

HYPNOTHERAPY

**Hypnotic Gastric Band, Rapid Weight Loss with
Hypnosis and Overcome Phobias Using Highly Effective
Psychological Techniques**

By Serenity Young

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Introduction

Hypnosis is a subject everyone has an opinion about, but few people have ever directly experienced. Hypnotherapy, on the other hand, is a topic that leaves many people baffled or completely blank. So, what exactly is the difference between hypnosis and hypnotherapy? That's one of the questions this book answers.

An important point to understand is that hypnosis and hypnotherapy are not the same thing. Hypnosis has been around since humans began to speak and involves going into a trance. Hypnotherapy uses the hypnotic trance to help you achieve a goal, or create a positive change in your thinking, to help solve a problem. Whereas hypnosis is centuries old, hypnotherapy, like other talking therapies, is a relatively recent practice.

This book helps you understand how hypnosis works. It also discusses the various problems and symptoms hypnotherapy can effectively treat, and shows you how you can put hypnotherapy to use for you.

CHAPTER 1

Examining Hypnotherapy

Hypnosis is a powerful technique. It can help you change negative beliefs and achieve your goals, treat serious emotional problems, and alleviate a range of medical conditions.

You may hear about a work colleague who was cured of smoking in a single session, or a friend of a friend whose lifelong phobia was permanently removed by a hypnotherapist. A hypnotherapist can also show you how to practice self-hypnosis in order to achieve a seemingly infinite variety of personal goals.

This chapter explains what hypnosis and hypnotherapy are about. It gives you a clear understanding of what is involved, the difference between hypnosis and hypnotherapy, and some of the amazing benefits possible.

Getting to Grips with the Basics of Hypnotherapy

First things first. We want to reassure you right up front that hypnosis is safe.

Being hypnotized is not dissimilar to being sleepy or in a daydream. And, as we explain in the ‘Sliding into trance’ subsection, you’ve been in a trance probably every day of your

life; hypnotherapy is simply a method of putting your trance state to work solving your problems.

When you're in a hypnotic trance, you are completely aware of the words being spoken to you by the hypnotherapist. And, should a fire alarm go off or any other physically threatening situation arise you will immediately take yourself out of trance to respond.

Hypnosis carries an element of risk as do all therapies and activities. But, as long as your hypnotherapist is properly qualified, and operates within a professional code of conduct

Discovering The Differences Between Hypnosis And Hypnotherapy

The first useful thing to distinguish is the difference between hypnosis and hypnotherapy. We really want you to understand that there is a big difference between the act of hypnotizing someone (hypnosis) and the amazing changes that can happen with the help of a qualified hypnotherapist (hypnotherapy). We hope that after you read this section you will never confuse a stage hypnotist (the person you see getting laughs on TV) with a hypnotherapist (the person who helps you stop smoking, lose weight, or recover from a life-long phobia).

Hypnosis is a state of mind connected to deep relaxation, narrowed focus, and increased suggestibility. Hypnosis is an intermediate state between sleep and wakefulness. Hypnosis can

be likened to the state you are in when you act intuitively instead of intellectually. During hypnosis, you basically ask your inner drill sergeant to take a break while your clever, artistic self comes forward. And believe us, everybody has both aspects within them!

Hypnotherapy is hypnosis used for therapeutic purposes. Hypnotherapy applies the technique of hypnosis to encourage your unconscious mind to find solutions to problems.

Hypnosis is a state of consciousness. Hypnotherapy is a therapy. Hypnosis itself is not therapy. The therapy part of a hypnotherapy session occurs after hypnosis has been used to induce your trance. Then the hypnotherapist makes suggestions that help your unconscious mind achieve your goals or remove your problems. Just as there are many avenues to hypnosis, including self-hypnosis and self-induced trances, there are many different hypnotherapy techniques and applications.

Sliding into trance

Trance is a state of mind that involves a selective focus of attention. You are in a natural trance state several times each day, usually when you're relaxing.

Examples of times you may slip into a trance include:

- Being fully involved in reading a book
- Going window shopping at your favorite stores

- Becoming anxious or fearful about an upcoming event
- Playing with an imaginary friend as a child
- Zoning out while exercising
- Fantasizing about an old love interest

Trance states occur naturally and regularly. Hypnosis utilizes these states to access your unconscious mind in order to help you more easily achieve your goal or solve your problem.

The following are the main trance states, and some of the traits a hypnotized person may experience while in each state, listed from light to deep levels:

- **Light trance:** Eyes closed, relaxed face muscles, deepened breathing.
- **Medium trance:** Head and body slump, reduced awareness of surroundings, slower responses, deepening of light trance state.
- **Deep trance:** Deepening of medium trance state, deeper abdominal breathing.

Somnambulism: A very rare trance state in which a hypnotized person may experience sensations as if awake. Commonly known as sleepwalking, this is a very rare condition. This state is counterproductive in hypnosis because the person is in too deep a state to retain the hypnotherapy suggestions in either their conscious or unconscious memory!

At increasingly deeper levels of trance, you become more open to your unconscious mind and more receptive to hypnotic suggestions from the hypnotherapist.

Examining States Of Mind

Conscious and unconscious are terms that describe aspects of your mind. Though impossible to prove as a reality, these concepts are widely accepted in the Western world. The conscious mind thinks quantitatively using words, numbers, and logical and sequential thinking. The unconscious mind, on the other hand, uses images, memories, feelings, intuition, dreams, and abstract, non-sequential thinking.

If you think of your mind as a spectrum, at one end of the spectrum is the super-alert state you're in when you're frightened or excited. At the other end of the spectrum is deep sleep. In the middle of this consciousness spectrum is everyday alert states of mind, in which you're relatively focused on what you are doing. The left of this point, towards the unconscious end, represents an everyday trance state, such as daydreaming.

Interestingly, the word 'hypnosis' comes from Hypnos, the Greek god of sleep. So perhaps the extreme left end of the spectrum would be coma, but we're trying to be uplifting here! In this admittedly superficial model of human consciousness, the unconscious mind resides somewhere between daydreaming and

deep sleep. Conversely, consciousness resides at all points to the right of the midway point.

A brief history of hypnosis

Hypnosis isn't a modern concept; it has been around for a long time. Egyptian hieroglyphics exist depicting the locals experiencing hypnosis as part of religious rituals. Many early practices of hypnosis were linked with a belief in religion, magic, and the occult. These rituals often involved a cure of some illness during what was mistakenly presumed to be sleep. (It was actually a hypnotic trance.) Egyptian priests would hypnotize people to treat illnesses using hypnotic suggestions.

Similarly, in classical Greece, worshippers went to temples to invoke Hypnos, the god of sleep, who brought them healing and prophetic dreams. It is well documented that people would come to sleep in the Temple of Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine, while priests would speak to them while sleeping, offering suggestions for healing.

Actually, it's impossible to say where hypnosis came from. From the time that mankind developed speech there has probably been some sort of practice where one person expressed words that induced a trance state, in order to alter everyday awareness. Many early cultures have evidence of eliciting hypnotic phenomena for both spiritual and healing purposes.

A modern-day equivalent of hypnotic phenomena, such as trance, is seen in religious ‘tent revivals’, where hands are laid on and people are felt to be ‘healed’. However, this is not the type of hypnosis that this book focuses on!

The history of hypnosis is a fascinating subject. If you read about hypnosis over the centuries, different cultures view it differently. It often had a reputation of dubiousness, and/or power, associated with it. The main reason for this reputation is because, until the nineteenth century, the concept of the unconscious was unknown and hypnosis may have seemed like a religious, or possibly supernatural, practice.

No doubt this very simple model will have many scientists in dismay but, if nothing else, it should help you to understand one important thing: that consciousness and unconsciousness are two sides of the same coin. There isn’t an either/or aspect to it, but only shades of grey.

So, although you may think that your conscious mind is in control most of the time, your hypnotherapist accesses your unconscious mind in order to help you to change your negative thinking, or solve your problems.

Why access the unconscious mind? Because, although your conscious mind is excellent at logical, sequential, and analytical thinking, it can also be quite fixed. Your conscious mind may also develop unhelpful defenses in its attempt to protect itself. The unconscious mind is a more flexible friend, and can easily

change old habits and defenses maintained by your conscious mind.

Getting Past That Old-Style Hypnosis

You've probably seen examples of old-fashioned hypnosis in the movies. The scene usually portrays the hypnotist as a slightly overbearing authority figure and the patient as an unquestioning, sheepish character, totally powerless to resist the hypnotist's commands. The way the hypnotist induces trance is totally graceless and very dominating. He (and it was always a 'he') commands: 'YOUR EYES ARE GETTING HEAVY; YOU WILL GO TO SLEEP . . .' Very boorish indeed!

Although a rather extreme caricature, this scenario is not a million miles away from how old-style hypnotherapists used to operate. But as the times changed, so has the way that hypnotherapists work. Today, medics and professionals are no longer revered for their unattainable knowledge. Most people have access to medical information if they want it. Back then, professionals put themselves above the common, nonmedical person. And historically, many though not all hypnotherapists were physicians or psychiatrists. Hypnotherapy training today is no longer exclusively the domain of the medical profession and a wider, rich range of professions are involved in its practice.

Some common attributes of what we call old-style hypnosis involved:

- An authoritarian approach and presentation to the patient.
- The hypnotherapist commanding the patient into trance.
- A very monotone, artless, repetitive approach to trance induction.
- The absence of a therapeutic relationship between therapist and patient.
- A doctor-knows-best approach to treatment. No negotiation.

In essence, the old-style approach was: ‘Do as you’re told.’ Today, people don’t accept this type of behavior from a professional from whom they’re seeking help. People expect to have a dialogue, ask questions, and be treated with respect. So clearly, the old style – essentially an authoritarian style – had to be modified.

Understanding the way hypnotists used to work is helpful in understanding how modern methods of hypnotherapy thinking and practice developed.

Milton Erickson, a US psychiatrist who started practicing hypnotherapy in the early 1900s, helped modernize the field. He developed a variety of new techniques, as well as a more relaxed approach called the permissive hypnosis style, traits of which include:

- Greater respect, gentleness, and support for the patient.

- Use of any aspect of a patient's beliefs and language to induce trance.
- Empowering the patient's unconscious mind to find its own solution.

The use of metaphor. Erickson developed the ability to improvise story- telling relevant to a patient's life, interests, and/or problem to help the patient's unconscious mind search for its own solution.

It is difficult to convey Erickson's widespread influence. No other single hypnotherapist to date has influenced current hypnotherapy practice as much as Erickson. Not only did Erickson write prolifically about his techniques, but also other hypnotherapists have written prolifically about Erickson, and have even analyzed his style of working with patients to create new forms of therapies.

Finding Help with Hypnosis

Hypnotherapy can help you cope with a wide range of issues, including:

- Increasing confidence
- Breaking bad habits such as smoking, nail-biting, bed-wetting, and so on
- Removing phobias
- Managing pain
- Enhancing performance in artistic, academic, and athletic fields

- Controlling weight and improving eating habits
- Correcting eating disorders
- Curtailing excessive alcohol use

This is just a brief overview of some of the most common hypnotherapy treatment areas. If you're curious about a problem not listed here, speaking to a hypnotherapist can certainly clarify whether the issue you're concerned about is one that hypnotherapy can address. The Appendix offers help in finding an organization or hypnotherapist to help you.

Understanding The Therapy Part Of Hypnotherapy

We write enthusiastically about the potentials for change that hypnotherapy can provide. If you have never experienced hypnotherapy, it's probably a bit difficult to understand how these changes happen when you're in trance, with your eyes closed and, in a daydream, -like state. Fair enough!

In order to explain how therapy occurs while you're in trance, remember this: during hypnosis your body is relaxed, but your thoughts become very attentive. You are able to focus at an enhanced level when you are in a hypnotherapy session. And what you are focusing on is the therapist's suggestions. This is where the therapy part begins. If your issue is to avoid sweet, fattening foods, the therapist gives your unconscious mind specific suggestions on how to do this very easily. If you are coming to hypnosis to stop smoking, the hypnotherapist gives you suggestions to remove your associations with smoking, so

that you no longer have any desire to smoke and no longer consider yourself to be a smoker!

Hypnosis plus counselling

Hypnotherapists often employ techniques and skills from a wide variety of counselling methods. These skills begin with listening well, in order to accurately understand what you want from the hypnotherapy. Being empathetic, whilst forming a working relationship with the patient, is a skill hypnotherapist have developed since the old days of authoritarian style hypnosis.

There is a huge range of counselling methods, and hypnotherapists may have different theoretical starting points. So do not expect a hypnotherapist to use a specific counselling method. A qualified hypnotherapist should be at least a good listener, and someone who helps you feel confident about the hypnotherapy work the two of you are involved in.

Hypnosis plus psychotherapy

Psychotherapy does not usually focus on a single problem and is about exploring feelings. Psychotherapy does not start with a concept of how many sessions will be required, and places no limits on the number of sessions needed. Hypnotherapists tend to work in a limited number of sessions usually less than half a dozen unless additional problem issues arise.

However, the techniques of psychotherapy are sometimes used by hypnotherapists who particularly need to go into past personal history issues. Saying that, most hypnotherapists are very here-

and-now orientated and unlike psychotherapists, don't generally spend time talking about your childhood. However, this depends on the problem being brought to the hypnotherapist.

Techniques: The Tools of a Hypnotherapist

Your mind is like a complex network of pipes, with each pipe having its own function and route. Some pipes are interconnected, and some pipes run on their own; some pipes are very small, and some pipes are extremely well hidden. In order for the network to run efficiently, all these pipes need to be kept in good working order; occasionally polished, or repaired, or even replaced. Most of the time, you can take care of your own plumbing, ensuring that it flows freely, by giving it a bit of a clean every now and then. Sometimes though, something happens that is beyond your ability to cope, and you need to call in a plumber to prevent the network from collapsing.

Think of your hypnotherapist as that plumber. The hypnotherapist's job is to ensure that your psychological pipework is flowing well, by cleaning and unblocking the pipes; sometimes replacing pipes that have been worn away, or repairing those that are leaking. It may be necessary for the hypnotherapist to go on a search to find a hidden and elusive pipe that is proving to be irksome. You may find that your hypnotherapist has to look at old plans of the pipework with you; or perhaps help you plan a new way to run those pipes. Whatever the job, your hypnotherapist is there to help you return the network to normal or even improve it in some way or other. In

order to do this properly, just like any plumber, your hypnotherapist uses an impressive array of tools.

