

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

NOTES ON MENTAL SUGGESTION

BY ARTHUR DOUGLAS, M.D.

DR FORBES WINSLOW contributed an article on mental suggestion by transference to *The Practitioner* in May 1913, giving a number of cases of patients who were very materially benefited by it, indeed cured; most of them I saw myself during and after treatment.

He stated: “The *modus operandi* consists in hypnotizing a subject and having seated him in a chair opposite to the patient, join hands and then make your suggestions, without in any way directly influencing your patient, or putting him in a state of hypnosis. We must infer that there is a natural sympathy between the recipient and the patient, also with the operator who makes the suggestions.”

The results are undoubtedly due to suggestion. It acts as follows: The subjective mind, having control of the emotions and sensations, and being amenable to suggestion to a marvellous degree, must obviously be reached if any good is to result.

The following case seems to demonstrate that the ‘sensitive’ knows when he is in touch with the subjective mind of the patient.

A lady under treatment for severe nervous breakdown

A lady had been under treatment for some time with severe nervous breakdown. She was treated by transference with good results.

On one occasion she attended suffering from severe neuralgia at the back of the head and down the neck. She happened to be accompanied by her sister who by the way could hypnotize herself and had frequently been placed in that condition by her husband (a doctor).

Thinking this to be a good opportunity to make a small test, the sister was asked to send herself to sleep, which she promptly did; she was then told to get in touch with her sister’s subjective mind; this was accomplished in about two minutes; she was further told to communicate with the other mind that the pain was to cease immediately, which it did. This lady knew nothing whatever about transference or the subjective mind, nevertheless she was able to say when *en rapport* with the sister’s subjective mind, so

presumably she did know, more particularly as her suggestion was at once obeyed. It can hardly be imagined that she could be in touch in so short a time by any other means.

Autosuggestion against attacks

There is a state to mention, which when explained to the patient, acts as a suggestion, and which I always include in my treatment.

Many complain bitterly of “attacks” or “turns” which come on under varying conditions. After treating them by the usual routine of suggestion for a varying period, I tell them to go in a direction opposite to their thoughts.

A clergyman was, for some little time, under treatment for loss of mental control, or *folie du doute*. His attacks assumed the form of dread lest he should collapse, at home or in the street. It reached such proportions that he feared to occupy the pulpit. It also compelled him to stand still wherever he might be.

When he reached the proper stage of treatment, I gave him the following instructions: when the attack came on he was to continue walking and was on no account to stand still, assuring him at the same time that nothing would happen.

I take the view that by his obeying the impulse to stand still, that impulse would act as a strong contra-autosuggestion, and, therefore, rather tend to increase than modify the attack, whereas the walking on would act as an autosuggestion against the attack and would tend to stop it.

Furthermore, in the event of a future attack, it would most probably be a modified one. A third attack would be still less intense; and so it proved to be, and he was soon able to attend to his ordinary duties.

“Her sister could hypnotize herself and had frequently been placed in that condition by her husband (a doctor)”

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PHOTO QUIZ ANSWERS

CASE 1 RASH AFTER A SORE THROAT

A Guttate psoriasis

B It is often self limiting requiring only emollients. UVB, topical steroids and vitamin D analogues can also be helpful

CASE 2 GRANULOMA ANNULARE

A Localised, generalised, patch type, subcutaneous, perforating and HIV-associated granuloma annulare

CASE 3 IMPETIGO

A *Staphylococcus aureus*

B Aureus means golden— the colour of the crust typically seen with *Staphylococcus aureus* infection

CASE 4 HENOCCH-SCHÖNLEIN PURPURA

A 75% of patients are between 2 and 11 years of age

B Around 5% of patients will develop chronic symptoms with less than 1% progressing to end-stage renal failure

CASE 5 SLAPPED CHEEK DISEASE

A It was the fifth disease in the classification of childhood diseases, after measles, scarlet fever, rubella and Dukes’ disease

B It is a self-limiting condition

CASE 6 SELF-INDUCED RASH

A The appearance suggests folliculitis probably caused by blocking of the follicles by the cream

B By applying the cream in one direction, proximal to distal in a gentle stroking fashion, the follicles are less likely to become blocked