

“Fail-Safe Hypnosis” ala Dr. Ernest Rossi

Aka The “Magnetic Hands” Technique

By Doug O’Brien

(Note: I learned this from Dr. Ernest Rossi years ago at an Ericksonian Hypnosis Conference in New York City. He called it “Fail-Safe” Hypnosis because he never uses the traditional hypnotic command, “You Will Do such and such!” Instead he uses embedded questions, “I wonder if you will do such and such?” so that he cannot fail. If the client doesn’t do such and such, well fine, he never said he would.

Dr. Rossi also utilized what is called “covering the full range of possibilities” when he says things like, “and you hands might come together, or they might drift apart, or they might stay right where they are...” which further avoids the hypnotic faux-pas of failure (the subject’s hands not moving when the hypnotist asks them to) by pretty much covering everything that could possibly happen. Then, whenever there is ANY response in any direction, Dr. Rossi would utilize it by saying, “That’s right! Excellent. And that movement can continue, even more,” and ascribe to that movement a positive meaning. As an example, were the person’s hands begin to drift toward each other he might say, “That’s right. That means all this learning is really coming together for you now.” If the hand were to move apart he might say, “That’s right. You’re really opening up to new ideas and broadening your horizons.”

This process below, sometimes termed “magnetic hands,” is essentially a “convincer.” It helps to convince the client of several things, 1. That they are hypnotizable. 2. That they have a conscious mind AND an unconscious mind and 3. that BOTH are capable of working autonomously on the client’s behalf. It can be used as an icebreaker with no overt therapeutic goals beyond the aforementioned convincing, or as part of a longer induction.

It should also be noted that, in this transcript, whenever the client showed any signs of responding in the direction of their hands moving together, the guide affirmed that movement by saying something like “Yes.” Or “Good.” Or “That’s right.” These affirmings will be shown in parenthesis)

All right, let’s begin.

Can you hold you hands up, elbows bent, near your face, with the palms facing each other? That’s right, about 6-8 inches apart, with your fingers straight up and down.

Excellent.

Now, allow your eyes to focus on a point right here (indicate the spot midway between their hands)

Right in the middle

Of the space between your hands

That’s right.

And you can rest your eyes there without strain

Just soft-focus your eyes and notice
That you can see both your hands
And you can see that imaginary spot
You can see me
You can see the walls and the door
You can really see the whole room
With your peripheral vision
While you keep your eyes on that one spot
Now
Take a deep breath in
And hold it for a few seconds
Hold it..
...And let it go
Good.
And now just continue breathing
Deeply and comfortably
And don't control the breath, just observe it.
Listen to it, feel it, or even see the rise and fall of your chest
With your peripheral vision
But sit back in your mind
And let it happen
Naturally
While you simply observe it
And the reason I'm asking you to do this
Is to make the distinction
Between the *doing* and the *observing*
A moment ago you were *doing* the breathing
You were controlling it
Now you are *observing* the breathing
Letting it happen as you watch
And in a moment from now
I want you to take that same observer position
With those hands you're watching
Because, of course, you could *do* something with those hands
You could make them come together
You could move them further and further apart
But I would like you to do
Nothing at all
Just observe

Just watch those hands as you would, perhaps,
Some fish in an aquarium
Or animals in a terrarium
You can be very close to them
And yet apart from them
At the same time
And you can watch those hands with a sense of curiosity
Wondering
What it is that they will do
Because, in a moment,
I'm going to ask your unconscious mind
To bring your hands closer and closer together
Until they touch
And I don't know
If they will
Move
Closer and closer together until they touch
Or if they will move away from one another
Or if they will stay "Rock Steady"
Right where they are
And I will be curious to watch and
See what they will do
And you can be curious
Even as you are aware
That your feet are comfortably on the floor
You are aware that you can hear my voice
And the sound of the noise from outside
And you can be aware of your breathing
And (that's right – your fingers are twitching
Beginning to move)
Even as you feel yourself
Sitting comfortably
The chair supporting your weight
Waiting
Watching
(Good! That's right, even more.
Wrists bending
Hands moving)
You might be aware

That the human body has an electrical magnetic field
Some people call it chi; some people call it the life force
Some people believe they can see it
Calling it the aura
(That's right! Good)
Others can feel it
And it is real
We really do have this electrical magnetic field
It has been photographed
It has been documented
And perhaps you will notice
A feeling
Perhaps a tingling
Or not
Perhaps your hands will just continue
As if drawn by an invisible force
Closer and closer together
Sometimes, like a gravitational field,
They get to a certain point
And then they are drawn much more forcibly
Now
As your hands come all the way together
I wonder if you might find your eyes
Wanting to close
That's all right
Your body taking another deep breath in
And relaxing all the way down
That's right
And what a delightful feeling of surprise
As those hands come all the way together and touch
Now...
That's right
Excellent
It's nice to know
That you have a conscious mind
And you have an unconscious mind
And both can work autonomously
On your behalf
And now your left hand

Or your right hand
May begin to float gently down to your lap
Or perhaps both together
With that sense of deepening comfort
Or do they want to stay right there?
That's all right
It's nice to know that there are no bad parts of you
There may be parts that are out of date
And need to be updated now
(That's right, the hands slowly drifting down)
But each and every part of you
Wants you to be a happy, healthy, fully functional human being
And you can rest assured
(as your hands come to rest
comfortably on your lap)
That as we proceed
Part of your mind will continue to listen
Continue to record and utilize
Every positive suggestion
Every valuable and constructive idea, thought
That I offer you
That is appropriate for you
And will reinforce and set in motion
Those desires you have in your own mind
Now...

---(Proceed to therapeutic metaphor or other trance suggestions or reorient)

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