

The Traveling Ashes

If you want to get them *screaming*... learn this trick.

Effect:

A small daub of ashes is placed on the palm of the spectator's left hand. You instruct the spectator to close both of her hands and turn them face down. Several magical moves later, the spectator is instructed to open her hands palm up. The ashes are seen to have traveled from her left palm to her right palm.

The Traveling Ashes is one of my personal favorites, for it is the perfect show-off magic effect when you want to be nonchalant about your skills. The other thing I love about this effect is that the "dirty work" is over before the trick begins! So, all you have to do is concentrate on your presentation of the trick.

Also, **the magic happens in the spectator's hands**. Nothing is more devastating than having something happen right in your own hands and this trick is a perfect example. The reaction that you will receive will amaze you, even after you have performed it hundreds of times.

I personally do this trick almost every day! You'll love it because it's easy and you can do this anywhere, anytime! — **Bryan Dean**

The Traveling Ashes - The Secret

(In this effect, the part of the magician is played by a man, and the spectator, a woman.)

What You Need:

A dirty ashtray. The cigarette ashes should be "fresh" — less than an hour old. Fresh ashes will stick to the skin better (see The Method).

The Preparation:

The best time to set up is just before you are about to begin. The best scenario is to sit at a table or at the bar where a dirty ashtray is present. Without being obvious about it, move the ashtray "out of your way" to one side or another.

As you do this, your middle finger pushes into the ashes causing the ash to stick to the tip of the middle finger. (For this explanation, we'll use the right middle finger.)

Don't go into the trick at this point; you might want to wait a few minutes before you begin. Just don't touch anything with your middle finger.

Also, be sure that your hand does not hover over the table top. Some ashes might drop onto the surface of the table, effectively ruining the trick. (Personally, I hold my hand on the edge of the table, with my fingers relaxed and off the table.) Keep your hand and fingers relaxed and natural.

The Method:

When you are ready, tell the spectator, "***Hold your hands like this.***" You are holding your arms at your waist level, with both hands, palm down, relaxed and limp. Your fingers are pointed in the spectator's direction.

This is important: Your hands must be relaxed and limp because if they are tense and flat, your middle finger will point right at your spectator — and they will see the ashes!

Here's the preparation: When your spectator mimics your action, you take both of her hands in your hands and, at the same time, your right and left hands gently move the spectator's hands apart *just a few inches*.

Note: Your thumbs are on top of her hands, and your fingers are below while *both* of your middle fingers press gently upon the palm of the spectator's hands. **This will do one thing:** The right middle finger, as it touches the palm of the spectator's left hand, will deposit a smear of ash onto her left palm. (*Read this entire paragraph again.*)

Now, since you are doing the *same exact motions with both hands*, that is, your left middle finger as well as the right middle finger are touching the palms of her hands, it will be as if you are just separating her hands.

And, it should be done in a matter-of-fact manner. Don't make a move out of it, please. Just separate her hands, and say, "**No, like this.**"

A brief review: You have moved the ashtray and secured some ash to the tip of your right middle finger. After a few minutes, you say to your friend, "**Hold your hands like this,**" as you hold your hands in a relaxed and limp manner at your waist level. When she mimics your hand and arm positions, you say, "**No, like this,**" as you gently move her hands apart a few inches.

Practice this repeatedly with a friend. The whole process, beginning with, "**Hold your hands like this,**" and ending with, "**No, like this,**" should take just about five seconds.

Amazingly, the trick is over; the rest is acting and presentation. Your spectator, though, doesn't even know that the trick has begun! (Unfair, isn't it?)

Tell the spectator, "**Now, close your hands into two loose fists, like this.**" As you say this, you close both of your hands into two very loose fists with the back of your hands facing the ceiling. Your finger tips are not even touching your palms. The reason is simple: If your spectator closes her hands into two tight fists, her fingers will smear the ashes that are on her left palm — and that's not good.

After she makes two loose fists you, very obviously, dab your right middle finger into the ashes in the ashtray. You'll get a few odd looks in your direction as you do this.

With the ashes on your right middle finger, say, "**Pick right or left hand.**" As you are saying this, you are gesturing to her right and left fists with your left hand. Remember, that her right hand is opposite your left hand, and her left hand is opposite your right hand.

Now, one of two things will happen: either she'll say "Right" or "Left". Here is what you do: If she says, "Right", you say, "**Great! Turn over and open your right hand.**" If she says, "Left", you say, "**Great! Keep your left hand closed and turn over and open your right hand.**" You see, no matter what she says, she must turn over and open her right hand!

When she opens her palm-up right hand touch the center of her right palm with your ash-tipped middle finger. Make sure that you get a nice dark "mark" on the palm. If you need more ash, dab your finger into the ashtray and put some more ashes on her open right palm. You want just enough ash to make a mark on her palm that is dark enough to see. Again, you might get some weird looks — especially from your friend. Grab a napkin and wipe off your hands. If no napkin is available, just rub your hands together, use your pants, or whatever. You just want, without pointing it out, to show your spectator that your fingers are clean. *At this point it is very important that you do not touch the spectator in any way from now until the end of the trick!*

You say, "**Close you hand and turn it over.**" She does. Make a few "magical gestures" over her right hand. (Magical gestures are left up to you.) You say to her, "**Open your right hand and turn it over.**" Yes, her right hand. She does and, you both look at the ashes. Look just slightly annoyed (as if something didn't happen) and say, "**I'm not sure if this worked . . . try it again . . . close your hand and turn it over.**"

Make some more "magical gestures" over her right hand and say, "**Now, open your right hand and turn it over.**" She does. Wait a beat and then say, "**Turn your left hand over and open it up!**" She sees the ashes on her left palm and screams.

Comments:

Any magic that happens in the spectator's hands is a million times more effective than when the magic is in your hands. Magicians go out of their way to find this kind of trick. The thought of, "How is it possible that he got into my closed hand?" will go through their mind all night.

Also, when the spectator tries to backtrack and figure out what has happened, she cannot go farther than the point where you blatantly placed a daub of ash on her open, face-up right hand.

Why? Because that's the point where they think the trick began, but, as you know, it started long before that! This is very important for you to keep in mind as you do this effect.

Some might ask why I have the spectator open her right hand to show the ashes twice. The reason is that I want the spectator to think that the magic hasn't happened yet. (Also, remember, that your spectator does not know what will soon happen.)

When I have her repeat the closing of her hands, the "magical gestures", and opening of her hands, I usually smile at that point and (as if I'm thinking to myself, "Great! *Now* it worked!") then say, "**Turn your left hand over and open it up!**" This makes anyone watching this effect think that the magic just happened right then.

A note from Bryan:

I am telling you, this really is an amazing trick. If you just learn this, practice it a few times, get the timing right... you'll have a *miracle* in your hands!

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