

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

D.I.Y. Magic

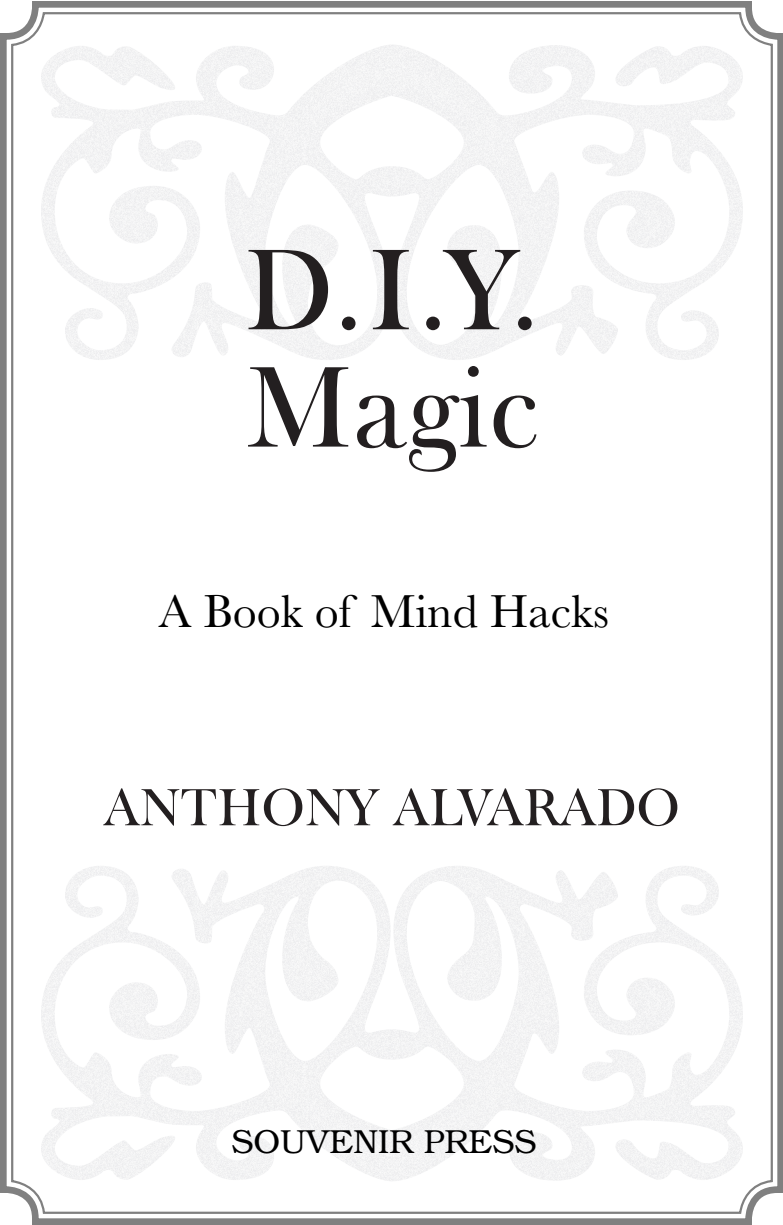
A Book of Mind Hacks

Written by Anthony Alvarado

Published by Souvenir Press

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.



D.I.Y. Magic

A Book of Mind Hacks

ANTHONY ALVARADO

SOUVENIR PRESS

Copyright © 2012, 2015 by Anthony Alvarado

First published in Great Britain in 2015 by Souvenir Press Ltd,
43 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PD

Published by arrangement with Perigee, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group,
a division of Penguin Random House LLC

First published by Floating World Comics 2012

The right of Anthony Alvarado to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted in accordance with section 77
of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system
or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Copyright owner.

While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers,
Internet addresses, and other contact information at the time of publication, neither the
publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors, or for changes that occur after
publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume
any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

Neither the publisher nor the author is engaged in rendering professional advice or
services to the individual reader. The ideas, procedures, and suggestions contained in
this book are not intended as a substitute for consulting with your physician. All matters regarding
your health require medical supervision. Neither the author nor the publisher shall be liable or
responsible for any loss or damage allegedly arising from any information or suggestion in this book

ISBN 9780285643208

Text design by Laura K. Corless

Printed and bound in Great Britain by ???

