

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT E-BOOK 3:

## Self Hypnosis



By The American institute of Health Care Professionals, Inc

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## The Basics of Hypnosis: How it Works

When you hear the word 'hypnosis', you tend to think of magic and 'woo-woo'. We've all seen stage hypnotists encouraging their participants to believe they're chickens or otherwise make a fool of themselves and we've all seen hypnotists in films who seem to be able to cure any ailment and solve any problem with the power of their minds. Some people believe that hypnotism is a form of brainwashing like this and that it can be used alongside the 'dark arts' for all kinds of villainy. Others don't believe in it at all... so what's the reality?

### The Reality of Hypnotism

To understand what hypnotism really is, it can help to consider another term for it: persuasion. Hypnotism is sometimes referred to as 'the art of persuasion' which is an accurate description as that's really all it is. When you hypnotize someone you are persuading them that something is true – whether that's the idea that they don't want another cigarette or whether it's that they're really a chicken.

The problem is, that when someone tells you something is true, you generally tend to reject it until you're given proof. No one could really persuade you that you were a chicken using conventional means for instance, which is where hypnotism comes in.

And generally you're still not going to convince anyone they're a chicken unless they want to be a chicken or they're already particularly persuadable. In general, hypnotism is best used as a kind of 'nudge' to get someone to think in the correct way and is most effective when they're 'playing ball'.

### How it Works

So how then can you persuade someone to believe something they wouldn't normally? There are a few methods but generally the idea is to get in 'under the radar' by speaking almost directly to that person's unconscious.

The first way to do this is to get that person to feel completely at ease and relaxed so that they drop their guard. This is what you call putting someone in a 'suggestible' state. The right language can then be used to make that person trust in what the hypnotist is saying and to gradually 'lead' them. Careful phrasing is then also weaved into the subsequent 'script' in order to plant subtle ideas in such a way that the person does not 'reject' them. And when they then come around, the patient will likely have adopted those ideas as their own – almost like inception!

## How to Hypnotize Yourself Using Scripts

Self-hypnosis is a form of self-directed hypnotism that can be used for a variety of different ends. Self-hypnosis essentially means using subtle suggestions to alter the way we think about something, which in turn can then be used to help overcome a phobia or an addiction, to change the way we feel about ourselves or for a range of other benefits.

Normally, getting hypnotized would mean going to visit a hypnotist who would talk to you in such a way as to get you into a relaxed and highly 'suggestible' state. From there, they would then be able to talk you through a series of suggestions that would gradually change your beliefs on a particular topic until you eventually came away feeling different and better than you did before.

But how would this work if you were both the patient and the hypnotist? There are a few ways you can practice self-hypnosis but one of the most effective and the most similar to getting hypnotized professionally, is to use scripts.

### What is a Script?

The idea with a script is simple: you're going to be writing down the part that would normally be spoken by your hypnotist and probably then recording it so that you can play it back to yourself. Now you can sit somewhere quiet and relaxed and simply listen to the recording as though it were a professional hypnotist talking to you.

Alternatively you might decide to memorize and repeat the script to yourself like a series of positive affirmations, or you could even read it to yourself. Most though will choose to pre-record the script in a spoken form though and go through it that way.

### How to Write Your Script?

The difficult part is knowing how to write your script and what you want to put in it. Of course this is up to you but you can find a lot of guidance online to help. It should start in most cases with a section designed to help you relax and get into a 'suggestible' state. This might be achieved through the use of visualization, breathing techniques or 'tensing' and relaxing your body.

After this point, you begin with the script designed to have some kind of effect by getting you to take certain beliefs on board. You can achieve this for example with phrases designed to subtly 'weave in' statements as presuppositions within the statement. Saying 'you feel confident' may be met with resistance by your unconscious mind, whereas 'you love the feeling you have of being confident which is happening more and more' is much more gentle and more likely to have an effect.

## Creating Your 'Happy Place'

Visualization is an incredibly powerful tool that you can use during self-hypnosis, meditation or even creative pursuits. Either way, when performed correctly you can use it to 'simulate' an environment or stimulus almost as though you were there and to thereby fool your brain into thinking that whatever you're imagining is real. This can then be used to experiment, to remember things or to calm yourself down.

It's that latter use that we're going to be dealing with here, which can specifically be achieved by visualizing a 'happy place'. This is a place that you can 'go to' in your mind's eye that will make you feel calm and at ease. This can be used on its own for therapeutic ends, or it can be used to get yourself into a calm and suggestible state for self-hypnosis.

### What Should a Happy Place be?

When you inevitably get to the point on a hypnosis script where you're told to 'go to your happy place', it can be jarring and even stressful if you don't know where that is. To start with then: how do you choose where your happy place is?