All the techniques we talk about in this chapter comprise only some of the tools available in your hypnotherapist's toolbox. Your hypnotherapist may use some of these tools and not use others. More than likely, you'll find your hypnotherapist using a combination throughout the time you are in therapy, in order to help you achieve your outcome.

Choosing a Tool from the Hypnotherapist's Toolbox

When you visit a hypnotherapist, you're visiting someone trained to carry out a specific job a skilled craftswoman as it was. And like every skilled craftswoman, your therapist has a range of tools that allows her to efficiently complete any job. The hypnotherapist has tools to take your case history, tools to take you into a trance state, tools to take you deeper into the trance, and tools to do the therapy itself.

Whatever the job at hand may be, your hypnotherapist selects the appropriate tool for the job. And, as a skilled professional, she must have a full tool- box of techniques from which to choose. After all, you would never employ a plumber who turned up with only a spanner in her toolbox would you?

A plumber has an idea of the job she's about to undertake when she turns up on your doorstep. However, until she actually looks at the pipework, she can't fully assess what tools are required. It's

much the same with hypnotherapy. When you book your first appointment, you inevitably let the therapist know why you're coming for therapy. However, your hypnotherapist probably won't decide which techniques to use with you until she meets you.

In fact, many factors determine which techniques the hypnotherapist decides to use, including

Your specific symptom: Certain techniques have proved to be very effective in dealing with certain symptoms.

Your goals for therapy: Perhaps you want to know why your symptom started in the first place, or perhaps you don't care about that and simply want it to go away. What you want determines whether your therapist uses techniques that help you explore your past, or works in a goal-directed manner, aimed at moving you towards a healthier future.

Your personal history: It may seem strange, but your career, hobbies, likes, and dislikes can give clues as to the right technique to use. For example, if you enjoy gardening, your therapist may use metaphors about gardening to help you dig up your problem and plant the healthy seeds of a solution. However, if you suffer from hay fever, your hypnotherapist will avoid using the allergy as a metaphor, so that you don't end up with streaming eyes, sneezing your way through your session!

Your therapeutic history and personal preferences: Perhaps you've seen a hypnotherapist before who used a technique you found particularly effective. In this case, let your therapist know. She may be able to use it again to help you overcome your current problem. On the other hand, you may have experienced a technique you hated, or you may have concerns about a technique such as regression, and don't want to use that approach. Again, let your therapist know so that she can avoid using this with you. After all, she doesn't want to put you off your therapy!

Your belief system: Perhaps you believe that your current problem stems from something that occurred to you in a past life, in which case your therapist will consider using a past-life regression technique. On the other hand, if you strongly believe you haven't lived before, there's little point in taking you down this route.

Your hypnotherapist's personal preference: All therapists have techniques they favor. The method your hypnotherapist chooses may simply boil down to the fact that she likes a specific technique, is skilled at using it, and knows it works.

Your hypnotherapist's training: As with the majority of psychotherapy disciplines, hypnotherapy offers a variety of training approaches. For example, your therapist may have been trained in the analytical approach, in which uncovering reasons for the development of a symptom is an integral part of resolving it. Or her training may be in the solution-focused approach, in

which therapy is focused on resolving a symptom with little or no reference to the past. Or perhaps she uses an eclectic approach (probably the most popular today) that incorporates a variety of systems.

The techniques your hypnotherapist uses may vary throughout your sessions as you work on different aspects of your problem. Even though changing a washer in a tap is a relatively straightforward job for a plumber, they may use several tools to complete this task. The same goes for hypnotherapy. No matter how hard or simple the job is, you may need to use several tools.

Ultimately, your hypnotherapist wants to choose a technique that's right for you. If you want her to use a particular technique but she's negotiating to use another, she will have a good reason for her preference. Be prepared to discuss the matter with her and at the same time allow her to explain the reasoning behind her decision.

Giving It to You Straight and Not So Straight: Direct and Indirect Suggestions

Perhaps the earliest tool created for the hypnotherapist's toolbox is the use of suggestion. In hypnotherapy terms, a suggestion is a statement given in trance that something will happen. For example, your hypnotherapist may suggest that your hand is beginning to lose all sensation and become completely numb; or she may suggest that you feel completely relaxed as you think about walking across a bridge.

Simply put, a suggestion is the tool that helps you reprogrammed your mind to respond in a healthier way to something. As we write this book, a very pertinent analogy springs to mind: We write what we think is best and submit it to our editors. They may then suggest that such-and-such a paragraph would sound better if it were written in suchand-such a way. We listen to their suggestions, and if we feel that this is sensible and safe, we make the appropriate changes. If we don't agree with what they suggest, we can reject the changes; after all, it's our book, and we're in control. In a similar way, you can view your hypnotherapist as being the editor of your mind. She's there to make suggestions to the way you write paragraphs of your life. You can choose to accept her suggestions, or to reject them if you want; after all, it's your mind and you are always in control.

A post-hypnotic suggestion is a suggestion given in trance, for you to make something happen when you are not in trance.

Someone who has a problem bingeing on chocolate may be given the posthypnotic suggestion that they enjoy a sense of self-control whenever they see chocolate, and choose not to eat it.

Like every other discipline in psychotherapy, hypnotherapy has developed over the years. As it has done so, the techniques it uses have developed too. This becomes very obvious in looking at the use of suggestions. Originally suggestions were given in a very direct manner, sometimes called authoritarian. After Milton Erickson came on the scene a new approach to suggestions was placed in the hypnotherapist's tool- box: that of indirect or

permissive suggestion. Both approaches are still used effectively in therapy, and both form the most basic tools in any hypnotherapist's collection.

Getting direct suggestions

A direct (or authoritarian) suggestion is one that gives an explicit instruction to do something. It leaves no room for error in what it asks you to do for example, 'Stop smoking now' or 'You have no desire to eat sickly sweet chocolate cake' and it really acts as a form of reprogramming.

Generally, your hypnotherapist uses direct suggestions if you are trying to give something up or want to make a specific change to a particular behavior.

Convention has it that direct suggestions tend to be used with people who are used to taking or giving orders (such as soldiers, teachers, and policemen for example), and with people who have very logical minds (scientists, mathematicians, chess players and so on). However, nowadays this convention seems to have fallen by the wayside, as many therapists use direct suggestion with a broad spectrum of people. It's down to your therapist's judgement as to which type of suggestion (direct or indirect) is most suitable for you.

In ye olden days, direct suggestion was virtually the only approach used in hypnotherapy. Today, most therapists now find only using direct suggestions to be restricting because many

other approaches have been developed that complement and enhance their use.

Going the indirect route

An indirect (or permissive) suggestion is one that allows your unconscious mind to explore a variety of possibilities before coming up with a response. For example, ‘I wonder how soon it will be before you stop eating sickly sweet chocolate cake, and start to enjoy eating the right kind of healthy food you know will help you to lose weight?’ An indirect suggestion induces an expectation of change without explicitly stating it. It also allows your unconscious mind to make that change in a way that fully suits you.

So why choose this approach over direct suggestion? The answer is simple. Some people find the direct approach threatening, and some people don’t respond to authority very well, for one reason or another. Also, children are typically more responsive to an indirect approach. Indirect suggestions are seen to be less demanding and seemingly more comfortable to accept.

This indirect approach can be restricting, and many therapists now favor a mix-and-match approach when using suggestions.

Blending both

You’re halfway through your hypnotherapy session and you suddenly realize that your therapist has switched from using direct suggestion to indirect suggestion. Why is this? Well,

possibly she realized that you're not responding very well to the authoritarian approach. However, it's more likely that she's using a two-pronged approach in helping you to resolve your symptom.

By using direct suggestion, she's explicitly stating what you want to hear, helping you to reprogrammed your behavior. At the same time, your unconscious mind is allowed to explore a variety of possibilities and options, stimulated by the use of indirect suggestions.

Even when you're in trance, you are still in control throughout your hypnotherapy session. Your unconscious mind will always protect you. You cannot be programmed to accept any suggestions that go against your own moral or ethical framework.

Safely Splitting Your Mind with Dissociation

Have you ever been in two minds over something; one part of your mind thinking one thing and another thinking of something else? Have you ever had the experience of slipping into autopilot when you're doing something, hardly aware of what you're doing, because your concentration is focused elsewhere? These represent times when your mind appears to split into several parts, each seemingly operating independently from the whole. These are times when your mind experiences dissociation.

Some examples of everyday dissociation:

- Safely ironing whilst being completely engrossed in the television programmed, you're watching.
- Talking to a friend in a noisy and crowded bar and editing out the surrounding din as you focus on your conversation. (Or perhaps editing out your friend as you tune into someone else's more interesting conversation!)
- Driving your car without having to think about how you do it.
- Daydreaming in class as you tune out the boring drone of the teacher.

Dissociation is a natural phenomenon you experience every day of your life. It helps you to function in the world at large and allows you to cope when things start to get tough. And as your problems form part of your daily existence, it's only natural that dissociation can have a role in the development and maintenance of these too.

Minding your associations

Your mind is like a computer. All your thoughts and behaviors form part of the computer program that is your life. Like all computer programs, your mind contains many subroutines that have specific functions with regard to running certain behaviors. You can say that when these subroutines are running, functioning independently of the rest of the program, your mind is dissociated.

When you're ironing, a subroutine (or dissociated part of your mind) allows you to carry out all the functions associated with ironing automatically, so that you don't have to consciously spend much time focusing on the ironing actions. Running the subroutine frees up the rest of your mind (the main body of the computer program as it were) to watch TV, or listen to the radio, or compose your shopping list, or plan a project.

As any computer programmer knows, a program doesn't necessarily run smoothly the first time you run it. This is true of the mind, too. When you encounter a regular situation in your life, a subroutine in your mind allows you to cope with it in whatever way is appropriate. Many of these subroutines are written, as you progress through life, to incorporate what you learn and experience. Some run smoothly, whilst others have little glitches in their programming (and some have major glitches!).

Whenever you encounter a new situation, your mind has to create a new sub-routine on the spot in order to help you cope with it. Your mind may copy elements from older subroutines, or it may have to write the new one entirely from scratch. However, your mind does it, it may or may not get it right straight away, so your life may proceed smoothly, or things may go spectacularly wrong.

Even when it does get it right, the new subroutine can sometimes corrupt older subroutines, or end up completely erasing them.

Take the development of a flying phobia. You have comfortably flown many times before. Your mind holds a subroutine that allows you to relax as you are on the plane. Then, on one flight, you experience dreadful turbulence. Your mind has to come up with a new subroutine to allow you to cope in this situation. Part of this new program, rightly or wrongly, causes you to tense your muscles and become fearful. The next time you fly you may find that this new subroutine has either corrupted the old one, or completely over- written it, and what you now experience is good, old-fashioned fear!

Associating hypnosis and dissociation

As you have probably worked out by now, there is a very close link between hypnosis and dissociation. To put it simply: when you dissociate, you enter into a trance state, and entering a trance state is the basis of hypnosis.

So, the ability to dissociate is very useful for us hypnotherapists, as it provides a means of helping patients into the trance. But it doesn't stop there. Not only can we use it to induce trance, but dissociation can be a very powerful therapeutic tool.

Gaining a more objective point of view

One of the main aspects of dissociation is that it allows you to leave feelings behind. This means that as the mind splits, it can separate you from feelings both good and bad. Okay, so why is this important?

Your feelings color your experiences in life. How you feel at the time can determine how you respond to a specific situation, which, in turn, can affect how your mind handles that situation. The next time you experience the situation – or even think about it – the feelings you had at the time can come back and once again influence how you experience it this time round. The more this happens, the more likely you are to develop an automatic response to that situation, governed by your unconscious mind. Because your response becomes automatic, you may not understand why you respond the way you do, or be able to control yourself.

For example, when you think about, or meet someone you love, your feelings play a role in determining your behavior being soppy and childlike with a big grin spreading across your face, and so on. By the same token, when you meet someone you don't like, your feelings once again shape your behavior – you become tense, use an aggressive tone of voice, show defensive or aggressive posturing, and so on. Using dissociation hypnotherapy allows you to separate the feelings you experience with regard to the event, from the event itself. In this way you are able to examine the event more objectively, and consequently alter your response to it.

The words subjective and objective have a variety of meanings, so it's useful to have an understanding of what they mean when used in hypnotherapy- speak:

- **Subjective:** Your feelings and emotions intervene and affect the way you assess a situation.
- **Objective:** Your feelings are put to one side, and you can assess a situation without involving your personal opinions.

Using dissociation in hypnotherapy can help you gain a more objective view of your problem without your emotions affecting your judgement. This separation is important so that you get a clearer picture of what is going on.

Supposing you're very stressed at work. The amount you have to do keeps piling up and you feel completely swamped. When you try to think about ways of managing your workload, those stressful feelings come flooding in and cloud your judgement. You can't see a way round it all and your stress increases. In hypnotherapy, your therapist can use a technique that dissociates you from those feelings, so that you can view that stressful situation as if it were on television. You can see what's going on, but you have none of those awful stressful feelings you had whenever you thought about the situation before.

You are now viewing the situation objectively. Because the feelings are no longer interfering with your thoughts, you can see how to prioritize your workload or where you can delegate tasks. You realize that by having some leisure time you can actually work more effectively. The result: your stress levels drop!

Stepping away from yourself in stage dissociation

There are several different ways of working with dissociation in hypnosis. Your hypnotherapist may use it as a method of taking you into trance and as a very powerful therapy tool. One of the most common approaches to using it in either of these ways is an approach that is sometimes called stage dissociation. Simply put, stage dissociation is imagining seeing yourself – seeing yourself sitting in the chair you are in, seeing yourself enjoying a wonderful holiday, seeing yourself reading this book and so on.

Dissociation is useful in a variety of hypnotherapy situations:

To take you into trance: Your hypnotherapist may ask that you imagine stepping or floating out of your body, perhaps taking you on a journey to a favorite place. She may even ask you to imagine that you step out of your body and see yourself enjoying that wonderful holiday you are soon going to be taking. In other words, your therapist encourages you to daydream (and you won't get told off for doing so!).

As a therapy tool: Your hypnotherapist may ask you to imagine seeing a scene projected onto a screen. For example, she may ask you to see yourself handling a specific situation in a certain way. Because you're dissociated from the image (you're watching it), you can view it more objectively, with few or no unwanted feelings.

This isn't all there is to dissociation. Far from it! Another very powerful use is in parts therapy.

