# How suggestion quietly shapes our daily decisions and identity



Meet James Ellwood, a 38-year-old compliance officer residing in Dorchester, Dorset. Although he embodies the traits of a modern, educated individual—employed and self-assured—his daily routine reveals a deeper narrative about the power of suggestion that continuously shapes his identity and choices. In a world increasingly mediated by technology, his experiences provide a lens through which we can examine just how subtly these influences permeate our lives.

### 06:45 – Waking With the Algorithm

James begins his day with the familiar sound of his phone alarm, immediately succumbing to the temptation of checking notifications. This initial moment, seemingly benign, is anything but; as he scrolls through his curated feed, he is unwittingly bombarded with tailored headlines, fitness tips, and trending news. The content is not random but rather a calculated selection influenced by his previous interactions. The algorithm behind social media platforms is designed to reinforce his existing beliefs and behaviours, nudging him toward a predetermined version of himself.

Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as priming, a mechanism by which exposure to certain stimuli affects a person’s subsequent thoughts and actions. While James believes he is simply updating himself on current affairs, he is, in fact, being subtly guided by the logic of engagement and personalisation.

### 08:00 – Morning Reflection and Autosuggestion

In the shower, James engages in his morning routine of repeating affirmations like, “I’m in control,” and “Today will be productive.” These mantras, plucked from a popular wellness podcast, have become integral to his self-narrative. This practice harkens back to the theories of Émile Coué, who posited that repeated verbal cues can directly influence behaviour. While intended as self-empowerment, these affirmations encapsulate a more profound truth about how external suggestions can masquerade as internal motivation, further complicating the distinction between personal conviction and conditioned belief.

### 09:00 – Conformity at the Office

Arriving at work, James attends a morning meeting where a new compliance policy is introduced. Despite his reservations, he conforms to the group's consensus, echoing the silent acquiescence of his colleagues. The legacy of Solomon Asch’s conformity experiments is evident here; the pressure to align with the majority can suppress individual judgement, illustrating how social suggestion can distill personal beliefs into silence and compliance in the workplace.

Asch’s work remains relevant, reminding us that many individuals, like James, navigate professional environments where the instinct for social conformity often trumps the willingness to speak out against established norms.

### 12:30 – Lunchtime with Media

During lunch, James immerses himself in a documentary on geopolitical unrest broadcasted by a major outlet. The urgency and slick production quality inject a sense of unease regarding foreign instability, a narrative that inadvertently stokes feelings of patriotism within him. Chomsky’s concept of manufactured consent comes into play here; the selective presentation of information effectively guides James's emotional responses, achieved not through overt coercion but through pervasive suggestion. It ingeniously frames the absence of context—historical details or counter-narratives—as an invisible yet potent force in shaping public sentiment.

### 15:00 – Echoes of Philosophy

Conversing with a colleague about biometric surveillance, James instinctively adopts the line, “Well, if you’ve done nothing wrong, you’ve nothing to worry about.” This common refrain reflects Foucault’s notion of biopower, wherein individuals self-regulate based on societal norms. James believes he is articulating a rational opinion, but this perspective has been shaped through repeated exposure to media narratives and social discourse, illustrating the powerful influence of suggestion on personal identity.

### 18:30 – Consumer Desires

As he heads home, an advertisement for a new smartwatch captures James's attention, prompting feelings of inadequacy for not owning one. Despite previously having no intention to purchase, the marketing creates an artificial sense of need—a contemporary interpretation of the noble lie articulated by Plato. In this case, product promotion masquerades as an essential part of achieving a holistic existence, subtly steering James toward perceived fulfilment through consumption.

### 21:00 – The Algorithm Returns

In the evening, James settles into a dystopian series on a streaming service, chosen algorithmically based on his viewing history. Ironically, the show critiques digital control while the platform that suggests it continues to refine its understanding of his preferences, exemplifying the omnipresent nature of suggestion in the digital age. This technological iteration of suggestion operates silently, efficiently shaping his choices and reinforcing his consumption patterns without ever raising a controlling voice.

