



## Victor Mids: a very special guest at the European EMDR Conference!

# 'Illusions illustrate how human perception works'

By Ad de Jongh

There are just certain things in life that are more fun when you don't fully understand them. Take, for example, Victor Mids, Holland's most famous illusionist. He manages to weekly glue almost 1 million Dutch people to their TV screen and amaze them with his program *Mindf\*ck*. Lucky for us he will be opening the EMDR Europe Conference. I wonder what tricks he has in his mind for us...

Victor is a young doctor, only 28 years old and already famous. It is not a surprise though, as his presentation are disarming and his acts intriguing. For example, in his TV-program he shows us a young man throwing his smartphone in the Amsterdam canal on command, with his girlfriend unwrapping the same phone from gift paper 2 minutes later. He is capable of correctly guessing the name of people's very first pet. And he can make people forget their own name. Victor is passionate about illusions, and started 'Neuromagic' when he finished his medical degree. But that is not all. He has a message too. "I thought: It would be so cool to not only show illusions, but also demonstrate what it tells us about human perception."

Victor rarely presents in public. But he will make an exception though for the EMDR Europe Conference. Does Victor know something about EMDR? "A little bit, but not as much as I would like to". What will he show us at the conference? "Well, what I will find interesting to explain to EMDR therapists is how I use language and linguistics in my illusions to make people follow a certain way and to make them experience something different than what happens in reality. What I know about EMDR is that there are certain parallels."

### How does he do it?

The most fascinating part of his acts is the interface with psychology, for example giving people the impression that you know much more about them. Cold reading: the art of naming certain features or details about a person without prior knowledge, which sound specific for that person but in fact are not. In his TV program, Victor speed dates with several young women and then makes statements about their character. All women are flabbergasted. One of them even says: "How is this

possible? He knows more about me than I do myself!" Then, he disappointments them by admitting that in fact he used the same text for every person.

Victor smiles when I remind him of this. "Yes, it is about how people interpret and integrate the words being said to them." How does he bring that into practice? Can he lift a little corner of the veil? "Just by saying things in a certain manner, and integrated in a script, I can present a fictive version of reality and actually change a person's real experience."

The fun thing about Victor is that he is not just an entertainer. "I think I have an interesting message that we can learn from as a society. It has to do with various cognitive mechanisms behind illusions, because we always look at the world through coloured glasses. What we perceive is not an objective registration, but biased by assumptions, norms and values and rooted patterns in your brain. That is the reason why illusion exists. Your perception can fool you."

### The therapist as an illusionist

While listening to Victor, we might start to understand that in fact we psychologists are illusionists just like him, trying to change the mindset of our patients every day. What if we can learn from Victor how he successfully applies those techniques to influence others? For example, how could Ilse de Lange, a famous Dutch singer, start to play a song that was selected by another person in a separate room without her knowing. Mind-boggling. "Now that is another example of a cognitive mechanism, that is influencing", Victor says enthusiastically. "That is communication, priming and statistics, a combination of different methods. It just shows how easily your brain can fool you. But the explanation behind it varies per technique, I can tell you that."

Doesn't Victor find it hard to pop up with something new and intriguing continuously? "No", is Victor's solid answer. "I am full of ideas. I have plans for sociological experiments with large groups of participants, but I cannot tell you more about it now."

### Enough ideas

In that case, I suggest him to practice at the conference hall, with a thousand people in the audience. "Hahaha, it will be interactive for sure." Isn't it simple? If Victor can make a person forget his own name on TV, why not demonstrate the same trick with a traumatic memory? "I don't think it is a good thing if I give away my secrets", Victor says wisely. "The methods behind my illusions are divers. But of course, memory which is very relevant for your work, will be a topic to discuss." No more questions about the conference. The rest should stay an illusion.

*'At the EMDR Europe conference I will explain how I use language to influence people's mind.'*