Adding the Sum of Your Parts: Parts Therapy

How often have you said to yourself “There’s a part of me that...”; or ‘I want to quit (some bad habit), but that rebel inside of me just won’t let me do it’; or even ‘Something just makes me lash out when...’? Whenever you come out with a statement like any of these, you’re simply recognizing that one aspect of your mind is responsible for a particular behavior, or for making you feel a certain way, or for stopping you from doing certain things. As hypnotherapists, when we hear one of our patients coming out with a statement like these, we have a very good pointer as to the therapy technique we can use: parts therapy.

In parts therapy, the therapist isolates the subroutine that controls a particular behavior, or emotional response, and does therapy on it. In effect, separating the part of the mind responsible for the problem. Why? Because it’s the part of your mind that needs corrective action. It’s the part of your mind supplying the reason you’re going for therapy. It’s the part of your mind annoying the heck out of you.

But hang on a moment. You also have a part responsible for your confidence, a part responsible for your ability to focus as you study, a part responsible for your ability to be courageous, and so on. You, or your hypnotherapist, may also want to work with more than one part. For example, you may be going to see your therapist because you have lost confidence when you’re driving.

Your hypnotherapist may want to help you get in touch with the part of your mind responsible for your confidence and help you to make it stronger; or perhaps just to bring that part back into contact with the rest of your mind so that once again you can enjoy (safely!) getting back behind the wheel.

Communicating and negotiating with a part of you

So, how do you and your therapist work with your different parts? In a nutshell, you isolate the offending part and simply talk to it. **The basic process is as follows:**

1. Become aware of the part.

Your hypnotherapist may ask you to become aware of the part, perhaps by asking you to float it out of your body, or maybe by asking you to look at the palm of one of your hands and to imagine it resting there. You may be asked to describe what the part looks like. Don't worry if you imagine it to look like something strange, such as a lump of coal or a cute bunny rabbit. It's your perception that counts!

By imagining the part in this way, you are dissociating it – splitting it off from the rest of your mind. In this way, you can remove any unwanted feelings that accompany it.

2. Find out what the part has been trying to do for you.

In hypnotherapy-speak, this is called eliciting the positive intent, or finding out what function this part has been serving in your life and why it's there.

The simplest way of eliciting the positive intent is to ask that part what it has been up to and why it was doing that, and to then listen to what it has to say.

No, we haven't taken leave of our senses and drifted into the mystical world of the arcane. This is all about helping you to gain insight into what that annoying little part of you is up to. The interesting thing is that once you gain insight, your symptom starts to collapse as you gain a measure of power over it.

3. Thank the part for what it has been doing for you.

'What! Thank it! It's been such a pain for so long why should I do that?' Because it was originally trying to do something of benefit for you.

Whatever benefit there may have been is long gone, but it is important that you keep a positive state of mind for the rest of the procedure.

Ranting at it will hardly achieve that, will it?

4. Negotiate with the part so that it is happy to change.

Your hypnotherapist may then suggest that you explain to the part that what it was doing for you is no longer needed. After this, you can ask it if it's willing to make a change in what it has been doing for you, so that it can do something that is more acceptable for you both. You may find that it says 'yes' straight away, or it may need some resource to help it. If the part needs some help, your hypnotherapist will then ask you to become aware of what resource the part wants (for example, more confidence), and to dissociate the part of your mind responsible for that resource in the same way as in Step 1.

After you do this, you will be asked to give that resource to the first part you dissociated, perhaps by imagining that resource floating into and merging with it.

5. Transform the part to serve a useful role.

The part has finally said ‘yes’ to making the change and it now has the resources to do that. So now what? Your hypnotherapist will ask you to thank the part for agreeing to make the change – as this maintains the positive state of mind. To further enhance this mindset, your hypnotherapist will also ask you to make the image you have of the part more pleasing to you, perhaps by imagining a smiling face on it, by changing its color, by changing the way it feels to you, or through some other means.

The part’s agreeing to change, and your subsequent altering of its image sets in motion an unconscious process that allows the part to take on a new and more functional role; one that allows you to get on with your life without the problem you originally came to see your hypnotherapist about.

6. Bring the part back home.

You’re almost done! The final step is to bring that part back home. It is no good thinking ‘Oh, I can just chuck this unnecessary part away.’ Remember, it is a part of you! It may have been unintentionally naughty, disruptive, or whatever, but it has changed its ways and now holds a positive and functional role in your life. Just as the parent of a naughty child, after sending her to her room, gives her a hug and welcomes her back to the family after she has repented, so it is with your errant parts. Welcome them back and let them rejoin the family of your mind.

To accomplish this, your hypnotherapist may ask you to imagine the new, improved part floating back inside you and once again

becoming a fully functioning part of your own inner world. Or maybe she'll ask you to pull the part in with your hands, as you welcome it back inside your- self. However, you are asked to do it, it is important that you bring the part back home. The next section explains why.

Bringing it all back together again: The importance of reintegration

So, what will happen if you don't bring that part back in or, as we like to say in hypnotherapy circles, reintegrate it? Remember that your mind has been split wide open, and if you don't reintegrate the split part, you're going to feel a little spaced out, to put it bluntly. After a period of time, you would feel normal again. But in the meantime, something just as bad as the part you just got rid of may well take its place. So why risk it? Welcome that changed part back with open arms.

If you do come out of a dissociation technique feeling a little spaced out, let your hypnotherapist know. It may be that another part has dissociated with- out your being aware of it. That part may simply need to be brought back in; a very simple and straightforward process.

Travelling in Time

You may want to play the theme tune to Doctor Who as you read this section! As with the good Doctor (a television time traveler), time can play an important role in vanquishing your adversaries. Unlike the Doctor, your adversaries do not come in the form of Daleks and Cybermen (although the upcoming

section on metaphor may turn that statement on its head). Instead, your foes come in the form of phobias, anxieties, and so on. Oh, and it's worth knowing that hiding behind the sofa won't make them go away either!

Your perception of time plays an important role in both the development and maintenance of your symptoms. How you perceive the past, the future, or even the passing of time, influences the way you handle the problems in your life. And with that in mind, your ever-resourceful hypnotherapist has an array of tools to help you alter your perception of time: taking you back into the past, forward into the future, or helping you to alter your perception of the very passing of time.

Going back in time: Age regression techniques

Let's start by dispelling a myth: You do not have to be regressed for hypnotherapy to be successful! Despite what you may hear or be told, uncovering the past and dealing with it is not an essential part of getting over your symptom. Regression is simply another tool in the hypnotherapist's toolbox that can be very effective, when used at the right time and in the correct manner.

That little rant over and done with, let's get on with talking about what regression is. Very simply, regression is a technique in which your hypnotherapist takes you back in time, in your mind, to an event that actually happened or that happened in your imagination.

Considering the reasons for regression

Why does a hypnotherapist consider using regression? For several reasons, that may include:

You want to find out about the origin of your symptom. You've had your symptom for a long while, but can't remember how, why, or when it started and want to.

Your therapist may suggest you find the origin of your symptom, believing the origin may well have an important bearing on helping you to finally remove the symptom.

Several seemingly small events may have compounded together to give you the symptom you're experiencing. And your therapist may suggest that in order to remove your symptom, you need to work through the individual components.

You want to change the way you perceive an event in your past. You have experienced an event in the past, and as you think about it in the present, you find it disturbing; perhaps feeling disempowered, lacking in confidence, anxious, and so on. Your hypnotherapist may regress you to that time and allow you to change how you remember that event, or how you responded to it.

For example, you may remember being scared as a child by a particularly grumpy dentist who was nasty to you when you cried as you were being given an injection. The sense of powerlessness you felt then contributed greatly to the dental phobia you have in the present. You can be regressed to that time, but this time, as you remember it, you can be empowered to safely tell the dentist exactly what you think of her. Once you're empowered

in the past, that sense of empowerment can be brought back into the present and sort out a major component of your phobia.

You want to remember an event from your past. Perhaps you hid a particularly valuable piece of jewelry in a very safe place, so safe in fact that you can't remember where you put it!

You may have prevented yourself from experiencing some emotion connected to an event in your past, such as bereavement. Unfortunately, that emotion got locked away inside you, fueling your symptom in the present. Your hypnotherapist may use a regression technique to let you re-experience the event and let out that emotion in safety. Because the emotion is no longer locked away, your symptom runs out of fuel and disappears.

You want to access a good feeling from your past. Perhaps until recently you have always been very focused when you are playing tennis. However, recently your game has been very poor for one reason or another. Your hypnotherapist can use a regression technique to take you back to a time when you had those important feelings of focus; allowing you to once again get in touch with them, and to bring them back to the present and back into your game.

Regression allows you to gain insight into what has gone before. And with insight comes a measure of control over your symptom. Once you have control, it's a relatively simple step to progress forward to finally ridding yourself of the symptom.

The time is right and you have agreed to be regressed. So how will your hypnotherapist do this? There are several ways to go about it:

Counting you back through the years. Your hypnotherapist may take a formal approach, counting you back through the years as your mind drifts back through time.

Your hypnotherapist may also use a technique that allows you to scan the years to find those times that contributed to your problem; asking your unconscious mind to lift one of your fingers each time you identify an event. The hypnotherapist may then use one of a variety of approaches to let you visit those times.

Defining the terms

It's useful to define some of the terms associated with this process of going back in time:

Regression: Going back in time but viewing past events with your adult eyes. Through regression, it's as if you're watching your- self as the event unfolds. And yes, it's a form of dissociation.

Revivification: Going back in time and experiencing an event as if it were happening to you now. Your reference to the pre- sent is lost and you act, think, and feel as you did during the event.

Past-life regression: An interesting one this: Going back in time to a life you experienced before you were born into the one you are living now.

If you read the hypnotherapy literature, you see that the terms regression and revivification are often used interchangeably. More often than not authors don't bother with the word 'revivification' and stick to using the word 'regression'. We have often wondered why this is, and apart from it being sheer laziness, have come to the conclusion that it is because 'revivification' is harder to spell than 'regression'!

Letting your unconscious mind decide where to go. Your unconscious mind is given the task of taking you back in time to an event that has relevance to the development of your problem.

Asking you to remember a specific time in your past. This technique is nice and straightforward. If you know when an event happened, and some of what happened at the time, your hypnotherapist may simply ask you to start remembering that time. As you become more involved in that memory, your recall will improve.

Being creative. You, or your hypnotherapist, may have a creative streak and take you back by having you, for example, imagine that you're flicking through the pages of a biography of your life. As you reach the chapter detailing the events that led up to the development of your symptom, you may be asked to step into the pages of the book and reexperience what happened.

And for those with a liking for science fiction, you can always imagine that you're travelling back in time in Doctor Who's time machine, the TARDIS!

You do not have to be regressed if you don't want to. However, your hypnotherapist will always make sure that it is safe for you to go back in time, if you do agree to it.

Going forward in time: Age progression techniques

If you can go back in time in your mind, it stands to reason you can go forward, right? You may be thinking that the past has actually happened, and you have memories of the events in your life, and think that the future is yet to occur, and wonder how you can progress into a future that hasn't happened yet.

Well, the truth is, you go forward in time, all the time. Whenever you start thinking longingly about an upcoming event, you travel forward in time in your mind. Whenever you plan an event or make a date, you travel forward in time. Your hypnotherapist can use this ability as part of the package that helps to resolve your symptoms.

Your mind is goal-directed. This means that you consciously, and unconsciously, set yourself up to achieve things both good and bad!

When you think about an upcoming event, your mind has a habit of playing out various scenes relating to that event, perhaps creating pictures that almost predict how you're going to look or behave. You also create a wide variety of self-statements that describe how you think things are going to be. In effect, you set

goals in your mind that influence the way that you approach an event, subtly altering your feelings and behaviors.

Self-statements are those little things we say to ourselves that confirm our attitude towards some event, person, or situation. They can be positive; for example, 'I can do this' or 'I'm enjoying this'. Or they can be negative; for example, 'I can't do this' or 'I'm fat'.

For example, if you're scared of giving a talk you have to make in the near future, how you view that future talk affects you in the present. You may see yourself as being nervous, stumbling over your words, and panicking.

Because of this vision, you feel anxious in the present, which may influence how you behave – becoming snappy with people around you, for example. Furthermore, you give yourself negative self-statements such as 'I'm going to be dreadful when I give this talk' or 'I'm going to be so nervous when I am up there.' When you finally give the talk, you will more than likely have the same negative experience that you have been visualizing: you will have achieved your negative goal.

However, if you think about the talk in a more optimistic way, you create more positive goals. Perhaps you can see yourself confidently stepping up to the lectern and clearly delivering your speech. You give yourself positive self-statements such as 'I am going to do well when I give this talk' or 'I am going to remain confident when I am up there.' You feel good in the present and when you finally give the talk, this time you give it well, because

you've been focusing on a positive goal that subtly altered your feelings and behaviors in a positive way.

Your hypnotherapist can take this process of looking into the future and use it in a very beneficial way, helping you to create very clear images of what you want to achieve. As she continues with this process, so you break down the negative goals that you have unconsciously set yourself, which have been keeping your symptom in place. By changing your view of the future in this manner, you change the negative feelings and behaviors that you've been experiencing in the present. Both consciously and unconsciously you start to move towards this positive new goal.

So, how does your hypnotherapist send you into the future? Simple! She uses an age regression technique (outlined in the preceding 'Going through the techniques' section), but takes you in the opposite direction. Instead of counting you back in time, she counts you forward; instead of letting your unconscious mind decide where in the past you should go, she lets it decide where in the future you should be, and so on.

Age progression techniques are often referred to as pseudo orientation in time or hallucinated age progression.

Altering time: Time distortion techniques

'We're preparing to deploy the Phase Shift Stimulator in order to distort the time/space continuum!' Er, no. This isn't how this

works (although it would be fun if it were!). What we're referring to when we talk about time distortion is not altering time itself (that does lie firmly in the realms of science fiction), but how human beings perceive the passing of time.

Clock time: This is a constant and is not affected by your own point of view or thoughts because it is determined by an instrument such as a clock (unless you have access to a Phase Shift Stimulator!).

Subjective time: Your personal perception of passing time, influenced by the way you feel. As such it is variable.

So, why would your hypnotherapist want to help you alter your subjective time? Because subjective time influences how you feel about something, and vice versa.

Sometimes you feel that time seems to fly when you're enjoying something but drags when you're not (and we hope time is zooming past for you as you read this book). Enjoyment and boredom are not the only factors that can affect your perception of passing time; many emotions and feelings including anxiety, depression, pain, sadness, stress, elation, and interest and their consequent effects on your perception of passing time, determine how you view situations and events in your life.