The first thing to do, is to think what automatically comes to mind when you think 'happy place'. For some people it might be a forest, for others a tropical beach, for others a quiet log cabin. Whatever comes to mind immediately, that can be a good thing to start with – don't try and force it.

If nothing is coming to the fore, then you can also try asking yourself questions. For instance: when was the last time you felt truly happy or truly calm? Or is there a place you go often in real life in order to calm down?

### Bringing Your Happy Place to Life

Once you've got an idea of at least what your happy place is like you can then go about bringing it to life and making it as real as possible. One way to do this is by drawing on real experiences you've had to color the image in your mind – you can even base the happy place on a real place you've frequented.

Another strategy is to try drawing your happy place. This is a good way to decide on the physical dimensions and layout which can help to keep the space more 'real' in your mind. Don't forget to concentrate on your other senses though – populating your happy place with sounds and smells will make all the difference.

## The Most Powerful 'Altered States' for Self-Development

When you hear the term 'altered state', you might be forgiven for presuming the subject is going to be 'mind altering drugs'. Often these terms are used together but in fact they can describe very separate phenomena. Drugs are just one way of achieving one kind of 'altered state' and not a particularly healthy or useful one at that. There are many other altered states then besides those you might achieve with drugs and these should be of much more interest to anyone who would like to improve themselves in any way. Let's take a look at some examples...

### Meditation

Meditation is perhaps best thought of as any exercise in mental discipline. We tend to presume that meditation necessarily means trying to 'empty your mind' but in fact that is just one possible objective. In 'mindfulness' meditation on the other hand, the aim is to keep thinking and to try and take note of the content of your thoughts as they pass through your mind.

Meditation varies greatly depending on your goals and on the kind you are using but across the board it has been shown to improve mental discipline in waking life too, by encouraging calm and by giving you the mental tools to deal with whatever life may throw at you.

### Hypnosis

If you should use self-hypnosis or see a hypnotist, then you will likely first aim to reach an altered state of heightened suggestibility. What this effectively means is that you'll have 'dropped your guard' to the point where you will be more inclined to believe what you hear and to take it on board as an aspect of your personality. This way the hypnotist or the script is able to speak almost directly to your unconscious mind.



## Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreaming is a type of dreaming where you – as the dreamer – are aware that you are in fact dreaming. This then means you'll be able to control the direction of those dreams, not only allowing you to use your dreams as a 'testing ground' but also letting you experience things you couldn't in real life for therapeutic or other ends.

## Hypnagogia

Unfortunately, not everyone is capable of lucidity in their dreams and it takes a lot of practice. Easier is to try and maintain a state of 'hypnagogia' which is the moment just before you fall asleep. This is something that many great thinkers are said to have used historically to generate ideas as you will be in a state of heightened creativity. It's a great type of altered consciousness for self-development and you're probably in it at least twice a day already!

## Self-Hypnosis and Placebos

The ultimate objective of self-hypnosis is to help you retrain your thinking for any number of ends. Whether you want to become more confident, to be more adept at speaking in public, or to give up a habit like smoking – self-hypnosis can potentially make a big difference.

And the potential effects of self-hypnosis can be even more impressive when combined with the power of placebo...

### What is a Placebo?

A placebo is essentially any potent effect that results from the belief that you are doing something different. The most common example of this is the 'sugar pill' – which is simply a pill that is made entirely from sugar with no active ingredients. Patients will take this pill, believing that it is some kind of medicine and as a result, they will often get better or see improvement despite the fact that there's nothing in it.

Likewise, placebos can help people to get over addictions, to overcome phobias to become more confident... sounding familiar?

### How They Work

But how can a pill made of sugar possibly result in someone becoming smarter, fighting an illness or even combating psoriasis?

Well it's all to do with the power of the mind and specifically the impact of neurotransmitters and hormones. Simply, if you believe that you're getting worse, then you produce stress hormones like cortisol and norepinephrine which actually tax your body and result in you getting worse. On the other hand, if you believe you're getting better, then you will produce positive neurotransmitters like serotonin and endorphins which can help to strengthen the immune system and to fight pain. You'll sleep better, you'll be more optimistic and you'll be less likely to focus on all the negative thoughts that get in the way. For something like 'confidence when speaking' a placebo gives you 'permission' to forget your inner critic and to just be your best without second-guessing yourself. Surprise, surprise, this leads to better performance!

This is also related to the 'law of attraction' which states that if you act a certain way then you will eventually become a certain way. For instance, if you believe you are very successful and act as such, then eventually you'll be more successful. Why? Because your belief will make you act more confident, it will make you take more chances... it will even change the way you dress and all that will help you to become successful eventually.