FOR SARAH

Perhaps the immobility of the things around us is imposed on them by our certainty that they are themselves and not anything else, by the immobility of our mind confronting them.

—Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

CONTENTS

Introduction: What I Talk About When I Talk About Magic.....	xiii
1. Dropping the Spoon.....	1
2. Intuition.....	7
3. Time Travel, or Neo-Ludditism.....	12
4. The Life Line Walk.....	18
5. Automatic Writing.....	24
6. Establish a Creativity Ritual.....	28
7. Ornithomancy.....	35
8. The Cloak of Invisibility.....	39
9. The Ganzfeld Technique, or the Poor Man's Sensory Deprivation Tank.....	44
10. Yoga.....	53

Contents

- 11. Bibliomancy.....59
- 12. Manifestation.....65
- 13. Build Your Own Tarot Deck.....69
- 14. The Coin Trick.....81
- 15. Schizophrenia as Oracle.....86
- 16. Lucid Dreaming.....91
- 17. Surfing Waves of Synchronicity & the Interpretation
of Random Events.....99
- 18. How to Get Lost.....106
- 19. Meditation.....115
- 20. Dreamtime & Astral Projection.....118
- 21. Power Stance.....125
- 22. Surreal Juxtaposition.....130
- 23. The Flâneur.....136
- 24. Active Imagination.....142
- 25. Memento Mori.....151
- 26. Counting Coup.....157

Contents

27. Aleatory Writing.....	168
28. Memory Exercise.....	172
29. Floating in Inner Space.....	179
30. Potions, Libations & Herbs.....	187
31. Fasting.....	208
32. Beards & Other Transformations.....	212
33. Trance & Reverie.....	219
34. Neuro-Linguistic Literature & Programming.....	225
35. A Vision Quest.....	229
36. Memory Palaces & Mental Golems, or the New Art of Daemonology.....	234
Conclusion: An Irrational Manifesto.....	244
Acknowledgments.....	249
Further Reading.....	250
Art Credits.....	252
Index.....	254

INTRODUCTION

What I Talk About When I Talk About Magic

Superstition is rooted in a much deeper and more sensitive layer of the psyche than skepticism.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

TECHNIQUE

Read this book and try the experiments presented here. Change them as you see fit. You are the one in charge; these are just beginning points. Reading this book with an open mind will change the way you think about yourself, about creativity, and about the world. Think of this like you would a travel guidebook to, say, Guatemala or the Czech Republic. If you buy the book, you better plan on actually going there, right? This is not a book merely to be read; it is a book to be lived!

Introduction

TOOLS REQUIRED

1 copy of the book in your hands

An open mind

Bonus: It's nice to have a notebook to take notes. You will get a lot of cool ideas doing these experiments.

TIME REQUIRED

288 pages

RESULT

A radically original arsenal of ways to think, perceive, and experience the world.



When I talk about magic, I'm not fucking around. It isn't a joke or a trick. I'm talking about real techniques that most people are capable of trying out if they let themselves.

Most people, however, don't.

Magic is taboo. It's considered the realm of flakes, hippies, and drug-addled softies—a waste of time.

Introduction

But the good stuff always is.

Dig a little deeper with me, dear reader, and I will point you in the direction of uncharted waters. Here there be dragons.

I have tried to summarize what this is all about dozens of times and each time used a different metaphor, because all fall short. Imagine trying to describe the act of swimming to someone who has never seen a body of water larger than that held in a cup. Or trying to describe music to the uninitiated, not just hearing music but playing music . . . where to begin? How to come up with something not feeble and academic like: It is a series of rhythmic tones that are pleasing to the ear? Ha!

No, the best thing to be done would be to lay out simple and straightforward instructions on how to whittle a flute, how to build a drum, or how to whistle and clap your hands, and from these rudimentary recipes enterprising readers would be able to find their own way. Mere description would be meaningless.

In the same way, I have laid out some guideposts in this book, some simple instruments that you are welcome to construct for your own amusement. If any of these ideas strike you as poppycock, skip them. Use what you can use and throw away the rest.

What is magic? It is the fine and subtle art of driving yourself insane! No, really, it is just that. It is a con you play on your own brain. It is the trick of letting yourself go crazy—I do believe that when it's done right, the magus treads the same sacred and profane

Introduction

ground where walks the madman. It is, however, possible for the modern magician to enter that realm and return with knowledge and, yes, power.