If your hypnotherapist decides to use time distortion with you, she will probably do so by reminding you, when you are in trance, of positive times in your past when time seemed to either speed up or slow down. She then associates those experiences to

the event you want to change your perception of, by using direct suggestion.

Take the tennis player who feels she never has enough time to accurately serve the ball, and the flying phobic who feels that a one-hour flight seems to last for ten. In both these examples time plays an important role in manipulating feelings. For the tennis player, her perception of passing time causes her to experience anxiety and stress to such an extent that it interferes with her game. For the flying phobic, the experience of time dragging as she sits on a plane serves to heighten her feelings of fear. In hypnotherapy, the tennis player may be given a suggestion that time slows down when she's serving, just as it did when she was waiting to go on that holiday of a lifetime, and that she now has all the time she needs to toss the ball in the air and accurately serve it to her opponent. By altering her perception of time, her feelings change too, and her serve improves. Alternatively, the flying phobic may be given suggestions that time flies by as she sits on a plane, just as it did when she got those wonderful presents on Christmas Day, when she was a child. She's encouraged to experience every minute of the flight as just a second, so that she reaches her destination before she knows it. Contracting her perception of passing time helps break the fear response, allowing her to feel more comfortable as she journeys towards her destination.

Time distortion techniques manipulate your perception of events past and future, as well as how you experience the passing of time. You only have memories of what has been, or hopes for what is yet to come. By working with these memories

and hopes, you can make positive changes in the way you live your life today.

Scanning a Variety of Other Common Techniques

So far, we've discussed the major tools in your hypnotherapist's toolbox. But that doesn't mean that's all there are. Far from it. Your hypnotherapist has plenty of other tools to use; some more popular than others. We explain the most common in the following sections. Visualizing, imagining, or pretending change. Because change always begins in the mind first, your hypnotherapist may suggest that you 'visualize, imagine, or pretend' that you are enjoying the change you wish to make. If you want to be confident taking an upcoming exam, she may ask you to visualize, imagine, or pretend that you are well rested, thoroughly prepared, and actually eager to get the answers out of your mind and onto the paper! Virtually everyone has the ability to visualize, or to imagine, or to pretend. All are valid modalities of representation to achieve the same goal.

Modality of representation describes how you use your senses to represent things in your mind.

When you think, you don't use just words. Thinking is a creative experience that involves your five basic senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Your mind uses these senses as a means of expanding and enhancing your thinking process. **For example:**

- Sight: As you think you see images in your mind.

- Hearing: As you think you hear sounds in your mind.
- Touch: As you think you experience feelings in your mind.
- Taste: As you think you experience tastes in your mind.
- Smell: As you think you experience smells in your mind.

Most people favor one sense (generally sight, hearing, or touch) as their primary modality of representation, and favor the other senses less their secondary modalities of representation. This doesn't mean that you only ever think in one modality. For example, when asked to imagine a beautiful garden, some people see the garden in their mind very clearly (visual primary modality). However, they may also be able to hear the sounds of the birds and the bees (hearing as a secondary modality). These modalities color your thoughts and help to give them meaning and vitality.

Try thinking about your best friend.

How do you know you're thinking about your best friend?

What comes into your mind that tells you who you're thinking of?

Whatever your answers are, they're proof that you can visualize or imagine! You're representing your best friend in your mind.

In hypnotherapy, this process is used in a variety of ways. It's certainly used in age regression and age progression techniques (see the previous 'Travelling in Time' section) because you need to imagine yourself in your past or future. You may also be asked to visualize and engage in a dialogue with a wise person who has the answers to all the questions you want to ask. You may be

asked to pretend that you're digging up weeds in a beautiful garden; where the digging up of the weeds represents digging up and getting rid of your problem.

Using your mind in this way is a powerful tool because it lets you fully represent whatever it is your hypnotherapist is asking you to do. You will find that this technique holds a very important position in your hypnotherapist's toolbox.

Finding out how to forget

What were we going to say about forgetting? We can't remember! Okay, we know it's a very tired joke! However, your ability to forget can play an important role in therapy. How you remember things in your past can taint the way you experience similar events in the future.

A person who has to have a regular and painful procedure carried out by her doctor has a memory of the pain she experienced during that procedure in the past. This memory influences the way she thinks about future procedures, predicting that they will be as painful, if not more so, than those she's already had. As a consequence, she'll experience the next procedure as a nasty and painful event! However, if she can forget about the previous pain, she won't necessarily set herself up in a negative way, and can experience the procedure with considerably less discomfort.

If your hypnotherapist decides that it would be useful for you to forget some- thing, she will probably do this by using suggestions

that you simply forget it. Because you are motivated to do so, your unconscious mind allows it to happen. It's almost as though you push the erase button on that particular part of the memory. In fact, your hypnotherapist may ask you to visualize yourself doing just that.

You may have an event in your past that you particularly want to forget. Dealing with the emotions that accompany the memory is much healthier than forgetting it in its entirety. In this way you can recall the memory with- out feeling pain or discomfort. Even if you consciously forget the event, your emotions about it are still there in your unconscious, festering away and per- haps leading to a whole new batch of symptoms.

Another area where you may experience forgetting is when you awaken from the trance and can't remember what went on during the session. This can be because:

It is a natural response of having drifted into one of the deeper levels of trance.

Your hypnotherapist has asked that you forget what happened during the trance. It may seem strange that your hypnotherapist wants you to forget events in trance. You may wonder if she's trying to hide something from you. The answer is no. The reason your therapist will suggest that you forget your trance may be because she feels that you're a very analytical person, and that the moment you are out of trance you'll start analyzing everything that went on, and in the process undo all the good that the session has brought you!

Even though you will probably forget whatever it was suggested you forget, the reality is that your memory eventually will return. However, as it returns, you will probably find that your perception of the memory has changed to something much more positive.

You cannot be made to forget anything you don't want to forget. If you are in good rapport with your therapist, you're motivated to forget something because you know that doing so will help you to achieve your required goal from the therapy. The result is that your unconscious mind is much more likely to allow you to forget.

Substituting a memory

If you can forget something, surely you can fill that gap in memory with something else? This is very true. You have a great capacity to alter the way you remember events from the past.

If you were to ask a group of people to recall an event, they had all witnessed, you would get as many different versions of that event as there are people in the group. This is not because they are all inattentive, and can't remember things very well, but because of the way memory works.

When a digital television signal is sent out, only the important parts are transmitted over the airways. When they reach the television set, the set itself fills in the missing pieces, and creates a representation of the original image. Your memory is a bit like

digital television signals. Very few people have 100 per cent accurate recall, which means that most of us store only a variety of fragments of a memory. When you retrieve a memory, you pull up only those fragmented parts stored in your brain. Your brain acts a bit like a television set and fills in the missing pieces so that you can have a reasonably accurate recall.

Your hypnotherapist can use this ability of your brain to create components of a memory as part of the process of resolving your problem. By taking the original memory and forgetting specific parts of it, your therapist has an open canvas upon which to help you create a more acceptable memory through a process of suggestion and visualization. Don't worry, your therapist won't alter your memory to suit herself. She will have discussed the process with you beforehand, and asked you what you would like to remember – this is the picture that she helps you paint onto the canvas.

Exchanging an old memory for an entirely new one is very difficult. This technique works best when an old memory is subtly altered in some way.

A flying phobic, who has developed her phobia because she had one bad experience of turbulence on a flight, may wish to alter the memory of that flight so that she recalls having remained calm, relaxed, and in control as she sat through the experience. This has a knock-on effect into the present, helping her to feel comfortable whenever she flies, because she does not have the negative reference to the original memory to taint her flying experience.

You are likely to retain the original memory after a memory substitution. However, because you have been playing around with it in a positive manner, your perception of that memory will be radically changed.

Memory substitution is carried out only with informed consent from you. You cannot be made to change a memory if you don't want to.

Telling stories

Perhaps the oldest form of learning is through listening to stories. You teach your children important social and moral truths by reading them fairy tales and various stories found in religious texts. As you grow older, you learn further truths through reading stories in newspapers (hmm! Truths?), magazines, books, television, and films.

The psychotherapy community being the resourceful thing it is, recognized that stories offer an indirect learning method and began to use the concept across its various disciplines, including hypnotherapy. As the listener pays attention to a story, its content creates associations with material already stored in her mind; helping to shape and alter self-perceptions and the way she views the world in general, in a positive or negative way, depending on the story. This means that a positive story can be used in therapy to help you resolve your problems.

In psychotherapy, a story representative of something that holds some significance to the listener is called a metaphor.

Your hypnotherapist may use a metaphor during the trance session, or may deliver one when you are not in a state of hypnosis. It may come in the form of a story, or it may come as a reminiscence of the way a previous patient dealt with a symptom similar to yours.

Your therapist may tell several metaphors at the same time, one embedded in another, in order to make several different points about the way you can resolve your symptom.

Another way your therapist may use a metaphor is to create a metaphorical representation of something. For example, for a person beset with the problems of premature ejaculation, a therapist may use a version of the following metaphor:

‘As a child you may remember feeling hungry, enjoying an urge to eat. Perhaps you can remember rushing to sit down at the dinner table and wolfing down your food, paying little attention to anything except the instant gratification of your hunger. But now, as an adult, you can appreciate that hunger in a different way. You can take your time arriving at the table, enjoying looking at the feast that is laid out for you, perhaps complimenting the cook, before you take your first mouthful of food. You can slow down in satisfying your hunger by savoring each and every mouthful you take, pausing every so often to appreciate the flavors and aromas that have been so carefully prepared for you. And slowly, gradually, you prolong your enjoyment, and the enjoyment of others around that table, as you learn to appreciate and control, in an adult way, the satisfaction of your hunger.’

The message contained in this metaphor is to slow down and take your time during sex, as you appreciate your partner more. At the same time there is encouragement to take a more adult approach to making love.

Metaphors can be scattered liberally throughout your hypnotherapy sessions (and they are certainly scattered with gay abandon throughout this book!).

They can inspire you by telling stories of how people overcame adversity. They can help you understand something (as we did at the beginning of this chapter where we likened the mind to a network of pipes). They can empower you by getting you to imagine, for example, that your immune system is a Phase Shift Stimulator blasting cancer cells into oblivion. Metaphors can help you overcome a whole variety of difficulties and concerns. However, they are used, they provide a very gentle and effective form of therapy.

CHAPTER 2

Considering The Limits Of Hypnotherapy

You're considering sorting out a problem by paying a visit to a hypnotherapist. Before you do, we suggest that you mull over a few things about the responsibilities of that hypnotherapist, as

well as some of the realities of hypnotherapy itself. After all, you want to go in for therapy with realistic expectations and a clear understanding of what to expect from your therapist and the process itself. The information in this chapter gives you just that.

Realizing That Hypnotherapy Helps, It Doesn't Cure

Okay, the truth is that hypnotherapy is not magic and hypnotherapists do not have special powers. You're not going to walk in for a hypnotherapy session and walk out an hour or so later with all your cares and woes miraculously cured, hallelujah!

Many myths surround hypnotherapy and many people walk into a session expecting the impossible. When you go for therapy, enter into it with realistic expectations. That means understanding what can be done and what can't be done.

And now a word that is an anathema to hypnotherapists: cure. Cure is a word often misused by patients and by some hypnotherapists. Cure implies that something is going to go away. Possibly for good. Oh, how we wish therapy were that simple. Unfortunately, it isn't, and it never will be.

No hypnotherapist worth her salt will promise a cure to her patients because she cannot guarantee that the problem you work on will go away. It may; or you may learn to live more comfortably with it; or it may go away and return at a later date; or it may be that nothing changes at all. All these possible outcomes apply to any form of therapy or medical procedure. You may be thinking 'What's the point in going for therapy then,

if there's no guarantee of change?' The fact of the matter is that no therapy can guarantee change. However, hypnotherapy does have an excellent track record and the evidence shows it to be very effective at helping people to make changes to their lives and to achieve their goals.

Hypnotherapy helps. That means it is an aid to overcoming something, and as such, relies on the effort you are prepared to put into the therapy process. It can't do it all on its own.

Accepting Hypnotherapy's Limitations

When you go for your hypnotherapy session you need to be realistic about what it can achieve. Although hypnotherapy's effects are wide-ranging, like any other therapy approach it does have its limitations.

Setting yourself up for success

As with anything, many factors determine the outcome of hypnotherapy:

Your symptom: Hypnotherapy can help resolve many different symptoms. However, it cannot help with everything. For example, cigarette addiction can be treated, whereas the treatment of heroin addiction should be left to the medical profession. If in doubt, ask your therapist if hypnotherapy is right for your symptom.

Your symptom itself often determines the length of time you spend in therapy. Smoking cessation can take as little as one session to complete. However, if you are being treated for

something more involved, such as bulimia, you can expect a longer course of treatment because of the deeper issues involved with this condition and its treatment.

Your expectations: Are you expecting too much from hypnotherapy? Do you think it is a magical panacea that will get rid of your symptom at the click of a finger?

The ‘I want to lose two stone by Friday’ mindset is doomed to failure. Your expectations must be realistic from the outset. Hypnotherapy is therapy, not magic! Discuss your expectations with your therapist and be prepared to have the reality of the process pointed out to you.

So, what can you realistically expect from hypnotherapy? You can expect to have a very good chance at relieving your symptom. However, there is also a much smaller chance that hypnotherapy will have little or no effect.

As with any course of treatment, medical or not, you can’t have an absolute guarantee that the treatment will work. Why? Because of the factors we discuss here.

You can also expect to put some effort into your therapy process by carrying out homework assignments that continue the therapy process, even when you are not with your therapist. You can also expect that your therapist will put in as much time and effort as is needed to help you overcome your symptom.

Your fears: Are you at ease with your hypnotherapy session? Do you fear anything about the process you’re going through, such

as whether the effects of your therapy will be longlasting, or just how effective it will be? Perhaps you're worried that you aren't going into trance in the way that you thought you would. Maybe you're concerned that being in trance now will affect you during the meeting you're chairing later in the day.

If these or any other fears spring to mind during your therapy session, discuss them with your therapist before, during – yes, you can talk in trance – or after the trance has concluded, and let her put your mind at ease. Letting such fears fester away without discussing them interferes with your chances of having a good outcome for your therapy. The relationship you have with your therapist: Is it a good one? Do you feel comfortable with her? Is your therapist someone you can work with?

