



## Magic makes sense - magic tricks in lessons with sick children and adolescents

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#### 1. Why utilise magic tricks in lessons at the school for sick children?

- A few suggestions

- Magic tricks accompanied by suitable stories and metaphors help children to relax and can reduce anxiety, for example prior to a planned operation.
- Children and their parents frequently suffer from anxiety and feel themselves under pressure during stays in hospital. If children learn how to perform magic tricks and can perhaps demonstrate these to their parents, this deflects the centre of attention away from the illness. The children also have the opportunity to become active in a counter-role to being a passive patient.
- The mastering of magic tricks and thereby succeeding in captivating a surrounding audience creates a positive memory of the stay in hospital.
- Sick children require sympathy, support, distraction, encouragement and experiences which strengthen and develop their feelings of self-esteem. The experiencing, learning and perfection of magic tricks and if possible the demonstration of these tricks provides a potentially successful opportunity for an entertaining and at least in part positive experience in the clinic.
- The children's group in a psychiatric clinic for children and adolescents practised successfully for a magic show. In the highly structured group sessions which also included tuition in relaxation and acting techniques, the creation of a "magic atmosphere" achieved prime significance alongside the actual learning of small magic tricks. (Anneliese Neumayer)

#### 2. Magic tricks and learning processes

- Magic tricks can enhance the methodical and didactic content of lessons in virtually all subjects.
- Tricks involving numbers can help with basic calculation processes; the compilation of a trick requires fundamental geometric ability. Mathematical tricks are particularly suitable for children with learning difficulties. A child with negative experiences in the acquisition of "cultural techniques" will especially enjoy impressing others in the demonstration of number games.
- Reading and understanding magic tricks can for example enhance English lessons. The demonstration of these tricks requires communicative and creative skills and helps in the further development of these abilities.



- The analysis of magic tricks touches on the subject of scientific phenomena.
- Last but not least, the objective of demonstrating these tricks addresses and encourages the entire artistic and creative potential of pupils involved.
- Children with an attention deficiency syndrome are particularly keen to learn magic tricks. Initial enthusiasm can soon be followed by frustration at the necessity of perseverance. What these children then need are simple tricks which can be mastered to performance standard within one hour: these children also require clear structures and planning.

### 3. Abilities to be able to teach magic tricks

- The teacher must possess a solid basic knowledge of magic tricks which he/she should be able to demonstrate with infectious enthusiasm.
- The teacher must be able to judge which tricks are suitable for specific classroom conditions: for example, predicting tricks and illustrated book trick for pupils in individual tuition on the isolation ward (limited material required: only paper; tricks which can be made by hand). The pupil will normally be able to display his/her skills proudly within a selected communicative atmosphere. This acquired knowledge provides the pupil with a skill which can be employed in future performing spheres.

For pupils in group tuition in a child and adolescent psychiatric unit, a wide spectrum of tricks would be suitable (extremely easy tricks should be practised first: so-called “self-starters”) which should be learned over a specific period of time to be displayed in a performance. Each pupil should practise a common repertoire of tricks together. Wizards’ hats, magic spells, magic music, rhythm instruments and all additional audience-friendly attributes should play a role in these projects.

### 4. Examples for situations which can be aided with magic tricks

- Conjuring during the process of making contact (these tricks such as “duck and cloth” are not explained)
- Magic tricks as a sympathetic place to escape to
- Magic tricks and learning
- Group learning and performance

Two opposite poles (isolation ward and group tuition) as potential tuition locations with examples of magic tricks (list is open-ended and variable – only the tricks practised in the workshop are listed).

KMT/ individual situation at hospital bed

Stiff rope, colouring book, elephant, number tricks and picture puzzles



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Psychiatry/ Group activities

Cup game, stiff rope, colouring book, elephant, number tricks and picture puzzles

Elements of a performance:

see PPP Tips for performances

Conclusion:

When clinic teachers teach their sick pupils magic tricks, this frequently has a double effect: the pupil often succeeds in forgetting the illness for a certain period of time and learning becomes a holistic experience which plays a central role as magic tricks require understanding and training.

Further reading; links

Annalisa Neumeyer – two books on this topic:

Mit Feengeist und Zauberpuste, 2009

Wie Zaubern Kindern hilft, 2009

[www.therapeutisches-zaubern.de](http://www.therapeutisches-zaubern.de)

Ulrich Rausch – one book and his web site

Zauber- Fundgrube: Kunststücke für Schüler und Lehrer im Unterricht (Cornelson Verlag)

[www.circus-mignon.de](http://www.circus-mignon.de)