That said, I must warn you that these arts should be practiced only by those who are sound of mind. Like a powerful drug, the visions and experiences that are open to the initiate are not vouchsafed for all. As with trying anything new, use common sense, be safe, and don't take on more than you can handle. If you can't afford to lose your mind a bit, then please put this book back on the shelf and walk away. . . .

Still here? Good. Having shared that caveat, I will also say that this book does not dabble in black magic. That is the harnessing or deal brokering with nonhuman entities of one shade or another. If that's what you're looking for, you're barking up the wrong tree and should consult a less straightforward grimoire than this one.

That is not to say that the practitioner of the arts described here won't meet strange and compelling creatures and characters along the way. However, I believe that at some level these entities are subconscious structures of our own making. Does this make them any less powerful or capricious? In my experience, no.

In short, rather than advertise this as a book of magic, it could just as well have been labeled a book of psychology hacking or a creativity cookbook. Think of it as jail breaking the smartphone of your mind, teaching it to do things that its basic programming was never set up for. Advanced self-psychology.

Introduction

Had enough analogies and ready to move on to the main course? Wait, here is one last story; it is the same story that all stories are made of, the only story. All are endless variations of this: The hero leaves the world of common day and enters a region of supernatural wonder, fabulous forces are encountered, and a decisive victory is won. The hero returns from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. This book beckons you to take the hero's journey.



The truth is we have all practiced a form of magic at one time, when we were children seeing images in the passing clouds. Remember lying on your back watching faces appear in the sky? A puff of cumulus becomes the eye of some creature that melts into an alligator's nose and then becomes fantastic dogs, castles, angels, cartoons of people and animals that waltz from one form to another. Images can also be seen in the hot coals of a fire, in the grain of wood beams, and on the surface of rippling water. The phenomenon is surely the reason why primitive man saw himself surrounded on all sides by the elemental spirits of all things—the sprites, nymphs, dryads, and sylphs of forest, river, and fire. And wasn't he richer for it? Now of course we know better! But I propose these same faculties now lie dormant within us.

The deceptively simple exercises in this tome are designed to

Introduction

help us beginners born into the modern age of reason set aside the rational web of what we already *know* and allow us to *see*. The techniques for approaching this state of seeing are infinite. Some work better than others and some of the best have become codified over the centuries, like scrying with tea leaves, or tarot card readings, or prognostication by the stars. These are the familiar paths to magic. But do not be misled; they are not the only paths in the forest. And with vigor and a machete, you can hew your own trail.

The old paths all bring us to the same place: a state of transcendent awareness. The historian and philosopher Mircea Eliade believed it was the foundation of all rites of magic, from the Siberian shaman preparing to descend into the underworld in search of a lost soul to the Aborigine who walks into dreamtime to see what must be done to ensure a prosperous hunting season. Today, it is the work of the artist, the poet, all those who create, as well as the underpinnings of every hero, from Orpheus to Harry Potter.

But who is to say that one method of enchantment or entrancement is better than any other? Singing, chanting, drumming, and dancing are effective, but there is no magical law established that says the dancing must be done to tribal drums as opposed to, say, a DJ spinning 45s, or that magic will work only if the practitioner is wearing animal skins and bird feathers but not sneakers and a cotton hoody. What the Australian Aborigine elder and the Tungusic shaman have in their psychic endeavors is the support of the community in its inherent belief structures. This is the biggest

Introduction

obstacle the modern practitioner faces; most of the world doesn't believe magic is something to be taken seriously, and therefore the modern practice of magic demands an eccentric and confident personality who doesn't give a fig what others think.

Again and again we find that the art of magic lies in the recognition of the parallels between the self and the world. Science is devoted to breaking things down. To making everything into smaller and smaller parts. Magic works in the opposite direction. The fantastic tableaux of faces and actions, beasts and palaces visible in the clouds of your childhood were nothing but a mirror of your mind.

This book is intended to be merely a signpost showing the trailheads of a dozen or so portals that will take you there, to a path that returns to the imagination of childhood, to a path that will set you off on the hero's journey. Be warned that everything that comes after—the region you go to, the forces you encounter, the victory and what you do with it when you return—are all up to you. I would also like to humbly say that I'm not the first to tread these strange hallways. I follow in the steps of the Dadaists, the surrealists, the poets, the beatniks . . . et cetera ad nauseam. I am particularly indebted to the work of C. G. Jung.

