

This is my edit of Jack's DIY file on the Mirror Trick. I added the section on the science of the trick, and rewrote his method for structure and grammar. For questions or comments, please email me at nbumbernickel@gmail.com. If you want the unedited file, Jack's email is jackoddity@gmail.com. More tricks can be found [here](#), courtesy of HospitalCowboy.

What I do now is my responsibility, and your burden.

This is just hypnosis. Nothing will come from nothing. If you don't want anything from this, you'll get bored quick. But if you go into the trick with a goal in mind, you can achieve mental clarity, self-knowledge, and understanding.

You will need:

- a dark quiet room with no locked doors
- a candle, or some other flickering flame that can be kept lit for a long time
- a reflective surface large enough to hold your face, like a disposable glass mirror or still body of water
- a knife, hammer, or rock
- at least an hour of time

It is also recommended that you subject yourself to

- sleep deprivation
- alcohol or other drugs that don't break your concentration
- lyricless music or heavy repetitive beats like isochronic tones, monaurals, or binaurals
- wearing shoes

The process is as follows:

Sit in your dark room with no locks and no interruptions. Place the mirror so it shows your face; eye level is ideal. Then, place the flame so it illuminates the entirety of your face. Keep the knife within reach. If you are doing this with a friend, don't look them in the face until the candle is out.

You must look at the mirror at all times. Never allow your eyes to wander to the darkness of the room. The method must induce a mild trance for this to be anything more than nonsense. If you don't feel you're reaching a focused mindset, you may want to delay.

The mechanism of the trick is looking at your face in the mirror and asking questions. It doesn't matter whether out loud or privately. Maintain eye contact with your reflection until you get an answer. It may take a few minutes; you must not force this. The answer to your questions should feel as though they came quite naturally, as thoughts do when pondering something familiar.

The first question is always the same: “When did you feel the least amount of control in your life?”

Upon achieving an answer, a moment of self inspection is in order. Fill your mind with the reason you answered such a way. Then, if you are left with a question, ask it. Continue asking the mirror questions to which you have never wanted to provide a definitive answer. The first stage of the trick ends once you reach the end of that list. At least half an hour should have passed, which is enough time to initiate a trance.

The first stage was to understand your desires and all uncertainties regarding them. The second stage begins with asking the mirror what you don’t want to know about yourself. These answers are only as true as you make them out to be. This is the point where the answers may take a different voice in your head. You will surely start to see distortions in the mirror. If you have some inner quarrel, your reflection will grow grotesque; if you’re not self destructive, it will merely change in curious ways. You may hear the mirror audibly; you may even have it run into your own little conversation. If so, don’t leave it unresolved.

At this point, you will enter stage three of the trick. You may now start to try and mold your mirror’s face into one you really want to have. You should ask the mirror what you truly desire.

Recently, I’ve tried to suggest an idea to the subject when in this state. I do this through Barnum statements like these.

- You have a great need for others to like and admire you.
- You tend to criticize yourself.
- You feel have a great deal of unused capacity which you have not turned to your advantage.
- You have some personality weaknesses, but you can generally compensate for them.
- Your sexual adjustment has presented problems for you.
- Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside.
- At times you have serious doubts as to whether you’ve made the right decision or done the right thing.
- You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.
- You pride yourself as an independent thinker and don’t accept others’ statements without satisfactory proof.
- You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others.
- At times you’re extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, reserved.
- You fear that your aspirations are unrealistic.
- Security is one of your major goals in life.

These kinds of statements suggest I know and understand the subject. It builds a belief in the hypnotist in their minds. If carried out to its furthest extent, I'm uncertain what is not possible in regards to clinical hypnosis.

To end the trick, you must make a decision towards your goal or desire, whatever it may be. Upon reaching this decision, extinguish the flame. In the completely dark room, turn around and walk away. Try not to look at yourself in the dark for a time; until you resolve your issue, the image in the mirror will bear all your remaining issues. The pain will be apparent.

I offer only this, and my hope is that you will take this for yourself, and make it your own. This is yours now. Because I think you can do it better.

===

And now for the explanation. As I said before, this is simple hypnosis. The trick exploits various quirks of the human brain, developed as it naturally evolved over millions of years.