Like any relationship, the better it is, the smoother things run. If you don't feel comfortable with, or dislike, your therapist for any reason, the all-important trust factor will not be there. If you don't trust your therapist then your mind won't trust the therapy process itself. If this is the case, then politely say 'Thanks, but no thanks' to your therapist, and find another in whose company you do feel comfortable. Remember, the therapy sessions are for you, not your therapist.

What's going on in your life at the moment: Life has its ups and downs and these may help or hinder your therapy. If all is hunky-dory and good things are happening in your life, you tend to feel upbeat, positive, and motivated you have what's known as a positive mindset. These good feelings affect the way you view

the course of your therapy, making you more optimistic, positive, and motivated about the whole process and its outcome.

With this positive mindset you could very well find that your unconscious mind is more open to the suggestions your hypnotherapist is giving; speeding up the process of change. On the other hand, if life at the moment is seemingly stressful or dull, then the opposite may be true. The negative mindset that these feelings create may hinder your therapy, giving you a pessimistic outlook towards it and consequently slowing the whole thing down.

No matter what's happening in your life at the moment good or bad your therapy is still likely to work under the guidance of a skilled therapist. In fact, let your therapist know if you are feeling negative; she can include suggestions during the session to help lift your mood – something the majority of therapists do as part of the course.

However, if these negative feelings are persistent and don't relate to the reason you are in therapy, you may want to consider booking a few sessions to help you overcome them.

Highlighting the importance of your motivation

The most important thing you can do to ensure success for your hypnotherapy sessions is to look at your motivation and make sure that it is correct. The motivations that bring people for therapy are many and varied. For some, the motivation is positive, helping them along the path to change.

For others, the motivation is negative, and can actually hinder that process. A couple of examples of the negatives and why they hinder:

Because someone said you should: So, someone in your life is urging you to try hypnotherapy. Take a look at why that person is pushing you toward therapy. Is it because they have a genuine concern for your welfare, such as not wanting you to die from lung cancer because you smoke, or wanting to help you get over the turmoil you experience when public speaking – or is it because they are trying to manipulate you? Do you feel that you need to go for therapy because if you don't, they are going to leave you? Do you feel that they're using emotional blackmail to get you to therapy for their own selfish ends?

If you're going for therapy only because someone else wants you to and you have no real desire to change, then your therapist can sit with you waffling on to her heart's content without making the slightest bit of difference. Even if change does happen, the likelihood is that you will be back to your old ways faster than you can say 'therapist'! Why? Because you never really wanted to change in the first place. And short of elaborate brainwashing techniques, no therapist is going to be able to make you! By the way, if someone urges therapy on you out of genuine concern, perhaps you should take a little time to listen to them. After all, if you act on their concern and go for therapy, it could very well improve your life no end – if not save it!

Because you don't want to make any effort: This applies to the lazy amongst us! If you're trying hypnotherapy because you think

it's the easy option, you aren't going to get very far. Sure, hypnotherapy can certainly speed up and ease the process of change, but this only happens if you put some effort into it too. If you don't put any effort into the process you aren't going to get any- where. Imagine wanting to push a stalled car. You need to put some effort into pushing, in order to get it to move. Simply rest your hands against it and you will be standing there all day getting nowhere fast!

So, in order for therapy to have the greatest chance of succeeding, you need to have the appropriate motivation. Your chances for success are much greater if your motivation:

Genuinely comes from you: You are going for therapy because you want to make the change.

Is realistic: You understand that change may take time and that hypnotherapy is not a magical panacea for all ills, and you're prepared to put some effort into the process.

Letting Go May Be Harder Than You Think

Sometimes giving up your problems isn't easy. Okay, tell us something new! Perhaps you are thinking this is a bit of an understatement. After all, you're probably reading this book because you want to get rid of a problem that's proving difficult to shift. However, some problems can be very easy to get rid of, so why is it that others prove to be difficult blighters?

Facing the fact that you may want to keep your problem

The human mind can be as fickle as the human being to which it belongs. So, even though on one level you are desperate to get rid of your problem, on another level there really might be a good reason for you to keep it. This is known as a secondary gain: your problem has something of benefit to give you.

Oh yes, your problems can be beneficial, even though you may not be aware of what that benefit is! That benefit may be misplaced and dysfunctional and can be achieved by other, healthier means; but the problem is still serving some important function. You may find, for example, that your problem keeps you away from a job that you don't like, or perhaps it's stopping you from having to do tasks you dread, such as shopping, ironing, or picking the kids up from school.

Of course, you may be able to resolve an issue without the need to address the secondary gain. However, you may find that you develop new and equally dysfunctional symptoms in order to provide the same benefit! In this case there would be little point in having therapy in the first place.

Uncovering secondary gains

Sometimes, uncovering the secondary gain is the key to helping a patient resolve their problem. A couple of examples:

A patient who came for treatment for panic attacks arrived, accompanied by her husband, mother, father, and a neighbor.

Now, it is not uncommon for patients with panic symptoms to be accompanied by someone else because it helps them to feel safe on their journey to the hypnotherapist, in case they have an attack. But being accompanied by virtually her entire family was a bit of overkill! However, as skilled therapists (well, at least we like to think we are!) this immediately suggested to us that something else was going on – a secondary gain. What was it that necessitated her bringing all these people with her? During the consultation, we asked what would happen if she no longer had the panic attacks. After a moment pause, she replied that she would no longer be getting any attention from her family. Bingo! Secondary gain uncovered! She went on to explain that she basically did everything for the family, with very little attention being paid towards her. It was nothing malicious, that's just the way the family had developed. However, when she had a panic attack, everyone crowded round her, being kind and gentle.

Another patient presented for pain control. She had a bad back and wanted to be able to control her pain. She had been through every conceivable approach to getting rid of it, but to no avail! During the consultation, she was asked what she would be able to do, that she can't do now, once the pain had gone. After listing several things, she gave a sheepish pause and then stated that she would once again be able to have sex with her husband. Something about the way she stated this implied that this was not something that she was looking forward to – at all! When asked how she felt about once again being able to enjoy that side of her relationship with her husband, she stated that she dreaded it. That, in fact, she no longer found her husband sexually attractive. Ta-dah! Secondary gain uncovered at last!

In both cases, the secondary gains needed to be addressed before the symptom could be dealt with appropriately and they both were, as it happens.

Overcoming your secondary gains

It is your hypnotherapist's job to recognize, and to help you address, any issues with secondary gains. After all, if you were aware of them you would probably have done something about them already! Sometimes the secondary gains are very obvious, and sometimes they're hidden. You need to address secondary gains, because you don't want another symptom springing gleefully into your life, in order to meet the gain.

Of course, not all your problems are beset by these annoying quirks of your psyche. But that doesn't mean they don't exist.

Your therapist may want to work with you in several ways when helping you to overcome a secondary gain:

Discussing: Where the secondary gain is obvious, you can discuss what is happening with your therapist and develop a strategy from there.

Your therapist can develop suggestions to give you in trance to help.

Dissociating: If the secondary gain is not obvious, your therapist may wish to use dissociation techniques that allow you to safely isolate the part of your mind responsible for your problem and to have a conversation with it to help uncover what is going on.

Once the secondary gain is uncovered then something can be done to alleviate it.

Allowing your unconscious mind to sort things out appropriately: Maybe you don't know how to address the secondary gain at a conscious level. However, your unconscious mind knows what's needed, and can collaborate with your skillful hypnotherapist to come up with a new behavior or response that addresses the secondary gain in a much more appropriate way.

Referring you to another agency: Maybe the secondary gain cannot be addressed through hypnotherapy alone. For example, if couples counselling is needed, your therapist may want to refer you to a relationship counsellor in order to get the matter sorted.

Whatever the secondary gain, you can find ways to address the issues that it brings forth. After you address those issues, your symptom will probably be much more amenable to therapy.

Sabotaging your own therapy

As we said before, your mind can be a fickle creature. On the one hand, you're desperate to get rid of a symptom, and on the other, your mind seems to pull out all the stops in an attempt to retain it. It's as though the mind has put up a barrier to change. You can agitate your inner saboteur without realizing it. ***For example:***

Unconscious defiance: Some people have a natural resistance to authority figures. That means offering up some measure of defiance to anyone they perceive as being in a position of

authority. These people may look upon their hypnotherapist as being in such a position (even without knowing it) and unconsciously block or do the opposite to whatever the therapist says or does.

If you fall into this category, be prepared to discuss this part of your personality with your therapist. There are ways around this. But just remember that you are in the therapy session as an equal and that the work you are doing is a team endeavor.

An unconscious need to prove superiority: Some people seem to have the mindset that no matter what their therapist does they always try to go one better, or try to prove her wrong. This is certainly the case with some hypnotherapy patients. The therapist suggests X and they do Y. Not only is this frustrating for the therapist (though once they are aware of it, they can rework their strategy), but it could end up with the patient having to spend much longer in therapy than is strictly necessary.

Forgetting' to tell your therapist some important piece of information: We are all forgetful to some degree. However, some hypnotherapy patients have selective memories, omitting to tell their therapist some piece of vital information that is relevant to their symptom – despite the in-depth questioning they underwent during the taking of the case history. Not being in possession of that snippet of wisdom, their therapist goes ahead with therapy only to find that things aren't working the way they should.

A way round this is to begin to write down, well in advance of your first session, every piece of information you feel may be

relevant to your visit to the hypnotherapist. In this way, if your mind begins to play tricks during your session, the information will hopefully be at hand on that piece of paper – as long as you remember to bring it with you!

Don't worry. If any of these gremlins of sabotage begin to rear their ugly head, your hypnotherapist will be able to plan a strategy to foil their little game!

Resistance is a conscious or unconscious attempt by a patient to avoid going into trance or to avoid accepting the therapeutic suggestions given by the therapist. Despite seeking out hypnotherapy in the first place, you may resist attempts to change. Your hypnotherapist may explore the reason for this resistance because it may be central to resolving your problem.

Examining Your Hypnotherapist's Ethical Responsibilities

Any reputable, professional hypnotherapist holds an ethical responsibility towards every person she treats. But what does this term mean and how does it apply to you? In therapy terms, ethics refers to a code of conduct based on morals – the ability to distinguish between right and wrong – that govern the professional conduct of your therapist.

So, your therapist's ethical responsibility is to ensure that her professional conduct is appropriate when working with you. That means:

- Telling you about their fees and availability in advance.
- Explaining the therapeutic process to you.
- Answering your questions honestly.
- Not prolonging therapy unnecessarily.
- Ensuring that you are as comfortable as possible during the therapy process.
- Showing a professional regard towards other therapists and therapies (for example, not criticizing them!)
- Working within their own level of competence.
- Ensuring the confidentiality of anything that you may tell them.

On top of this, your therapist should show you what is known as unconditional positive regard, which means not being judgmental and accepting you as you are – a complete human being with the normal human problems that affect us all. After all, your therapist is only mortal and is subject to the same pitfalls in life as the rest of us. If you ever have the misfortune of meeting a hypnotherapist who says that they aren't, then walk away quickly, as you have just met a very deluded person. Unfortunately, one or two of them are out there!

Your therapist's professional ethics come from a variety of sources:

Personal ethics: Derived from her own belief systems and moral values.

Workplace ethics: Laid down by the powers that be, at any institution from which your therapist works.

A professional code of conduct: Mandated by any professional society your therapist belongs to. As a condition of membership, your therapist is required to comply with rules governing her conduct in therapy.

If you want to know what you're therapist's code of ethics is, just ask her. As a member of a professional body that governs her professional conduct, she should be able to show you the code of ethical conduct she agreed to abide by. Check the Appendix for an extract taken from the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis Code of Ethics to see what such a code may include.

Make sure that your hypnotherapist is a member of a bona fide professional organization. Such a membership means that she's bound to act in a professional way during therapy. It also means that you can use the society's complaints procedure should you have any concerns about your therapist's conduct – which we certainly hope you won't!

Looking at Your Hypnotherapist's Legal Responsibilities

Okay, now for the legal bits. Your hypnotherapist is bound by whatever laws are applicable to your particular country of residence. State laws (in the US), national laws, and international laws (in the European Union) apply to determining who can practice hypnotherapy, how they can advertise, what they can advertise, and so on.

The extent to which hypnotherapy is regulated depends on the individual laws in each country. For example, in the UK and

certain other European countries, no laws directly govern the training and practice of hypnotherapy. (A disgusting state of affairs, we know. Thankfully, moves are afoot to rectify this!). In the US, some states have very stringent laws, whilst others have virtually none.

On top of all this, every hypnotherapist should have professional indemnity insurance, that covers for malpractice, should a case be brought against them. To check whether your therapist is insured you can, of course, ask her; or better still, make sure that she belongs to a professional body that insists on professional indemnity insurance as a requirement of membership. How do you do that? Find out which professional body your therapist belongs to and phone them up and ask.

Incidentally, if you're worried whether your therapist has had any lawsuits for malpractice brought against her in the past, the professional body will also hold that information.

Practicing Self-Hypnosis

There's something absolutely fascinating about the first time your success- fully hypnotize yourself. You feel that you've done something that you thought previously impossible. Then there's the satisfaction of achieving your goal. I'll never forget the first time that I (Mike) successfully hypnotized myself. I had had writer's block on a project for several weeks, and desperately needed to overcome it because a deadline was imminent. I was

alone in a hotel room and after ten minutes of self-hypnosis, I immediately began writing pages and pages!

Most people who learn self-hypnosis from books start by reading generalized scripts. You may have already read some scripts elsewhere in this book. After reading this chapter, you will know how to customize scripts, and even create your own, so that you can specially address your needs.

So, get ready for a step by step explanation of what you need to do to hypnotize yourself.

Connecting to Your Unconscious

Self-hypnosis is a relatively quick and marvelous way to access your unconscious mind, which is where the actual changes take hold in your life.

Your unconscious is the non-emotional part of your mind, which is simply about the business of preserving and protecting you. The intention of your unconscious mind is always to make your life better in some way. It is literally open to suggestion!

But to get there from here, so to speak, and enter self-hypnosis, you must bypass the critical factor of your analytical conscious mind. This simple process, a skill actually, becomes very easy with practice. The moment the critical factor is pushed aside, voila! You're in direct communication with your unconscious mind.

Setting Your Goal

The first step in self-hypnosis involves forming a clear understanding of your goal. Though you may have many goals, it is best to address them one at a time. So, make a list if you want to, but focus on only one at a time. Give each goal the exclusive time and attention it deserves.