There's only one caveat: you need to really believe in a placebo for it to work, which makes it remarkably difficult to placebo yourself..

Which is where self-hypnosis comes in!

## The Benefits of Self-Hypnosis

Self-hypnosis is the process of giving your own unconscious mind suggestions with the aim of altering your beliefs, your feelings or even your performance. Think of it as a little like inception: the planting of ideas that will ultimately help you to thrive and to get past road blocks that may have been your undoing in the past.

This is what self-hypnosis does on an abstract level, but let's take a look at some of the specific advantages of using this excellent tool.

### Changing Your Beliefs

The power of all hypnosis is in its ability to alter your beliefs on a certain subject. While this might not sound highly transformative on the face of it, it can actually be enough to completely change your life in the right circumstances.

This is owing to the role of placebo and the law of attraction which together conspire to ensure that your beliefs can shape your reality.

'The law of attraction' for instance shows us how believing something causes you to act in a certain way which in turn causes that thing to happen. Think you're unsuccessful? Then you'll slouch and never put yourself forward. Think you're a winner? Then you're going to telling people that with your body language.

And in countless studies, placebos have shown how our belief alone can even profoundly shape our health.

### Knowing Yourself

A hypnotist then can use these facts to help patients to think in healthier and more productive ways to in turn ensure they are psychologically as healthy as they can be and that they hold the unconscious beliefs that lead to success. Ultimately they can 'reprogram' their patients to think in manners similar to the world's most successful people.

But with self hypnosis you have the benefit of getting to do this yourself. That means you can to choose precisely what you need to believe to go further and to then go about making that happen. You live inside your own head and you know precisely how your brain works – and this puts you in the perfect position to make the most profound changes. Plus you'll know better than anyone when it's working!

On top of that there are some other clear benefits to self-hypnosis too – such as the fact that it can be used anywhere. Or the fact that it's completely free and can only take a few minutes. Eventually you will learn to be constantly changing your beliefs and thoughts and this is incredibly powerful.

Teach a man to fish...

## Visualization As a Form of Self-Hypnosis

Self-hypnosis is of course hypnosis but carried out alone to treat yourself as the 'patient' or subject. Rather than sitting in a hypnotist's office and receiving guidance from them in the form of a script and instructions, you will instead simply be taking yourself through the same steps with the same goal of changing the way you think about a particular subject.

The problem with this, is that it can be easier to 'second guess' ourselves when we use self-hypnosis. The objective of any form of hypnosis is to get ourselves to 'believe' the suggestions that we are being given and that can be difficult when we know that we wrote them down earlier that afternoon.

This is why self-hypnosis can often be carried out in the form of visualization instead...

### How to Use Visualization for Self-Hypnosis

As with any form of hypnosis, you first need to get yourself into a suggestible stage. This means relaxing yourself so that you drop your guard and are more likely to believe what you see and hear.

With visualization though the next stage will involve visualizing something vividly in an attempt to almost make it real. Instead of listening to someone tell you that you are highly successful – you will instead attempt to see it in your mind's eye. Here you are actually going to visualize yourself being the person you want to be, getting the reactions you want to get from others and achieving the things you want to achieve.

What makes this so powerful is that our brains can't always tell the difference between fantasy and reality. As long as the visualization is convincing enough, we will respond as though it were really happening on a neurological level. And what does this mean? It means that our brain then believes the narrative of that visualization.

### Other Uses of Visualization and Hypnosis

Very often visualization is used to help us see our own success (specific or general) and to get us to really believe in it. Likewise though, visualization can also be used for other things – for instance it is commonly used to help us feel calmer and to combat stress in the form of an imagined 'happy place'. This is a very powerful tool that you can return to whenever you are struggling with anxiety. Likewise, visualization can also be used therapeutically to change the way you 'see' a memory or a person.

## Visualization Training for Self-Hypnosis

Visualization is a key component in many forms of self-hypnosis. When you use self-hypnosis, it can be harder to use 'suggestions' using a script as you will be talking to yourself rather than letting someone else guide you. Thus we need to find other ways to influence our unconscious minds and using visualization is one of the very best ways to do that.

In fact, if you are good at visualization and you try hard enough, you can actually fool your brain into responding as though what you were imagining were really there. So if you can visualize yourself as successful – while in a highly suggestible state – then your brain will believe it.

But what if you aren't very good at visualizing things? What if your mind's eye can't conjure real-feeling imagery? Here are some tips that can help:

### Start Small

Don't start out trying to visualize entire places but instead imagine smaller items that are situated in the real world with you. If you're sitting at a desk right now, then imagine a mouse standing next to your keyboard waving at you. 'Rendering' something small and simple like this is often much easier.

When you do this, pay attention to the way it moves, the way it casts its shadows and what it looks like from different angles. Practice this often and you can start to build up to bigger things.

