

# The Amateur's Mind

## THE JEDI MIND TRICK

BY MICHAEL ROME & TIM RYERSON

In the first *Star Wars* movie, Obi-Wan Kenobi, his pupil Luke, and Luke's androids are stopped at a military checkpoint. The emperor's soldiers are searching for Luke's droids. Obi-Wan uses hypnotic suggestion on the guards: "These aren't the droids you're looking for," he says. The emperor's soldiers duly respond, "These aren't the droids we're looking for." They open the gate without a search, and Obi-Wan reminds Luke that the weak-minded are easily influenced.

Are there ways to go beyond reading tells by using similar techniques to sway our opponents' decisions? The answer may be yes. It's possible that the Jedi Knights were trained in Neural Linguistic Programming (NLP). The concept behind NLP is that the environment greatly affects our conscious and subconscious perception. By understanding how sight, sound, touch, and memory mold our internal reality, we can empower ourselves and influence others.

One of the major concepts in NLP is the process of establishing rapport. Rapport means to develop a bond or connection with another person. The primary technique for establishing rapport is mirroring. I would be mirroring if I started sitting and positioning myself in the same way as the other person, or talking with a similar speech pattern. Rapport can even be achieved by simply showing interest and sympathy. (*You say this would be disingenuous? Oh no! Insincerity at the poker table?*)

Once you have developed rapport, you can start to take control and lead your subject in the direction you want. If you've ever bought something you didn't want, then the salesperson did his job by using this technique on you. At the poker table, you could start influencing players to doubt their hand and fold. On those occasions when you want them to call, you might start persuading them to believe that you doubt your own hand.

This brings us to the subject of anchoring, which is a way of attaching

a feeling or emotion to something such as a movement, word, or touch. This is the same process that occurs when we hear a certain song, which in turn triggers associated memories and emotions. How do you go about "anchoring" a poker player into doubting his hand?

The first step is to gain rapport and lead the player into uncertainty about the strength of his cards. You then anchor this state with a touch or gesture, such as tapping the table in a particular manner. This is repeated a few times to enhance the attachment.

Suppose you were to use the following language pattern early in the game while tapping your fingers on the table: "I'm not too sure about my hand. I think it's good and it feels like a winner, but there are doubts in my mind... *major* doubts. You know when you look at your hand and really start thinking about it? The types of hands that you were positive would win, and then you *lost* a lot of money!" Hopefully you have anchored the association and can use the tapping later to get them to doubt their own hand.

This technique works well for players who are already talkers at the table. It could be the deciding factor when your opponent is having difficulty deciding whether to fold or call. The added influence of these NLP techniques might be just enough to push your opponent one way or the other. Let's face it, when we have a problem deciding which way to go, we are looking for any sign or inspiration for direction.

You could also use anchoring on yourself. How about anchoring the feeling you have the best hand and firing this anchor when you want to bluff? You'd have the perfect poker face! As Obi-Wan would say: "May the force be with you."

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