Think about what you want to achieve or change and state your goal in a single sentence. Making your goal concise and to the point lets you repeat it and remember it easily. That means that your unconscious mind can then absorb the goal and begin to help you seek your own ways of achieving the outcome you want. Stating your goal in a single, simple sentence also helps your unconscious form ways of achieving your goal.

Keep your goals positive and use the present tense. Some examples of single sentence goals:

- I am calm and peaceful when I lie down at night, and drift to sleep easily.
- I remember all I've studied when I take an exam, and can recall the information at will.
- I have greater public speaking confidence because I am knowledgeable, and the audience wants to hear what I have to say.
- I honor my health and vitality by selecting foods that are nutritious.

One method helps to clarify goals brilliantly – the magic wand question. It goes like this:

If you had a magic wand and could change one thing about yourself, and one thing about your immediate world, what would be different after you used your wand?

This question immediately forces:

- A concise focus on the problem.
- An awareness of the connection between how your perception affects your reality.
- An ability to focus and visualize the change you want to make.

When I ask clients the magic wand question, I can see a slight physical change that indicates they are entering a light trance state.

Use the magic wand question to formulate your goal for self-hypnosis.

Hypnotizing Yourself

If you understand the concept of trance, which we explain in Chapter 1, you already have a firm grasp on self-hypnosis. And, after you know what trance feels like, you can easily hypnotize yourself.

The basic steps for self-hypnosis are similar to those you undergo in a normal session with a hypnotherapist, except that you are the hypnotherapist! The following sections cover what you go through when you experience self-hypnosis.

A couple of tips that can help you establish your self-hypnosis practice include:

Establish a place to practice: Choose a place where you can be completely comfortable, whether sitting in a chair or lying down. The environment you choose should be free of distractions and potential interruptions. Your skin becomes sensitive when you are in trance, so be sure that the room temperature is just right (better to be a little warm than too cool). Though not necessary, some people prefer soft lighting, soothing music, or even a scented candle. Self-hypnosis is your gift to you. Whenever possible, indulge yourself in total comfort!

Set a time limit: Mentally give yourself the following suggestion: ‘Exactly 10 (or 15) minutes from now, my eyelids open automatically and I feel calm, rested, and refreshed. I am ready to take on the rest of the day, or I am ready to drift off to sleep’ (whichever you prefer). Don’t worry about looking at a clock. Your unconscious mind knows how to measure time and will, with practice, reliably disengage you from hypnosis in the precise time that you allotted.

Inducing your own trance

An induction is the method used to put yourself into trance. In self-hypnosis you induce yourself into trance.

You can choose from a variety of induction techniques, many of which you can easily teach yourself. The next subsections offer some induction methods you can try.

As you read more about hypnosis, you may come across induction scripts that use generic phrases that sound harmless, but in certain cases are to be avoided, such as:

If you're obese or worried about your weight, avoid the word 'heavy'. Don't think to yourself 'I am feeling heavy and tired', just 'I am feeling tired'.

If you are depressed, avoid the word 'down'. Don't say 'I will sink down into trance', but 'I will go into a pleasant trance'.

Progressive relaxation

Using the progressive relaxation induction technique, you focus on gradually relaxing muscles over every part of your body. This relaxation helps you to go into trance.

1. Begin by simply closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths.

Imagine that with each breath you are exhaling bodily tension, which will help you to

2. Start progressively relaxing all your muscles, from head to toe, or toe to head, whichever you prefer.

Give yourself repeated suggestions to relax all your muscle groups.

Keep in mind that it is not an anatomy test. Forgetting to relax a specific body part – your knees, or elbows, or toes, or whatever – isn't crucial. Your unconscious will fill in any parts you forget, if you think of your whole body being relaxed, after taking yourself through this script.

You can use phrases such as ‘Let them relax’ and ‘Let them go limp and slack’. Deliver these quite neutral phrases in a very permissive tone.

The nearby sidebar, ‘Sampling progressive relaxation’, offers a script to follow.

The goal of progressive relaxation is to create an overall feeling of comfort from head to toe.

Eye fixation technique

Possibly the simplest of all self-hypnosis methods is to simply choose a spot ahead of you a picture on a nearby wall, for example and simply stare at it until your eyes tire. When your eyes tire, relax them by closing them and let your whole body also relax. Then allow yourself to slow your breathing down, and go into a nice relaxed trance state.

Deepening your trance

Once you achieve a light trance state, you need to deepen and maintain the trance. Following is a very easy deepener you can use:

The ten-to-one countdown is probably one of the simplest ways of deepening trance for beginners once a light trance has begun. Basically, you count down from ten to one and tell yourself that with each number you’ll become more relaxed, both physically and mentally, and go deeper into trance. The nearby sidebar, ‘Counting down’ has a sample script.

Counting down

This is a sample script for counting down to deepen your trance:
'In a few moments time . . . I will count down from ten to one . . . with each descending number . . . between ten and one . . . I'll become one-tenth more relaxed . . . ten per cent more relaxed . . . with each descending number . . . and each descending number . . . will help me to go . . . one-tenth deeper . . . into a wonderful hypnotic state of relaxation . . . a light trance state . . . this will become deeper and deeper . . . as I count on . . . and if, while I am counting . . . I will begin to experience a very pleasant . . . physical sensation . . . as if floating down . . . into an ever-deepening state . . . of physical and mental relaxation . . . that will become deeper . . . and deeper . . . as I count on . . . Ready . . . 10 . . . 9 . . . deeper, deeper . . . 8 . . . 7 . . . 6 . . . drifting down . . . ever more deeper relaxed . . . 5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . deeper and deeper still . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . and all the way, deep down relaxed . . . ' Alternative deepeners may involve

- Imagining yourself in a relaxing scene.
- Imagining walking down steps, and at the bottom is a comfortable place to rest.
- Making a fist, and as you release the fist, imagining a soothing feeling being released throughout your entire body.

You may now even begin to invent your own deepeners!

Trusting your unconscious mind to carry out your suggestion

When you're in a deepened trance state, you start using the goal statement you devised for your self-hypnosis session. Now you realize why we tell you to state the goal in a single sentence. When in the trance state, you want to minimize words to allow your unconscious the non-verbal part of you to work its magic.

At this stage, just remember your single sentence goal statement. Then simply let go. Let the goal statement pass from your conscious mind, just say it a few times before starting the trance, allowing it to sink into your mind, then trust that you have handed it over to your unconscious mind, and that this wise part of you will now solve the problem.

This is the focal point of self-hypnosis. Don't just think your goal statement – imagine hearing it, seeing it, and experiencing the change actually occurring. Use as many of your senses as possible to incorporate your goal into your trance state. If you can visualize yourself having made the changes, that's even better. The point is to ruminate over your goal and make it as vivid as possible in your imagination. Your unconscious mind will do the work you have given it, if you are clear, focused, and concise on what you want.

Strengthening your ego

Ego strengthening is the icing on the cake after the main therapy. This is where you encourage yourself to feel happier, more confident, and all the other 'feel good' statements. Add these after you've repeated and imagined your goal statement. It can be a very powerful thing to give your unconscious mind positive messages for a change!

Waking yourself from trance

Although you may not feel it necessary, it is a good idea to count yourself awake, and tell yourself that you're no longer in trance. This helps you to dis- connect from the selfhypnosis experience and return to a fully alert state.

Try counting up from one to ten. Counting up essentially reverses the ten-to- one countdown you use to deepen your trance. Your mind responds to it as it is the opposite of how you entered trance.

You can tell yourself:

‘As with each ascending number from one to ten, I will become more awake, and confident that my unconscious mind is already seeking new ways to obtain my goal.’

Using awaking scripts helps to come out of trance and back into your normal conscious state. These scripts also give you confidence of success.

A few minutes after awakening from self-hypnosis, you are still in a highly suggestible state. Use that time to reinforce how relaxed and calm you feel, and how pleased you are that your unconscious mind is helping you reach your goal.

Examining the Pros and Cons of Self-Hypnosis

One main difference between this book and others is that although we acknowledge the power of self-hypnosis, we still advocate that serious problems are best dealt with in conjunction with a professional clinical hypnotherapist. In the following sections, we describe when self-hypnosis is and isn't appropriate.

When self-hypnosis is appropriate

We want to encourage you to enjoy the amazing benefits of self-hypnosis. Even though you may not have access to a professional hypnotherapist, it doesn't mean that hypnotherapy is out of the question. Self-hypnosis can be an extremely beneficial tool when used appropriately.

Some appropriate goals for self-hypnosis are:

- Doing homework assigned by your hypnotherapist.
- Boosting your confidence.
- Encouraging healthier living and eating choices.
- Enhancing your creativity.
- Controlling pain.
- Lifting your performance in sports, school, the arts, and so on.

Of course, you can use self-hypnosis in many other ways, but you may find these suggestions helpful in choosing a goal for your own self-hypnosis.

When self-hypnosis isn't appropriate

It is important to know the limits of self-hypnosis. You should not attempt to hypnotize yourself in certain situations, and it's important to be clear on those occasions.

Following are examples of when not to attempt self-hypnosis:

- If you have a serious mental illness (for example, schizophrenia).
- If you have issues relating to serious trauma (for example, rape, violence, childhood abuse).
- If your problems involve relations between you and other people.
- If you have serious phobias.

In any of these situations, we encourage you to work with a professional hypnotherapist. Why? Because with serious problems, it is very difficult indeed to resolve them alone. A professional hypnotherapist has the expertise to help you to achieve your goals and overcome problems that may have roots outside of your conscious awareness.

Developing Your Own Scripts

Hypnotherapy scripts must be individually tailored to be effective.

One of the most exciting things you can do at this stage is to choose a script and rewrite it so the words and message feel natural to you. We present several sample scripts throughout this

book that help you understand how hypnotic suggestions are phrased to help you achieve your therapeutic goals.

Take any script in this book that interests you and re-write it in the language that you use when you think or speak to a close friend. Using your own language and phrasing makes it more likely that your unconscious will absorb the suggestions and start searching for change.

Follow these general guidelines for script writing:

- Phrase sentences like you breathe – don't be too wordy, and use short phrases.
- Aim for the simplest language possible.
- Avoid using negatives such as 'no', 'never', 'not', and 'won't' – state goals in the positive.

Ongoing Self-Hypnosis

How can you best reach your goals? By being true to yourself and discovering the best way that you absorb new information. Hypnosis is a lot like going to school. The difference is that with hypnosis, you are learning a new behavior.

We are all different, and what works well for one person won't work as well for another. The following subsections offer tips that may be helpful for you to think about when deciding what works best for you.

A great deal of material on self-hypnosis is available, some of it contradictory. The old saying 'be true to yourself' applies here

strongly. It is really important to be true to yourself when trying different self-hypnosis scripts and techniques. Don't try a script that doesn't feel right to you. It just won't be as effective as one that you really believe in.

Making your hypnosis work

- If you want to be really successful, you should:
- Try to be hypnotized by a hypnotherapist before trying self-hypnosis.
- Practice self-hypnosis regularly.
- Set realistic and simple goals.

As with any newly acquired or desired skill, it is very important to persevere with your practice. Praise yourself for practicing regularly, and don't punish yourself if you miss a practise session; just keep persevering!

Establishing a routine

If your hypnotist teaches you self-hypnosis, she will give you direct advice about how often to practice, and tips for how to get the most with your practice.

As a beginner, you first need to prove that you can induce trance. At this beginning stage, you can keep the hypnosis brief – maybe two or three times a day for 10 to 15 minutes at a time.

Just before bed, and after waking up, are excellent times to practice self-hypnosis.

As you get better at hypnosis, you will get quicker and be able to hypnotize yourself in seconds. But be patient, this takes a good deal of practice.

At the risk of sounding obvious, the secret is to practice as much as you can without overdoing things. If you practice too often you don't give your unconscious enough time to process your previous self-hypnosis session. You must trust that even if you don't get instant results, your unconscious self is working on your goal on its own timetable. Regular practice, over a period of time, is more effective than huge gaps of time with no practice and then overdoing it in a single day to compensate.

Improving your effectiveness

The main way to deepen your trance is to read scripts, and to see a variety of approaches to the problem, or goal, that you are trying to work on. The Appendix can point you to books and other resources that offer a broad range of techniques.

A technique called pseudo orientation in time helps you visualize yourself in the near future, having achieved your goal. Using a hypnotic trance to see yourself in the future without the problem greatly increases your chances for success.

To use the pseudo orientation in time technique, you hypnotize yourself to go into the near future, with the change having been made some time ago. Then you simply experience the feelings and changes made after achieving your goal. You then return to

the present with these feelings of change embedded in your unconscious. (This technique is the bedrock of much hypnotherapy, and was one of the most frequent components of the work of Milton Erickson.)

Practicing seeing your problem in the past under hypnosis activates your unconscious to move you towards the solutions and goals you want to achieve. This is one of the most tangible proofs that your hypnosis is working – when you find that you have suddenly solved your problem, without actually mapping out a conscious strategy to do so!

Meeting the Family: Some Cousins of Hypnotherapy

Every family is composed of a wide variety of relatives. Some get along very well, some not so well, and some are in complete disagreement over

one thing or another. Therapy is very similar to such a family, with many branches and many differing points of view. When you come for therapy yourself, you generally expect to see one member of that family. But don't be surprised if you turn up on the doorstep to find that one or more cousins have turned up too.

Your hypnotherapist is a very skilled person who has gone through several years of training and skill building by the time you book your appointment to see him. Much of that training and skill building has obviously been in hypnotherapy; after all, he is a hypnotherapist! However, you may also find that your

therapist is trained in other powerful therapy techniques too, and may wish to use them with you during your therapy consultation.

Always seek out a properly trained therapist. After all, you want to put your- self into qualified hands when sorting out your issues. That means that you want to ensure that your therapist has been properly trained not only in hypnotherapy, but also in any other therapy technique that he uses.

There is more to all these techniques than what is covered in this chapter. This chapter only gives you an idea of what to expect, but fortunately there are many good books available if you want to find out more.

Looking at Reasons to Use Something Other Than Hypnotherapy

Being curious people, many hypnotherapists are drawn towards other therapies, wanting to find out more about them, and possibly seeking out training in their methods. Even though we are hypnotherapists, we acknowledge that there are other powerful therapy techniques that can help our patients to resolve their particular problems. From our point of view, some of these techniques are closely associated with hypnotherapy, although purists within those fields may argue otherwise!