### Visualizing Places

For places, important tips are to try drawing on memories (which will populate your visualizations anyway, with or without your say-so) and to focus on sensations other than your sight. Think about how you're feeling, the temperature and the ambient sound and you'll make your environment far more real and lifelike.

## Visualization Streaming

One type of 'training' you can use to improve your abilities in visualization and thus self-hypnosis is 'visualization streaming'. Here you will visualize items or places and while you do you will speak them out loud. Perhaps this would mean saying 'the sky is blue' or 'the grass is blowing slightly in the wind'. All this will help you to cement these aspects of your visualization as 'real'.

### Practice!

Most importantly though, to get better at visualization you need to practice. While you might not be able to convince yourself your visualizations are real just yet, with time they will become more tangible and thus far more effective in helping you to create your reality.



## What is Your Unconscious Mind?

Self-hypnosis is potentially a very powerful tool that you can use to overcome fears, improve physical and mental performance and even help cure addictions.

But without our understanding of the unconscious mind, there would be no such thing as hypnotism, never mind self-hypnosis.

In this article we will look at what precisely the unconscious mind is and how it relates to your sense of wellbeing and your personality at all times.

### What is the Unconscious?

Many of us think of Freud as something of a whack job who accused people of fancying their parents. Be that as it may though, he should also be remembered for the many incredibly contributions he made to the world of psychology. Before Freud there was no psychotherapy or counselling and before Freud there was no concept of an unconscious mind.

In Freud's view, the unconscious mind was everything going on 'under the surface' throughout our waking lives. He often likened this to an iceberg – where only the very tip is visible with all the rest being murky and inaccessible. So you might say one thing and think another... but on some level there is more going on under the surface that even you're unaware of.

It's key to note at this point that Freud only ever described an 'unconscious mind' because that was the part of the mind we weren't conscious of. He never used the term 'subconscious' which is really just a misnomer.

### Complications

Our unconscious is made up of all the things our brain believes to be inconsequential or too upsetting for our conscious mind to handle. Thus we often 'repress' memories and thus can't remember them, we deny things and we fail to notice things – but they are all still there working away under the surface.

And if there are unconscious associations we hold about something or beliefs about something – then these can hold us back and cause us not to perform at our best, or even to become mentally ill.

This then is the role of classic Freudian psychodynamic intervention – to help the individual come to terms and move past these unconscious road blocks. Freud had many tools for doing this, from the 'ink blot test' to the interpretation of dreams (the 'royal road to the unconscious).

## Hypnotism

Another tool of Freud's though was hypnotism, which aims to put patients in a 'suggestible state' where they are able to almost 'switch off' their conscious, critical mind for a bit. This allows the hypnotist, therapist or even the individual themselves to 'talk' to the unconscious mind directly and even to plant suggestions that might alter it.

## What Can Self-Hypnosis be Used For?

Self-hypnosis is the name for hypnotism that is carried out by the patient on themselves. This removes the need for a hypnotist which of course has some drawbacks but also has a number of distinct advantages. For starters, self-hypnosis can be practiced anywhere and at any time and as an added bonus it's also completely free of charge. Better yet though, self-hypnosis allows you to remain completely in control and to use suggestions that you know are going to be effective for your particular psychology.

So it's powerful stuff sure, but what can you use self-hypnosis to achieve? Read on and we'll look at some powerful examples...

### Combating Anxiety

If you have an anxious personality and are constantly dealing with stress and anxiety attacks, then learning to stay calm and to deal better with stress can do a great deal for your quality of life. In the short term, self-hypnosis can be used as a very effective relaxation technique, while in the long term it is very effective for preventing those stressful thoughts from arising in the first place.

### Confidence

Self-hypnosis can be used to improve confidence which can have highly beneficial knock-on effects in nearly every aspect of your life. At the same time though, you can also use hypnosis on yourself to train context-specific confidence. Perhaps for instance you want to be more confident with members of the opposite sex? Or maybe you have trouble speaking in public?

### Addictions

One of the most common reasons people will often go and see professional hypnotists is to help them overcome addictions whether those be smoking addictions, sex addictions or even problems with eating. In just the same way, you can use self-hypnosis to help you overcome your own addictions by reducing cravings and changing the way you feel about your own addictions.

## Adherence

Adherence is your ability to set yourself goals or ambitions and then stick to them. A good example for instance is the ability to stick to a new training regime if you are trying to lose weight or build muscle, or to stick to a new diet. No diet will work if you can't stick to it after all!

Again, self-hypnosis can help with this and might be enough to ensure that you actually stick at the program you've set yourself. Once you increase your own ability to stick at your goals – anything becomes possible!



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