



# Ego-Strengthening in the Hypnotic Encounter

ASCH Clinical Workshop 2026  
Level 1 for Pediatric GI Providers

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# Learning Objectives

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1. Define what is meant by ego strengthening and how it might be used in clinical practice;
2. Identify three different types of ego strengthening;  
and
3. Describe at least three strategies for ego strengthening in clinical hypnosis practice.



I have no financial or other conflicts of interest to disclose.

# Introductions



Dr. Mary Wilde, MD

The go-to holistic pediatrician for Anxiety & ADHD





Do things with all your “intelligence & love”

-Brenda Ueland

(but our *own* ego must go away)



STAGES OF LEARNING  
unconscious incompetence  
conscious incompetence  
conscious competence  
unconscious competence

-Noel Burch



there are many perspectives



there are many layers of experience

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# What is ego-strengthening?

A therapeutic technique designed to boost a patient's self-regard, self-efficacy, and coping skills through direct or indirect suggestions, empowering them to manage emotional distress and increase inner resources to handle life challenges.

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# The history of “ego-strengthening”



Émile Coué 1857-1926

John Hartland 1901-1977

Milton Erickson 1901-1980

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# Coué's Influences

- Routine practice with conviction “every day in every way”
- Positive affirmations
- Self-healing principle
- “It is the training of the imagination which is necessary...When the will and the imagination are antagonistic, it is always the imagination which wins, without any exception...When the will and the imagination are in agreement, one does not add to the other, but one is multiplied by the other.... The imagination can be directed....Every illness, whatever it may be, can yield to autosuggestion, daring and unlikely as my statement may seem; I do not say does always yield, but can yield, which is a different thing. But in order to lead people to practise conscious autosuggestion they must be taught how, just as they are taught to read or write or play the piano.”  
(*Self-Mastery Through Conscious Autosuggestion*)

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# Hartland's Influences

- Developed and formalized the “ego-strengthening procedure”
- Hartland’s “script” (not intended to be read, but adapted to the individual)
- Authored *Medical and Dental Hypnosis* exploring application
- “You are now SO very deeply relaxed... that everything that I tell you that you allow is going to happen to you... for your own good...exactly as I tell you. And every feeling... that I tell you that you experience... you experience... exactly as I tell you. And these same things continue to happen to you... every day... just as strongly...JUST as surely... JUST as powerfully... when you are back home... away... at work... as when you are with me in this room. As a result of this deep relaxation... you are going to feel physically stronger and more energetic in every way. You feel more alert... more wide awake... more optimistic. You become much less easily tired... much less easily fatigued... much less easily discouraged... much less easily depressed (anxious)...

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# Milton Erickson's Influences

- emphasized utilization of whatever a patient brings (including resistance)
- effectively used indirect ego-strengthening such as metaphor and story
- relied on mastery experiences of the past and future “Float back to a time when...”
- story of Erickson with a patient having delusions that he was Jesus, “I hear you’re a carpenter.”

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# What are types of ego-strengthening?

direct (affirming words)

indirect (metaphors, stories)

experience of mastery

more?

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# What are ego-strengthening techniques?

identifying strengths, interests

utilization (food fight)

applying past successes/areas of confidence (dirt biking)

giving tools not just using tools “on”

even in forms - therapeutic trance

permissive language/trust “whatever is right for you”

offering choice

M-channel (mastery)

how did that feel? how did you do that?

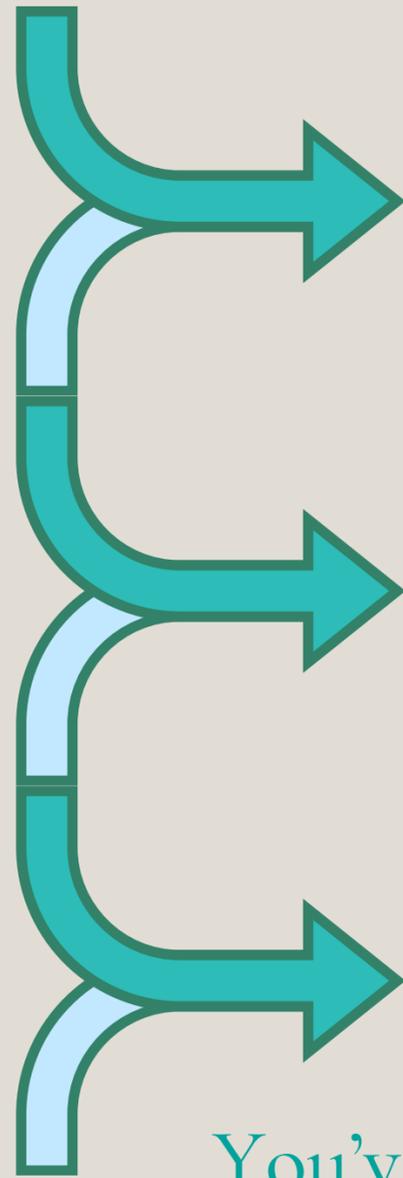
bringing back a token/momento

speaking to the patient, listening to and caring about what they say

what else?

# The language of ego-strengthening

- Yes
- That's right
- Good
- Hmmm
- You're doing great
- I wonder
- Notice
- Imagine
- Allow
- When
- Perhaps... so that
- You may be surprised
- You may be curious
- Just right for you



Perhaps you are beginning to recognize...  
you can tap into  
your inner resources  
and strengths...

Strengths you may never  
have realized you had...

...you'll be very proud of what  
you're learning and accomplishing.

You've discovered a place of inner strength and resources,  
a place that you can return to whenever you want



# Application/Stories

- “Aiden” self-perception as good
- “Tyler” marveling “how did you do that?” (45% dry nights)
- “TJ” favorite place: dirt biking
- “Charlie” the mental food fight

questions?



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