



HYPNOSIS and Other Stories By M. G. Dahl

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Dental Anesthesia



Chapter 6 - Dental Anesthesia

Dental with Hypnosis: Elman's Green Finger and a Visit to the Beach.

For years, my hypnosis skills have allowed me to cultivate a high threshold for pain. The upside? I can turn off pain. The downside? Through disregard, I can hurt myself badly ignoring the body's natural signals.

The upside includes pleasure in having dental work. I like going to the dentist.

"Take good care of your teeth, and your teeth will take care of you."²

For dental work, I have perfected the ideal of the dental office as a mouth spa. The cleaning is a good scratching of my itchy teeth. The taste of rubber gloves and slight pressure of the dental hands in my mouth send me to the beach in my head, all is well in the outside world. I trust my dental team.

When I'm getting a filling, the metal band around my tooth to hold the packed composite in place while it cures is the most overtly uncomfortable part of the filling, and I have reframed it as my favorite part. It means we are almost done.

When the first wisdom tooth needed removal, I asked the dentist what the ideal outcome was. He said, "It bleeds until it fills the socket and then the bleeding stops." When he came back in to check on me post extraction, his eyes got wide. I asked, "What?"

He said, "It bled until it filled the socket, then it stopped."

"That's what you told me was the ideal outcome. I asked my body to do what you said was ideal."

When the last wisdom tooth was impacted, with roots into the sinuses, the local dentists wanted to have full anesthesia for surgery up into my sinus cavity. I waited until a new oromaxillary surgeon arrived in town, a young guy. I showed up for my appointment, handed him my full mouth x-rays, and told him to go ahead and extract. He offered a

² E. Margaret Metzinger, my mother, 1936-2012

needle for numbing in one hand, and a mask for gas in the other. I said I was planning to use the Green Finger technique. He didn't know it, so I showed him.

"I imagine the finger is getting so numb it is stiff like a bat. And then I think 'green'. I imagine the finger is so numb it is like a thousand shots of whatever it is you have in your needle there, and then I think the word 'green'. Then I imagine it is so stiff, so rigid, so numb like a wood bat that it just won't bend no matter how hard I try, and then I think 'green', after confirming, ah there, that it just won't bend. Now I transfer that numbness to my jaw and mouth. First the outside of the gum and teeth."

Three strokes of the finger onto the outside gum transferred the numbness to the gum between the teeth and cheek.

Then reload the finger, "green, green, green."

Three strokes of the finger onto the gum inside the teeth arch, along the hard palate.

"Now, I'm almost ready. There are things I want you to do. You must avoid asking me how I am feeling. If you must, ask me, 'How are you doing?'" If I need you to stop, I will raise my hand, and you will stop so that I can set my mind properly, again, and when the hand goes down, you will resume. Avoid the use of words that evoke pain, like blood, sharp, cut, stitch, needle, forceps or scalpel. Tell your nurse, 'Give me that tool' and point to it. Is there anything I need to know to make this an ideal outcome?"

"You'll come back in a week for removal of stitches."

"No dissolving stitches?"

"No."

I sent myself into that deep down place where I can go away, and the body can be responsive to the medical or dental team working with me. I primed myself,

"All experiences of touch are just a light pressure, leading me to a successful outcome."

"All background sounds and smells reassure me all is well in the outside world."

And I went away to the beach for a visit to our lovely blue waters in my mind.

In the background, away from the rustle of the palm fronds above my shady beach spot, . . . ok, I burn easy. If I'm going to the beach, I'm going to be laying out in the shade, enjoying the blue water, blue sky, light breeze

I could hear the sound of the tool opening my gum, like the sound of a sharp knife I used to peel flesh off a fresh fish, right down to the bone.

But the sparkling water in front of me, in my mind was exquisite, and the gentle lapping of the waves

I could feel the gum flap fall away to expose the tooth.

I could smell the ocean, the salty fishy smell, the sounds of seagulls yelling about a food source, and who has first feeding rights.

I heard bone broken away, somewhere way back in the awareness, once, twice, maybe three times bone was broken out to release the wisdom tooth impacted into my sinuses.

We did fine until right at the end.

I became suddenly electrified with a cold bolt from my tooth socket, to the top of my head, to the bottom of my feet, and back to that tooth socket. My hand went up, I opened my eyes to say, "I can't do this . . . " but it didn't get out of my mouth.

The dentist had my tooth, intact, out of the socket.

He said to his secretary, "Give me that tool."

He put in the first couple of stitches easily. Then he said, "just one more stitch."

I felt the needle burn through the gum flap as he finished reattaching the gum.

Then he smiled and said, "I haven't seen anything like that since I was a student doing rounds at Walter Reed. A large veteran came in, had all four of his wisdom teeth removed using nothing but the Green Finger. He did it just about the same as you did it. I thought it was some military thing. What is it?"

"Dave Elman's Green Finger Technique."

Then he gave me the bill. It has a huge markup from what he quoted for removal, I asked what the difference in price was. He said he normally got paid for anesthesia, but that wasn't included, since I did my own. The additional cost was the extra cotton he used. He billed me for that. A lot.

I asked him, "Why didn't you tell me to turn off the saliva?"

He looked startled, "You can do that?"

"If my body is properly instructed of ideal outcomes and processes, it can slow or reduce blood flow. I assume saliva would have the same responsiveness, but we didn't ask, so we don't know."

I was completely healed up in two days. The swelling was down, and the stitches hung in my mouth, way in the back, tickling me for the next five days waiting for removal. If I had a pair of scissors with a long thin curved blade, I would have taken them out myself.

I dropped off a copy of Elman's Hypnotherapy when I went back a week later to get the stitches removed.

In discussing my experience with another hypnotist, I learned that the nociceptors of pain and temperature are beside each other. I knew to turn off awareness of the pain signals, I didn't realize that there were temperature receptors I needed to turn off, too.

References

Elman, D. (1970). Hypnotherapy. Glendale, CA: Westwood Publishing Co.

Website for access to Elman training and materials <https://elmanhypnosis.com/>