As with any versatile art, the applications are limitless. I hope the following essays will be of particular interest to artists, musicians, writers, and all those who are chasing the muse. Here are some keys that open doors to imagination, creativity, and yes, magic.

Introduction

LEXICON

A few notes on the terminology used in this book.

spell, experiment, technique, exercise: I employ these terms fairly interchangeably. *D.I.Y. Magic* consists of thirty-six chapters, each one explaining a different activity that you can try yourself. Sometimes I refer to the activity as an experiment, sometimes as a spell, sometimes as an exercise. While all of these terms denote slightly different things, I use them interchangeably here because they are all equally valid. You can think of these as psychological experiments, as philosophical exercises, or as magical spells. Indeed I encourage you to try to think of them from as many different angles as possible. However, simply be aware that there is no real difference between a spell, a technique, a thought experiment, and so on. Is it a spell that you cast upon the world or upon yourself? They are both the same—that is the secret. By changing the way you perceive the world, you change your world. This is magic.

bibliomancy: Gaining insight by randomly reading a passage from a book. See **divination**.

cantrip: While many of the spells in this book take a bit of preparation to try, a cantrip is any spell that is very quick and easy to do. These are the spells that you could try out the moment you finish

Introduction

reading the section on them—for example, bibliomancy, ornithomancy, the cloak of invisibility, the coin trick, and power stance.

divination: An attempt to gain knowledge and insight to a question by looking at something that has nothing to do with that question. See **ornithomancy**.

hypnagogic: The imagery you see as you are falling asleep. Greek for “leading to sleep.”

Ludditism: Rejection of modern technology.

magus: A person learned in magic. If you read this book and try out these techniques, I would consider you a budding magus. Interchangeable with *magician* and a bunch of other terms. I use *magus* because it is slightly unfamiliar and so has less cultural baggage. Saying *wizard* immediately conjures up images of a bearded guy wearing a pointed hat with stars and moons on it. Which, come to think of it, is actually pretty damn cool!

manifestation: Creating something in reality by thinking about it first. Everything, of course, is created this way.

ornithomancy: Gaining insight by watching the flight patterns of birds. Derived from the Greek *ornis*, for “bird,” and *manteia* meaning

Introduction

“divination.” You can add the suffix *-mancy* to the end of anything in Greek to mean prophecy by studying that object. For example, ichthyomancy (prophecy by looking at fish), daphnomancy (divination by studying leaves), chiromancy (palm reading), aleuromancy (divination with flour), cyclomancy (fortune-telling by staring at a spinning wheel), and lampadomancy (looking into flames). Basically, if it can be looked at, people have probably tried using it for divination. These techniques are also known as scrying.

reverie: A kind of **trance** caused by losing oneself in the rhythms of nature: snow falling, trees sighing in the wind, a flickering campfire, the rocking of ocean waves. The favorite pastime of poets.

synchronicity: Coincidence. There are two ways to look at coincidence: You can say it is merely a coincidence, so it means nothing. Or you can say there is no such thing as merely a coincidence; it must mean something. Synchronicity is coincidence that means something.

trance: Going into a state in which you are oblivious to your surroundings. Usually this involves becoming more focused on the internal world than on the external. Related to **reverie**. Often trance can be induced by repetitive activity—for example, the whirling dervish.

wombat: A short-legged marsupial native to Australia. Nocturnal, furry, and very cute. There aren’t actually any wombats in this book,

Introduction

unfortunately. However, most people don't fully read the lexicon; they just glance at the words listed, right? I wanted to reward the few of you who studiously read all the way through these definitions, while those who didn't may read the whole book wondering, But when does the wombat appear?



Dropping the Spoon

A vague subterranean world reveals itself, little by little, and there the pale, grave, immobile figures that dwell in limbo loosen themselves from shadow and darkness. And thus, the tableau shapes itself, a new clarity illuminating and setting into play these bizarre apparitions; the world of spirits opens itself to us.

—Gérard de Nerval, *Aurélia*

TECHNIQUE

Use common household dishes to peek through a window into altered consciousness.

