

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

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I recently had the pleasure of conversing with Dr. Damon over the telephone on some of the encounters each of us have experienced during the course of our professional careers. During this conversation I was reminded of a story I'd like to share with you, that surely could have had quite a different result if I had allowed the circumstances surrounding this experience to 'ruffle my feathers' so to speak and cause me to take certain actions I certainly would have regretted in the end.

During the course of my professional career I have had the privilege of traveling to many areas throughout our great nation while speaking on the benefits of hypnosis to literally thousands of people in nearly every state in the country. Each state is different and has many unique, inherent attributes and characteristics. The same applies to the structure and design of a good many hotels in these states. Each uniquely crafted in design and architecture in order to produce specific esthetics of an era imagined by the designer.

All full-service hotels, in addition to catering to the occasional overnight guest, are staffed with employees in the sales/catering department to accommodate patrons such as myself with respect to the specific layout and set-up of a meeting room. Because they are so accommodating, I've found that things can always be changed or altered if, before my lecture something was awry. However when it comes to the location of a room, at times this can be an almost impossible obstacle to overcome. (Notice I said, *almost*) Such was the circumstances surrounding my meeting room many years ago in Toms River, New Jersey.

Prior to our arrival that fateful day, the meeting room had already been pre-arranged according to my specifications and reserved by my office several weeks in advance. The hotel had been undergoing a series of facelifts over the last several months and I was anxious to see what beautiful changes had been made over the short period of time between my visits. In the center of the lobby, on display was a miniature-sized replica of what the hotel would look like once the renovations were completed. This of course included designs, textures and furnishings that would consume nearly the entire hotel. Sleeping rooms, meeting rooms, lobby, restaurant, lounge and so forth were all well overdue for a wonderful new look. Unbeknownst to me at the time, was that the new renovations and changes were to include a large wall at the top of the lobby steps to be torn down so as to accommodate the atrium look the renovating designer wished to achieve. And in keeping with the ever-growing tourist season, the hotel extended the entertainment days for the local house band to include their services *mid-week* as well as weekends. It was a brilliant marketing strategy that would surely bring in additional revenue for the hotel and allow its newly renovated look to be seen by those who wouldn't normally have reason to visit. Good for them, right? It was, but it was *not* so good for me. Allow me to continue.

After my pre-talk, I routinely take my place in the back of the room to begin my progressive relaxation. I normally guide two hypnosis sessions per evening. The subsequent session beginning well into the later part of the evening, and this evening was no different than any other except for one HUGE overlooked detail...

Imagine it... there I was... guiding the second group into trance around nine o'clock in the evening. The lights were dimmed, the room was quiet and the receptive participants were keenly engrossed and hanging on my every word. My voice was paced and my words were deliberate. I executed vocal tones to evoke emotion at precisely the right moment. I knew that in just a few moments I would have them exactly where I wanted them to effectively produce a state of hypnosis conducive to most, if not all attendees for real and profound behavioral change. The room had a peaceful aura about it. A sense of tranquility had enveloped the entire space that we occupied. It was an all-encompassing feeling that set us apart from the rest of the world for just this brief moment in time. When I was not speaking softly and deliberately into my microphone, there wasn't a sound to be heard from anywhere. You could have heard a pin drop. The audience and I were united as one and suspended in time by the same universal guiding force. This was the moment I had been waiting for and the climax of the session. This was the moment to deliver the appropriate suggestions for change to the client who came to me in need. This is what most of us consider our destiny, right? To elicit change through hypnosis to those who come to us for help and healing. Well, that evening my destiny was about to take an unexpected twist.

Here I am one moment completely engrossed in my work. And in the next moment, out of nowhere and without warning comes a blast of sound blaring so loud in the background that it made the hair on the back of my neck stand straight up. To my horror a band had just begun playing in the lounge upstairs! This was something that had never happened before and I was shocked to say the least. With my eyes as big as saucers, I wrenched my body around in order to communicate nonverbally to my assistant our need for immediate help with the situation. It was at that point in time that I knew I had trained her well. Because before I could signal her to get help she was gone. I briefly caught a glimpse of her profile as she slipped quietly out the door to put a stop to these uninvited tones!

In the meantime I had my group to deal with. What was I to do? What was the best course of action to take? Would I have to refund them their money? How would this intrusion affect the participants? Would I have to abruptly end my hypnosis session? What would this do to my reputation? In the split second that it took to have all these questions flash into my consciousness almost simultaneously, I knew I already possessed the answer. I knew what had to be done. And in the blink of an eye and without a moment's hesitation I reframed my suggestions to *incorporate the music*. "Some of you may find the sounds in or about the room to be of less and less importance to you... Some of you may find that the notes of the music and the tones you hear may help guide you into a deeper state of relaxation... The more you listen, the more deeply relaxed you may become... Single out a musical instrument and focus on that instrument so

that you can hear only the instrument that is the most pleasant sounding to you... With each strum of the guitar, with each beat of the drum you may find yourself in the process of becoming more deeply relaxed than before..." I continued on with this kind of patter until my assistant came back with a note stating that the group could not stop playing, for if they did, they would not receive compensation for their evenings work. At that, I reached into my pocket and handed her a fist full of money to put an immediate end to my intruder at any cost. Off she went, armed for battle with everything she needed (my credit card included) to execute my nonverbal request.

Very soon, but what seemed like an eternity, the music stopped as quickly as it started. I uttered a small sigh of relief and began to count my many blessings. First, that I was fortunate enough to have the quit wit about me to turn an otherwise ugly experience into one that was just a bit 'off kilter'. Secondly, that I was working with an experienced assistant that immediately took charge of the situation and, in my absence, could handle things with the hotel staff to smoothly and efficiently correct the disturbance. And last but not least that I was working with a great group of people who sincerely wanted to achieve success with hypnosis and had the motivation, desire and willingness to do so. Compound this with 'key word therapy' and my suggested use of a 'mantra' for thirty consecutive nights and this session was sure to be successful for all concerned.

I'm certain you will find it as amazing as I did, to know that as the participants left that evening most of them never mentioned the intrusion of music. Still others commented on the 'innovativeness' of the session. A few of them said that the music caused them distraction. To them I simply commented on how the distraction allowed their conscious mind to be busily involved while I snuck in the back door and accessed the subconscious for change. And yet others asked to what music we were referring!

On the way home that evening I found the perfect opportunity to ask my assistant to explain to me how she had managed to get the band to stop playing so abruptly. She instantly countered that she 'had a great teacher' and quite simply re-framed the thinking process of both the management on duty and the musicians. She redirected their thoughts in such a way that they were absolutely convinced that it was perfectly appropriate and acceptable for the band to take two of their breaks, back to back (40 minutes) while I finished with what was on my agenda. And all while getting paid a bonus to do so! Hmmm and to think that there's still some people out there who question the validity of waking hypnosis? Until next time.... don't sweat the small stuff!