### 23:00 – A Manufactured Identity

As sleep approaches, James reflects on what he considers a productive day, believing he has navigated it autonomously. Yet the reality is layered; his decisions, influences, and thoughts have all been shaped just below the surface. The true essence of suggestion lies in its quiet influence rather than overt manipulation. It whispers in our ears, convincing us of our freedom while weaving its threads through our subconscious.

James Ellwood's experience is not singular; it echoes the lives of many who, like him, traverse a world where suggestion operates in both direct and subtle manners. This narrative underlines the necessity for greater awareness of the forces at play in our daily choices, as the most compelling form of control often masquerades as choice itself.

As we navigate our own lives influenced by unseen suggestions, it is crucial to cultivate an awareness that empowers us to discern the origin of our beliefs and desires. By fostering this critical perspective, we may reclaim the agency we believe we possess, transforming the subtle nudges of suggestion into informed decisions.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[2]](https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/the-power-of-suggestion-what-we-expect-influences-our-behavior-for-better-or-worse.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[2]](https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/the-power-of-suggestion-what-we-expect-influences-our-behavior-for-better-or-worse.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asch_conformity_experiments), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_proof)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Asch)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle_of_persuasion)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[7]](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721412446369)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[2]](https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/the-power-of-suggestion-what-we-expect-influences-our-behavior-for-better-or-worse.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle_of_persuasion)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/), [[2]](https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/the-power-of-suggestion-what-we-expect-influences-our-behavior-for-better-or-worse.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://dorseteye.com/a-day-in-the-life-suggestion-power-psychology-science-philosophy/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/the-power-of-suggestion-what-we-expect-influences-our-behavior-for-better-or-worse.html> - This article discusses how deliberate suggestion can influence various aspects of human behaviour, including performance on learning and memory tasks, product preferences, and responses to supplements and medicines. It highlights the concept of 'response expectancies', where individuals anticipate specific outcomes, leading to automatic responses that help bring those outcomes to fruition. For instance, a person who expects alcohol to reduce inhibition may behave more sociably at a social event, even if the beverage is non-alcoholic. The article underscores the pervasive impact of suggestion on daily life and decision-making processes.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asch_conformity_experiments> - The Asch conformity experiments, conducted by Solomon Asch in the 1950s, investigated the extent to which individuals would conform to a majority group, even when the majority's answers were clearly incorrect. The studies revealed that a significant number of participants conformed to the group's incorrect answers, highlighting the powerful influence of group consensus on individual judgment. This phenomenon underscores the impact of social suggestion and peer pressure on decision-making processes.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_proof> - Social proof, also known as informational social influence, is a psychological phenomenon where individuals mimic the actions of others to determine appropriate behaviour in a given situation. This concept is particularly prevalent in ambiguous social contexts where people are uncertain about the correct course of action. The article explores how social proof operates, its mechanisms, and its influence on human behaviour, including its role in phenomena like herd behaviour and the spread of behaviours or emotions through social networks.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Asch> - Solomon Asch was a pioneering psychologist known for his work on social influence and conformity. His experiments demonstrated the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could influence an individual to conform, even when the group's answers were clearly incorrect. Asch's research has had a lasting impact on the field of social psychology, providing valuable insights into the mechanisms of social influence and the factors that contribute to conformity in group settings.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle_of_persuasion> - The principle of persuasion refers to the methods and techniques used to influence others' attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours. Robert Cialdini's six principles of persuasion—reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity—are widely recognised in the field of psychology. These principles explain how individuals can be persuaded through various means, such as returning favours, maintaining consistency in commitments, following others' actions, respecting authority figures, liking the persuader, and perceiving scarcity as valuable.
7. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721412446369> - This scholarly article examines how deliberate and nondeliberate suggestions can influence cognition and behaviour in surprising ways. It discusses the concept of 'response expectancies', where individuals anticipate specific outcomes, leading to automatic responses that help bring those outcomes to fruition. The article highlights both the beneficial and harmful effects of suggestion, emphasising the need for further research to understand the boundaries and underlying mechanisms of suggestion's impact on human behaviour.