So, does that mean your hypnotherapist is Jack-of-all-trades and master of none? No, absolutely not. Just as a doctor or architect has a range of skills – some relating directly to medicine or

architecture, and others not so closely related – so too does your hypnotherapist. That doesn't mean that if your therapist only practices hypnotherapy, he isn't any good. Far from it; it just means that he has chosen to focus solely on the use of hypnotherapy as his therapeutic tool.

You may be thinking that hypnotherapy may not be as good as it's cracked out to be, if hypnotherapists use other therapies. Rest assured; it doesn't quite go like that. Hypnotherapy is just as good, and can do just about anything that these other techniques can do, too. So, why use them? Well, there can be many reasons, including:

You are not responding to hypnotherapy. For some reason or other, hypnotherapy is not working for you, and your therapist may suggest that you try a different technique.

Your therapist wants to give you something to take away with you.

The ability to bring on a positive feeling at will is very useful, so your therapist may want to include anchoring from Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), or tapping from

Emotional Freedom Technique

(EFT), as part of your therapy (both therapies have their own section later in the chapter). The technique may help to enhance your hypnotherapy. If, for example, you are working through a trauma, your therapist may want to include something like the

great traumabuster technique Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), at some point.

Your therapist's personal preference. Hypnotherapists are only human, and we all have techniques that we favor, or find exciting to use. Your therapist may choose to use a technique just for this reason. Don't worry; he only uses it if he knows that it is of direct benefit to you!

Your personal belief system. You may have Eastern beliefs and your therapist may want to help your therapy along by linking into those beliefs, especially if he is trained in techniques such as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or Thought Field Therapy (TFT), that use concepts derived from the Chinese acupuncture system.

The main core of your therapy is hypnotherapy. The cousins are brought in to supplement or enhance whatever you are doing in order to help you towards a full resolution of your problem.

Asking why your hypnotherapist isn't using hypnotherapy

Your therapist always makes sure that you consent to the use of any technique he may consider using.

If you are at all concerned that he may be using a different method without you realizing it, then simply ask your therapist what is going on. Ask him what technique he is using, and why he is using it. Any reputable therapist should be quite up front about the whole thing, and give you a simple explanation as to what he is doing and why.

Making sure that you understand what your hypnotherapist is doing

Whenever you go for hypnotherapy it is important that you have an understanding of what is happening, as well as of the process being used. The same proviso applies when your hypnotherapist uses a technique other than hypnotherapy.

For a start, it's just common courtesy on behalf of your therapist to keep you informed. But further to this, there may be a good reason why you don't want a technique used. For example, you may have eye problems, and the eye tracking movements of EMDR may cause you discomfort. Or perhaps you don't like being touched, and you would find the tapping of the meridian points on your body during TFT or EFT annoying. Or you may have fallen foul of some annoying door-to-door salesman and find the language patterns of NLP irritating!

Just remember, the basic rule of thumb for any therapy is that you find it acceptable. If you feel pressured into doing it, then it just isn't going to work! Your mind puts up a barrier to it; you feel frustrated or annoyed, and in the end, you're wasting your hardearned money.

On the other hand, when you have an understanding of what is going on and have consented, then your mind is open to the technique and you should find it a marvelous addition to your hypnotherapy.

Gazing at Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Oh boy, is this a powerful and impressive technique! EMDR is very useful in helping people overcome the wide variety of effects that trauma can leave.

Trauma is the psychological effects of having been through or witnessed some terrible event. The effects of trauma can be long lasting, disrupting a person's life for many years, and in many different ways.

In a nutshell, EMDR is a technique that allows you to confront and work through disturbing memories using eye movements. No surprise there, considering the full name of EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.

To understand what this technique involves, take a closer look at what that name means. The eye movement bit comes from you following your therapist's fingers with your eyes. The desensitization and reprocessing happen as you do this. Your therapist asks you to follow his fingers with your eyes, and at the same time, asks you to think of the worst part of the disturbing memory (called the node), for example. He may also tell you to focus on a positive belief you want to have that you don't hold at the moment because of the incident you are thinking about, or on the feelings you have in your body as you think of that incident. By doing so, the process of working through and resolving how you feel about the memory begins, eventually

allowing you to come to terms with whatever it is you are working on.

EMDR is not just about resolving traumas. It can also help you overcome a phobia in a very similar way.

Now, don't be surprised if you find that your therapist doesn't use eye movements. In her researches, Francine Shapiro, the psychologist who developed EMDR, found that rhythmical tapping on the left and right hands works too. She even found that rhythmical sounds in your left and right ears also do the job. It's still EMDR (Finger Clicking in the Ears Desensitization and Reprocessing doesn't seem to have the same ring to it). And if your therapist is a technophile, you may find that he uses a snazzy machine that does the finger movements, or hand tapping, or even makes the sounds for him too (not that we think he is lazy . . .).

Eyeing EMDR's theories

How EMDR works is steeped in many theories, and to help in your understanding of we set out the main ones in the following subsections.

Information processing

This theory springs from the idea that there is a natural system within the brain that can process information about traumatic or upsetting events. When we experience one of these, our brain effectively separates the event from the rest of our mind. Certain memories, feelings, and thoughts are corralled away, helping us to deal effectively with what is happening. Over a period of time

this material is slowly and safely allowed to join the rest of the mind through a process of talking about the event, dreaming about it, thinking about it; allowing us to eventually come to terms with what happened.

You have a nasty row with your partner. You are furious with them. As the days go by, you mull things over in your mind, perhaps bending the ear of a good friend over a drink, dreaming about what happened when you sleep at night. After some time (and perhaps a romantic make-up meal for two), the row doesn't seem to affect you in quite the same way as it used to. In effect, your information processing system has allowed your mind to heal from the upset.

Okay, so what happens when it all goes wrong? What if, for whatever reason, the information processing system doesn't come into play, and the corralled material remains penned in? Well, some serious problems can occur. That trapped material is certainly not happy sitting there and tries to get the rest of the mind to take notice of it. Unfortunately, it won't be too subtle with the way it goes about it. You may find yourself experiencing panic attacks, flash-backs, or a whole variety of other psychological nasties that continue until the material is safely allowed to join the rest of your mind.

The corralled material needs to be let out safely, and EMDR does this by a form of accelerated information processing. In other words, it kick-starts the mind's natural process of assimilating the material, and then allows it to do so very rapidly and safely.

Memory channels

The idea of memory channels is central to EMDR. This theory has it that the mind stores information in a series of related memory channels, a bit like a filing system.

So, a memory channel may contain an image of a particular event from your past. Associated with this memory channel are others that contain related thoughts, feelings, and images. In order to be comfortable with a particular memory, all its associated memory channels need to be flowing freely. When your mind corrals information, it causes the associated memory channels to block, resulting in a back pressure of problems.

EMDR is a bit like a psychological plumber. It comes in and clears out the blockages in the memory networks, allowing the information to again be associated, accelerating the natural information processing system.

Wagging a finger: EMDR in action

Enough of theories! What happens if you agree to have EMDR? Well, to start with, there's a lot of finger wagging! Intrigued? Then read on.

There are several approaches to working with EMDR, and which one is used depends on whether your trauma was recent, or occurred several years ago. Specific methods are used to help you work through a phobia as well. But whichever method is used, it has the same basic components as all the others. These components are holding your trauma or upset in place, and your

therapist helps you to safely work through each of them, using the eye movements:

Node: This is the picture you're asked to bring up in your mind, which represents the worst part of the traumatic incident you are working through. For example, if your trauma is a car accident, your node may be the image of your car crashing into a tree.

Negative belief: This is the image you have about yourself in the pre- sent, as you think of that incident. For example, as you think about that crash, you may believe that you are a useless person.

Positive belief: This is the belief you want to have a positive belief to replace the negative one. For example, I am a worthwhile person.

A scale of your feelings: As you think of the node and the negative belief together, your therapist asks you to rate the level of the feelings that bother you on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no disturbance and 10 is the worst disturbance you can imagine.

A scale of how much you believe in your positive belief: Your therapist asks you to rate how much you believe in your positive belief, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'I don't believe it', and 10 is 'I completely believe it.'

The sensations in your body as you think about the incident: Your therapist asks you to notice if you have any sensations in

your body as you think of the node and the negative belief. For example, you may feel tension in your stomach.

Tuning into Thought Field Therapy (TFT)

Before looking towards the East in order to understand a little about the next cousin, a visit to the good old US of A is first necessary.

Developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s by the California cognitive psychologist Roger Callahan, Thought Field Therapy is a technique primarily used to treat anxiety conditions such as trauma, fears, and phobias.

At the basis of its approach is the intriguing idea, borrowed from Chinese medicine, that we all have energy flowing through us along pathways called meridians. Chinese medicine claims that these meridians, along with various points scattered along them, known as meridian points (around about 365 of them in all!), are very important in the maintenance of both physical and psychological health. Get a blockage or disruption in the flow of energy along one of these pathways, and ill health or psychological disturbance is the result. Dr Callahan theorized that blockages could occur in the energy flow as a result of disturbing thought patterns, such as feeling anxious or being traumatized.

In acupuncture (a branch of Chinese medicine), the practitioner inserts needles into various meridian points and gives them a little twiddle in order to free up the blockage. Not being keen on skewering his patients, Dr Callahan discovered that gently tapping on certain meridian points frees up the flow of energy,

as well as wiping out the unpleasant feeling associated with your trauma, fear, or phobia.

A few definitions can help in understanding TFT:

Thought field: An invisible field created by thought. If you're a bit sceptical about the concept of fields, remember that there are such things as invisible magnetic fields and gravity fields, so why shouldn't there be thought fields?

TFT theorists believe that each thought has its own particular thought field, created by the energy zooming round your body along the meridians. The thought field reproduces the biological and psychological responses that occurred when the event we are thinking about actually happened.

If you have a phobia of spiders, you react with fright when you see a spider. Various things happen to your body, such as your nervous system releasing adrenaline and your mind creating statements such as 'Oh my gosh! That thing is HORRIBLE!' When you subsequently think about that event, a thought field is created that causes your body and mind to respond as if the spider were actually there.

Perturbation: To put it simply, this weird word refers to the power that generates the changes made by a thought field. If you can remove a perturbation, then you can think about something without those nasty feelings occurring. You thereby lessen the impact of the trauma, fear, or phobia.

If you remove the perturbations that cause you to react with fear when you think about spiders, then you are able to think about them calmly. When you see a spider, the perturbations are no longer active, so you react calmly and hey presto, your phobia is gone!

Algorithms: The very precise tapping patterns carried out on a variety of meridian points to eliminate perturbations and free up the flow of energy along the meridians to alleviate your symptom.

What can you expect if your hypnotherapist uses 'TFT' with you? The first thing to point out is that it doesn't hurt! The tapping is gentle, and normally you're the one doing the tapping.

Your therapist asks you to think about whatever it is that is disturbing you; spiders for example. You are then asked to rate your level of anxiety on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no anxiety and 10 is AAARRRGHH! You're then asked to tap on a variety of specific meridian points, as determined by an algorithm, and every so often to rate how you feel on the 0 to 10 scale. The idea is that, as you tap and eliminate the perturbations, you gently slide down the scale until you reach 0; no anxiety!

You may be reading this with some skepticism, but remember you are probably reading this with a Westerners point of view. In the East, these ideas have been around for a very long time, helping to keep the population very healthy indeed. So, suspend

your skepticism and give TFT a try if it's offered. Who knows, it may just work for you!

Feeling Out the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

The younger sibling of TFT (see the preceding section), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), was developed by personal development coach Gary Craig, who was trained in the use of TFT by its founder, Dr Callahan.

Craig took the concepts of TFT and revised them. Instead of tapping on the 365 or so meridian points, Craig's method focuses on the more manageable number of 11. Dispensing with TFT's scale of anxiety, he added the use of the patient voicing positive affirmations, as they tapped away to relieve block-ages in the meridians.

There are several variations to the type of affirmation used in EFT, but an affirmation goes something along the lines of 'Even though I have this phobia of spiders, I deeply and completely accept myself.' Sound a bit happy-clappy, daffy-sappy? Try it out. It never hurts to say something positive to yourself, with or without the tapping!

Talking about Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)

Probably hypnotherapy's closest cousin, NLP was developed during the 1970s by two people: Richard Bandler, who had a background in psychology, and John Grinder, who had a background in linguistics. They studied other therapists' work (see the nearby sidebar, 'Looking to others for NLP's beginning')

to develop their own method. NLP helps you challenge negative thoughts and beliefs about yourself and the world around you whilst helping to create positive attitudes that free you from problems that beset you as you journey through life.

Apart from being used in therapy, NLP is also used in:

Education to help people develop strategies that allow them to learn more efficiently. Business to build rapport and communication skills. You know those annoying door-to-door salespeople? Well they've probably been trained in the communications aspects of NLP.

Law to develop persuasive language patterns, and to understand the verbal and behavioral responses of judge, jury, accused, and so on.

A book we recommend on all things NLP is Neuro-linguistic Programming for Dummies by Romilla Ready and Kate Burton (Wiley).

Looking to others for NLP's beginning

The founders of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, originally set out to understand the patterns of therapy used by three famous therapists who consistently had good results with their patients. Their intention was to study these patterns, and to eventually be able to teach them to other therapists. The three therapists they scrutinized are: Fritz Pearls, the founder of a school of psychotherapy known as Gestalt.

Virginia Satir, a very successful family therapist.

Milton Erickson, a hypnotherapist around whose techniques the school of hypno- therapy, known as Ericksonian hypnosis, was built.

Bandler and Grinder were also influenced by the ideas of Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist who wrote extensively on subjects such as systems theory and psychotherapy.

The two colleagues gave their work the rather laborious title of Neuro-linguistic Programming, which was not surprisingly shortened to NLP. Apart from looking impressive (and perhaps a little scary), this rather cumbersome title does have a meaning:

Neuro: Refers to the mind, but particularly to the use of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, to explore the world.

Linguistic: Refers to the use of language to communicate externally with the world, and internally to sort out thoughts and behaviors.

Programming: The communications that humans use internally create programmed that in turn organize thoughts, ideas, and behaviors, into something that produces outcomes and results.

Phew! To put it even more simply, NLP is a way of making changes to your experience of life by examining and altering your own self communication, as well as the communications you have with others.

Looking at NLP in practice

Of the plethora of techniques that NLP has to offer, your hypnotherapist may use any, or all, of those we outline in the following subsections.

Making meta modelling clear

Meta modelling, to put it simply, uses language to clarify language. In other words, this technique helps you to be more precise when talking to your hypnotherapist.