Evolutionarily, it became quickly useful to tune out redundant or steady information. The brain takes in an extreme amount of data every second, and so it has filters set up to discard any extraneous data. That way, an animal wouldn't be distracted by each individual pebble or raindrop while running away from a predator in the rain. You can see how that would be an advantage, right? Well that's what evolution looks for, so as a result we're all running algorithms in our brains to ignore types of information. And one of the main criteria is redundancy! Information that doesn't change - like, say, parts of the reflection of your face in a mirror - just gets muted out after a while. This is called the Troxler effect.

Ordinarily, we wouldn't notice this, but when it's something like the piece of skin you wear every day, we tend to notice when splotches start to blur and distort. This hallucination is only enhanced by the other elements: the flickering flame evolutionarily signals security from predators while also exciting the visual cortices of the brain, and the darkness is a universal trigger for sleep and relaxation. The brain, thus relaxed into a trance and engaged with an unchanging picture, will conjure up a mutated face in your mirror.

But the flipside is also true, and that's where the trick becomes truly brilliant. Darkness cuts off a lot of the millions of bits of data we usually get from our eyes, and our brain starts operating differently to compensate. For instance, it starts aggressively comparing images with things we've seen before, letting us identify that shadowy outline as a tree stump instead of a jaguar, or vice versa. This lets you compare the monstrous face in the mirror with past experiences, identifying things that aren't

really there. For instance, there are people on record who have seen the face of a dead relative in the mirror, because their brain picked out characteristics on the hazy reflection and matched them with old memories.

More dramatically, the brain will blatantly invent data when presented with such a sensory deficit. The brain, adjusted to the deluge of information it usually experiences, will often begin to imagine things; the negative effects of sleep paralysis are a result of this phenomenon. The state of sleep paralysis is indeed quite similar to the trance-like state induced by the trick, and you will begin to imagine sights and sounds. This can be very frightening - which brings us to the next point. Why a knife? To elucidate that element, we can take a dip into legend.

This trick has a long history. The first recorded usage was in the days of Socrates, who would tell young men to look at themselves in the mirror to know themselves. Psychic rituals likely used reflective surfaces for the same effects exploited in the trick. One important example of the mirror trick was in Venice, Italy.

In the early 15th century, Italy was going through a period of great strife. Power struggles were rampant between the cities and inside of them. Assassinations were so frequent that Venice often found itself with a new king monthly.

During this time of conflict, the rulers of Venice, called the Council of Ten, wanted to gain an economic advantage of their enemies in Florence, Rome, and Naples. Seeing that glass was very expensive, the Council tried to protect glassmaking secrets from leaving their city by securing all the glass makers of the city on the Island of Murano. They hired an assassin to keep the artisans on Murano, and legend states the mirror-makers taught him the trick.

According to legend, he spent the remaining hours of his life slaughtering the people he was hired to keep on the island. He was still screaming when they cut off his head.

During this trick, you break down the barrier between your rational, conscious mind and the primal subconscious hidden in your brain. This allows for clarity of mind and self knowledge. The same state can be reached after long periods of meditation, which prepare the practitioner for the breaking-down, but the mirror trick accelerates this process, providing no such preparation.

As a result, it is essential to stay focused when performing the trick. You must have a central point in mind; an issue or concept holding together your conversation. The given beginning question, "When did you feel the least amount of control in your life?", is a good starter for a structured conversation, but you can ask whatever you want as long as you remember where you're going. Don't get lost, lest you can't find your way out.

And if you do get lost? If you lose control of the mirror? Most people just turn on the light and cover up the mirror, but if it really misbehaves - laughing, chanting, insulting you, screaming - smash it with the knife and regain sanity in one fell swoop. Think of it as the kick in Inception or a handbrake in a semi-trailer truck. It will be loud, but not dangerous. The shoes are for this scenario, to protect your feet from the glass.

The most important part of this recovery scenario is to stay calm and not get scared. If things go really badly and you lose control and get scared, you might want to stay away from mirrors for about a week. You might not even be able to go back into the room. But that's just if you get scared by it; stay calm, and you'll have no problems.