Dropping the Spoon

TOOLS REQUIRED

1 comfortable chair, preferably of the cushy recliner variety
1 metal spoon
1 metal bowl or large ceramic plate
Notepad
Pencil

TIME REQUIRED

15 to 30 minutes, depending on how sleepy you are

RESULT

Experience the richness of hypnagogic imagery without forgetting it.



What is hypnagogia? You have experienced it countless times even if you don't know the name for it. You know the feeling. You're lying in bed or, even better, napping on the couch and the images of the day, the background thoughts that are always there, a constant hum, begin to take on a certain Cheshire cat leer; fanciful and odd images begin to swim by as effervescent as soap-bubble

D.I.Y. Magic

rainbows; fairy wings, a blue stag, patterns of red and blue (for me there is often a tunnel or kaleidoscope quality to the imagery) all swirl about, just as your consciousness relaxes its grip on reality.

You're experiencing hypnagogic imagery.

Hypnagogia in Greek means, roughly, abducting into sleep, or leading to sleep, depending on how you would translate it. It is that liminal in-between state where you are just beginning to dream but are still conscious.

The most famous example we have of hypnagogia fueling the creation of art is perhaps Samuel Taylor Coleridge's best-known poem, "Kubla Khan," which came to him after his reverie was broken by a knock on the door. Some might blame his visitor for interrupting the creation of the poem, but the truth is that without the knock on the door Coleridge would not have been cognizant enough to begin writing anything down or to remember it after.

Creative types, from writers to inventors and scientists, have long been aware of the rich trove of insight from our unconsciousness that can be made available to us through hypnagogic imagery. The list of inspired people who have made use of hypnagogic imagery is impressive: Beethoven reported obtaining ideas while napping in his carriage, Richard Wagner was inspired by hypnagogic imagery to write his Ring Cycle, Thomas Edison reported that during periods of "half-waking" his mind was flooded with creative images, and the philosopher John Dewey said creative ideas happen when "people are relaxed to the point of reverie."

Dropping the Spoon

Other geniuses knowledgeable of this technique include Carl Gauss, Sir Isaac Newton, Johannes Brahms, and Sir Walter Scott, but the person perhaps most successful at harnessing the creative energy was Salvador Dalí.

A well-read student of Sigmund Freud, Dalí—who never used drugs and drank alcohol (mostly champagne) only in moderation—turned to a most unusual way to access his subconscious. He knew that the hypnagogic state between wakefulness and sleep was possibly the most creative for a brain. Like Freud and his fellow surrealists, he considered dreams and imagination as central, rather than marginal, to human thought. Dalí searched for a way to stay in that creative state as long as possible, just as any one of us on a lazy Saturday morning might enjoy staying in bed in a semi-awake state while we use our imagination to its fullest. He devised a most interesting technique. Dalí would sit outside in the afternoon sun, drowsy after a large lunch, with a metal mixing bowl in his lap and a big spoon in his hand hovering over the bowl. As he began to drift off to sleep, his grip would relax and drop the spoon clanging into the bowl, waking him up. He'd then repeat the process, drifting along in this way, suspended between waking and dream, all the while taking in the hypnagogic imagery that would become the fuel for his paintings.

How simple, how obvious and elucidating this is! To think that those images of towering giraffes, lions stretching out of pomegranates, and four-dimensional tesseract crucified Christs were in

D.I.Y. Magic

fact straight out of dreams makes one realize that the mojo driving the king of surrealism (not to mention the likes of Newton and Beethoven) is in fact available to us right here and now, and the only cost is trading a nap for a drowsy state of temporary self-denial. The method also works for more than just wild imagery; Edison would do the same thing to gain inspiration for his inventions—drifting off to sleep in his rocking chair while holding a rock in his right hand, which would drop into a metal bucket on the floor.

My own experiments have shown that a ceramic plate works just as well as a metal bowl. Of course, some may prefer trying this experiment with a tape recorder instead of a pencil, but I have found operating “technologically advanced” equipment to be counterproductive toward fostering the desired dream state. Obviously if you are hunting for images rather than words, then only a pencil and paper will do. Another tip—you may want to dim the lights or even try writing with eyes closed. You will be surprised at how easy this is: You don’t need to watch your hand to be able to scrawl somewhat legibly; your hand knows what it’s doing!

So it is as simple as that. And best of all, there is absolutely no hangover or comedown to this trip. It is most pleasant, however, if you allow yourself the time to take a full and proper nap after you have gotten your notes and sketches down.