

# The Rope Trick

Close Your Eyes and Open Your Mind  
To Better Know Your Relationships



The Golden Gate bridge is one of the most famous rope-bridges in the world, its wire ropes made up of many thousands of steel strands. This extraordinary engineering achievement symbolizes the nature of interpersonal relationships, for reasons made clear in this book.

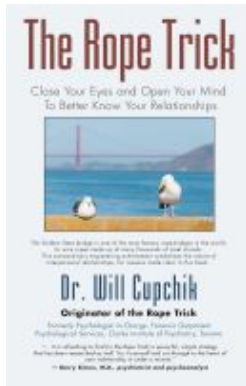
## Dr. Will Cupchik

**Originator of the Rope Trick**

*Formerly Psychologist-in-Charge, Forensic Outpatient  
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*"... It is refreshing to find (in the Rope Trick) a powerful, simple strategy that has been researched as well. Try it yourself and cut through to the heart of your relationship in under a minute."*

**— Barry Simon, M.D., psychiatrist and psychoanalyst**



*The Rope Trick: Close Your Eyes and Open Your Mind To Better Know Your Relationships* presents the psychologist-author's original mental imagery exercise that effectively and simply reveals the current status and dynamics of your important relationships. Included is a complete verbatim presentation of the exercise along with illustrative examples, plus fascinating and detailed explanations of why the exercise works so well. This exercise was thoroughly investigated for the author's doctoral dissertation.

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To Better Know Your Relationships**

**Will Cupchik Ph.D.**

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## PREFACE

### **THIS BOOK IS INTENDED FOR THE USE OF BOTH LAYPERSONS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**

#### **A note for laypersons:**

Laypersons, i.e., for our purposes any individuals who are *not* practicing or former mental health professionals, may choose to use and interpret the Rope Trick mental imagery exercise on their own [taking into account the information provided in this book], keeping in mind the disclaimers mentioned previously. It is also important to understand that, just as is true of night dreams, the Rope Trick imagery sequences [or ‘responses’ as they will also be referred to in this book] can have *various* interpretations, none of which should be taken as ‘gospel’ or presumed to be definitive. Rather, by carrying out the Rope Trick exercise in the manner that is outlined in detail in this book, and with practice, it may well be possible, within a very few minutes or less, to acquire insights into aspects of a relationship that may not have been entirely clear to the user beforehand.

A Warning or Caveat: it is *always* advisable to review one’s Rope Trick exercise response with an experienced psychotherapist who is knowledgeable in the interpretations of dreams and the possible meanings of symbols. Neither the author nor publisher accepts any responsibility for any imagery sequences or the consequences of same that may be experienced and/or interpreted by any user or his or her psychotherapist. If a reader is unsure whether he or she would be ready or able to deal with the resulting imagery and/or interpretations of the Rope Trick exercise, then that person would be well advised to not carry out the exercise without the assistance of a qualified psychotherapist.

In order to make for easier reading, the main parts of this book are written with laypersons in mind. For those who wish to learn even more about mental imagery, the appendices at the back of this book are intended to provide some of this material.

**A note for psychotherapists:**

The Rope Trick© was thoroughly investigated from within a rigorous experimental design for my doctoral dissertation within the Department of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto [Ph.D. in granted in 1979]. It was shown to be both clinically valid [i.e., it reveals the current status and dynamics of an interpersonal relationship] and is also reliable in a clinical sense, [i.e., it will likely provide a psychodynamically similar experience, time and again, over a short period and while the qualities of the relationship remains the same]. It should go without saying that, just as is true for any clinical intervention or exercise, the results of its use are neither necessarily predictable, accurate nor valid for *every* user on *every* occasion, and the involvement of a suitably trained clinician is always advisable.

By all means, consider the Rope Trick as a potentially powerful tool to employ with clients who are attempting to deal with their relationships. Even more than forty years on I still usually choose to read aloud to clients the optimal, written version of the Rope Trick experience to clients. This reading assures that each person gets virtually exactly the same mental imagery exercise in nearly the very same way as did the original 40 subjects of my dissertation, and that allows the therapist to pay the most attention to the client's mental imagery production, or 'response', having been assured that the Rope Trick exercise was delivered in the optimal fashion. I have included a verbatim rendition of the Rope Trick to use with clients in Chapter 1.

There is also another important reason why it can be best to read the written version of the Rope Trick to clients. The read-out-loud-from-the-written-version of the Rope Trick showed itself to be especially important in the case of the only person among the 40 who took part in the original experimental design *who did not include a rope in her response* and swore that no mention of a rope was ever provided when the exercise was originally read out to her. Thankfully, not only had the exercise been read in full from the written script but the delivery had also been recorded, and therefore the client could hear for herself that there had indeed been mention of a rope – in fact, five

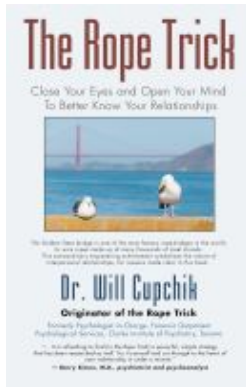
## *The Rope Trick*

different times, during the presentation of the exercise. This fascinating case is discussed in more detail later on in this book.

The fact that I have so much familiarity with the Rope Trick and so much information about how to interpret it does not appear to have markedly influenced my own response whenever I carry out the exercise. After writing the previous sentence, as an example, I actually did the Rope Trick exercise in regard to a relationship that I happen to be currently intrigued by; my imagery response came very quickly, within about 10 seconds. Probably because I am so familiar with the exercise and how to interpret it, the likely meaning of my response became clear very quickly. At the same time I do not believe that my familiarity with the exercise distorted my response in any substantial way, and the imagery that occurred to me was both instructive and insightful. Many others have similarly reported that having more information about, and practise with, the Rope Trick exercise did not likely lead to manipulating the responses they experienced.

I personally use the Rope Trick mental imagery exercise whenever I want to gain some additional insight into what may be going on in a particular relationship. Do keep in mind that it is a *here-and-now* exercise; at a later time the response I may have when carrying out the exercise is likely to be correspondingly different, reflecting the changes in the relationship that have gone on during the interval.

**Please Note: All the case examples presented in this book have been effectively camouflaged as to the identity, names, gender [sometimes] and other idiosyncratic particulars of the persons whose cases are mentioned.**



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