, it opens up a new path to simple, effective conversational hypnosis.

**R**ead on.

## About this Book:

This is the first chapter of Phil Callaghan's new book, *Conversational Hypnosis*.

It is presented in this form as a 'special report' so you can know what to expect at our new [NLP Masterclass on Conversational Hypnosis](#).

While this information will be presented live for the first time in York, UK on **25-26 September 2010**, the book itself is almost complete.

However, the *Conversational Hypnosis* book will only be available to the general public from 1st October 2010.

[Contact us](#) to pre-book your copy, or go here to secure your place on our [Conversational Hypnosis Masterclass](#).

**Note:** You must have some experience in hypnosis or NLP to apply for this advanced training.

## About the Author:

**P**hilip Callaghan is a Licensed NLP Trainer and Coach and holds a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry.

As director of Resourceful Change, Phil brings his unique experience to training and coaching businesses and individuals.



Phil also runs public training programmes throughout the UK. For further information about training, coaching and consulting, visit: <http://www.resourcefulchange.co.uk>

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