Normal communication tends to cut down on long-winded explanations. You use words and phrases that have a general meaning and convey a sense of what you are experiencing.

This is fine for day-to-day interactions, but when it comes to therapy, such generalities just won't do. Your therapist needs to have as complete an understanding of what you are experiencing as possible, in order to design an approach to your therapy personalized for you. Saying something like 'I feel bad' may mean a lot to you, but it doesn't convey very much to your therapist. Your view of 'bad' may be very different from your therapists. He wants to know precisely what you mean by 'bad', and will ask you to define your experience of 'bad', so that he doesn't have to make his own interpretation.

Tying down anchoring

Anchoring is a very useful technique that, amongst other things, helps you to get in contact with positive feelings almost instantly, whenever you want them.

Your therapist helps you to associate (or anchor) the positive feelings you're seeking to a specific action, such as squeezing your thumb and index finger together – something that you can do easily and unobtrusively, whenever you want to call up that changed feeling.

The association is made by your therapist asking you to fully remember the feelings you had at a time when, for example, you felt really positive and happy. When you are experiencing these feelings at their peak, your therapist asks you to squeeze your thumb and index finger together. By repeating this procedure several times, you begin to develop a conditioned response (or set an anchor as they call it in NLP speak), which allows you to achieve this specific feeling each and every time you squeeze those fingers together.

After the anchor is set, the next time you are feeling negative about some situation, you give a little squeeze and enjoy that wonderful glow of positive feelings spreading through your mind and body.

Watching for eye accessing cues

This interesting technique helps your therapist to understand how you are thinking at any one moment in time. No, we don't mean that he is reading your mind; rather than through observing you, he understands how you represent things in your mind. By watching you, your therapist can determine whether you are remembering something and seeing it as a picture in your mind,

or are constructing sounds in your mind, or remembering feelings. How does he do this? As we said, by observation, specifically by watching the position of your eyes as you think.

It is thought that the position of the eyes at any one moment is an indication of how you're thinking about, or processing, information. Robert Dilts (a well-known figure in NLP circles) conducted research that showed that there are recognizable eye movement patterns associated with the way people process information. Table 15-1 lists eye movements and their associations.

So, if you catch your therapist looking with interest into your eyes, he is doing nothing more than observing your eye accessing cues!

Going for the fast phobia cure

A famous one, this one, and one that often comes up when people talk about NLP. The fast phobia cure is a dissociation technique that helps you rapidly eliminate your phobia.

The fast phobia cure works by having you take your mental representation of the phobia and to play around with it as you run the events backwards and forwards in your mind. By doing so, you disrupt the way your mind holds on to your phobia, and the fear evaporates away. ***The technique follows these steps:***

1. Your therapist asks you to imagine that you are sitting in the projection booth of a cinema, looking down into the

auditorium, watching yourself sitting in a seat looking at the cinema screen.

(We said it was dissociation!).

2. You're told that on the cinema screen is a projected image of yourself, just before you experience whatever you're phobic about.
3. Your therapist asks you to run the film forward, perhaps in black and white, as you watch yourself in that phobic situation.
4. At the end of the situation, your hypnotherapist asks you to freeze the film and jump into it.

(Remember, it's dissociation.)

5. You're then told to run the film backwards, very rapidly, in color.
6. You repeat this process a few times.

By the end of the process, you are, hopefully, free of your phobia.

Cuing up the swish technique

This powerful little technique is very useful if you want to eliminate bad habits, or unwanted behaviors. ***Your therapist uses the following steps:***

1. You're asked to create a picture in your mind of whatever it is that triggers the habit or behavior.

This is known as the cue picture.

2. You're asked to create a picture in your mind of what you would like to have instead of the habit or behavior.

Known as the outcome picture, it may be healthy nails for nail-biters, or clean lungs for smokers, for example.

3. You're asked to make the outcome picture very small, and to place it into the corner of the cue picture.
4. You're told that when your therapist says 'Swish', you are to, very quickly, expand the outcome picture so that it covers the cue picture.

You repeat this step several times.

By the end, having smashed through the cue picture with the outcome picture, you find that your habit or behavior has significantly changed for the better.

Ten Common Misconceptions about

Our experience as hypnotherapists and trainers tells us that people often have similar types of misconceptions about hypnosis. Some may sense

that their beliefs about hypnosis are inaccurate, but a small part of them still believes in the misconceptions. Typically, we hear something like, 'I know it sounds ridiculous but .

.. (fill in your misconception here)'.

These inaccurate beliefs may prevent people who could actually benefit from hypnotherapy from seeking help. Perhaps some of these misunderstandings play a part in holding you back from seeking hypnotherapy.

Understanding misconceptions about hypnosis can alleviate your fears about being hypnotized, so in this chapter we list the misconceptions that we have come across most frequently, in no particular order.

Hypnosis Is Magical and Mystical

Throughout history, hypnosis has often been connected with the occult. The concept of hypnosis having an occult connection has often been the image perpetuated by some of the earliest known practitioners, the Egyptian priest-hood, who entranced religious followers.

Magic and hypnotism were often linked by people who wanted to invoke a fearful sense of power and control over others. Hollywood movies and low-brow fiction also contributed to the idea of the hypnotic bogeyman. Often the underlying implication is that the public should be afraid – be very afraid – of anyone who wielded the evil ‘hypnotic eye’.

Consequently, even today people erroneously believe that hypnotherapists have a power that allows them to manipulate others, but this is simply not true!

The reality is that trance is a natural state of mind. Hypnosis is any technique that brings about trance. In actual practice, all hypnosis is self-hypnosis you can’t be hypnotized unless you are willing. Hypnotherapy is simply a way of using trance to help with problems. Nothing mystical involved at all.

Of course, the results of good clinical hypnotherapy may seem like magic once you are rapidly relieved of your problem, or achieve your goal with ease!

You're Under the Power of the Hypnotherapist

This misconception is related to the one that says hypnosis is magical and mystical. The idea is probably influenced by stage hypnotists who appear to have power over those they hypnotize. Just keep in mind that people in stage hypnosis acts are willing participants.

Hypnosis is really just self-hypnosis and the participants in a stage hypnosis show choose to join in – even if they appear not to.

It is simply not true that a hypnotist has any control over you. No hypnotherapist can make you do anything that you don't want to do, or anything that is not in character.

Hypnosis Is Dangerous

Hypnosis in itself is not dangerous. You are particularly safe when working with qualified hypnotherapists. You are always in control and can come out of trance whenever you want.

One caveat we offer is to avoid personal involvement with unqualified hypnotherapists and stage hypnotists. Unscrupulous people, who have had only minimal instruction in trance induction, often set themselves up as hypnotists without understanding the complexities of psychological problems. This is not the type of practitioner you want to seek help from. A qualified hypnotherapist will ensure that you are taken care of emotionally and will treat you with care, dignity, and respect.

Hypnosis Makes You Cluck like a Chicken and Lose Control

Now is the time to draw distinctions between stage hypnosis and clinical hypnotherapy. Stage hypnosis is about entertainment and laughs. Clinical hypnotherapy is about helping you with problems, or achieving goals. A stage hypnotist simply uses hypnosis for a laugh. A clinical hypnotherapist is serious about working with your stated goals.

Keep in mind that the stage hypnotist carefully selects who comes up on stage. Usually compliant extrovert types are ideal for a stage hypnotist. The people chosen are willing to do any silly things suggested to them.

Stage hypnotists may vary in their qualifications and hypnosis experience. Some may even be qualified hypnotherapists, but a stage hypnotist will never treat you with the individual respect and attention you get within the context of one-on-one clinical hypnotherapy.

You Have to Keep Your Eyes Closed and Stay Completely Still

Anyone can move while in a hypnotized state. You may need to scratch an itch, and that's perfectly all right. It doesn't break the trance state.

Although a lot of trance induction involves closing your eyes and being in a relaxed state,

Athletes are often in trance while competing in sports. An athlete seeking hypnotherapy in order to enhance her sporting performance, will not be asked to close her eyes or to relax. A hypnotist works with such an athlete by bringing about an alert trance. This type of trance is more about recalling past peak performances while the eyes are open and movement is occurring. Relaxation and improved sporting performance are not compatible! Can you imagine running a race or playing any competitive sport in a superrelaxed state? You need the 'edge' to perform well.

Similarly, children who come for hypnosis can go into trance even when their eyes are wide open and they're moving around.

Also, clients for whom eye closure or relaxation is a threatening occurrence, such as those who suffer panic attacks or have issues of severe trauma, may not be given suggestions to relax or close their eyes because this may invoke the very state of fear that they are seeking treatment for.

Hypnosis Is Therapy

Hypnosis is not therapy; it is a therapeutic technique. Hypnosis can be used as a tool, or a complement, to various types of therapy and counselling.

Hypnotherapy is the therapeutic aspect of hypnosis. Hypnotherapy can be combined to work very powerfully with a range of counselling approaches – even forms that are contradictory in their approach such as behavioral therapies,

which don't recognize the concept of the unconscious, and psychodynamic approaches, which do.

You May Not Wake Up from Trance

What wakes you up in the morning? If you said 'My alarm clock', you're missing the point. You always wake up from each night's sleep – even when your alarm clock doesn't ring. Similarly, you always awaken from trance.

Remember, trance is not like being in a coma and is not sleep. Trance is a natural state that you enter several times a day while you daydream, exercise, or focus intently on a problem at work. You return to a 'normal' state of non-trance after each trance state. So, if you think about it, you have a daily practice of awakening from trance states – several times a day!

We admit that it's a bit of a contradiction to use the word awaken for a state that is not sleep. However, this is common terminology that hypnotherapists also use, even though all are aware that hypnosis isn't the same state as sleep. It's just one of the widespread paradoxes that has become commonplace!

Likewise, you can come out of a hypnotic trance state at any time that you wish. A qualified hypnotherapist will look after you and carefully bring you out of trance.

You Go to Sleep during a Hypnosis Session

Don't worry, your hypnotherapist won't let you fall asleep. You remain quite aware of your surroundings, even in trance, and may even hear sounds both inside and outside the room you're

in – a fact that can help you feel safe and allow yourself to enter trance.

You may be surprised that you clearly recall what was said to you during the session.

Some People Can't Be Hypnotized – Even if They Want to Be

Most people can be hypnotized – except those who really don't want to be. Sometimes fear and misconceptions about hypnosis can create an unconscious resistance. This is why a qualified hypnotherapist will take a lot of time, the first time you meet, to answer your questions and earn your trust before any hypnosis takes place.

You Don't Need a Hypnotist – You Can Hypnotize Yourself

The main thing we emphasize in this book is the need to work with a hypnotherapist before trying self-hypnosis. Even then we would not whole heartedly recommend – as other books do – that you practice hypnotherapy on yourself.

It is practically impossible to work on your own unconscious problems unaided. Even experienced hypnotherapists seek help from others to work on their deeper psychological issues.

However, once you experience hypnosis with a hypnotherapist, you are in a stronger position to decide when, and when not, to apply self-hypnosis.

CHAPTER 3

Ten Pioneers Of Hypnosis

It is difficult to say exactly who started hypnosis. Most researchers and historians agree that all cultures have induced trance in some form since humans began communicating.

Especially popular is the idea that hypnosis has always had a connection with religion, as it was possible through hypnosis to create a sensation of religious ecstasy through suggestion. In these cases, the aim was not about giving up smoking or losing weight, but rather to be filled with spiritual bliss!

Hypnosis techniques can be observed in many modern day religious and political practices with particularly enthusiastic or charismatic speakers. After reading this book, you will be an astute observer of trance induction, and capable of spotting when and how a speaker induces a trance within an audience.

This style was employed by early practitioners, especially Franz Mesmer, who was very ‘showbiz’ in his style.

This chapter concentrates on ten prominent individuals who influenced hypnotherapy as we apply it today in clinical/therapeutic applications. Many of the early contributions involved legitimizing hypnosis – removing its occult or entertainment associations – and making it more acceptable to a scientific community. So, it’s no surprise that most of the people in this list are doctors or psychologists.

Franz Mesmer (1734–1815)

Frederick (Franz) Anton Mesmer was an Austrian physician who, in 1766, wrote ‘The Influence of the Stars and Planets on the Human Body’. This essay developed the concept of animal magnetism – a belief that the planets, stars, and the moon affect not only the tides of the earth’s waters but the predominantly liquid substance in humans, and in all plants and animals, through an invisible, magnetic energy.

The terms mesmerism and mesmerize, which refer to the act or condition of being enchanted or fascinated, come into the language through Franz Mesmer.

Mesmer believed that placing magnets directly on a person provided his many medical successes. His technique also involved stroking the patient’s entire body until the ‘animal magnetism’ was transferred from the ‘operator’ to the ‘subject’, sometimes using a wand to release the energy. Mesmer actually

hypnotized people through direct suggestions to heal themselves.

People would easily go into trance given Mesmer's over-the-top, flamboyant style – a bit like fainting to escape an overwhelming experience.

Due to his crowd-pleasing act and his success in healing, Mesmer became very popular with patients. Needless to say, this bizarre new type of healing was not as popular with the medical professionals of the day, and in 1778 he was struck off the medical register and run out of Vienna. However, he moved to Paris, where he became even more famous and even received the patronage of Marie Antoinette.

James Braid (1796–1860)

James Braid initiated the legitimization of hypnosis with the British and European medical professions. Braid was a surgeon who, like most of his medical colleagues, was initially a sceptic of mesmerism. He accidentally discovered that, by getting patients to fix their view on a single point, he could induce a hypnotic trance. He later achieved trance by asking his patients to stare at his shiny scalpel case. He would move the shiny case in all directions before the patient's eyes, while insisting the client keep his head still and follow the case with his eyes only. This method of inducing hypnosis through fixed focal concentration is still in use today.

As Braid began to understand his accidental discovery of hypnotic trance induction, he came to the conclusion that

mesmerism was not a valid concept. He published attacks on Mesmer's ideas about animal magnetism energies having curative powers. Braid wanted to give his understanding of this healing process a more scientific basis.

In 1842, Braid invented the word hypnotism in a paper he wrote to discredit mesmerism and animal magnetism (see the earlier section on Franz Mesmer). However, his paper, titled 'Practical Essay on the Curative Agency of Neuro- Hypnotism', was rejected by the British Medical Association. He nevertheless persisted to present his ideas in the form of a series of lectures and public demonstrations.

In 1843, Braid published *Neurypnology, or the Rationale of Nervous Sleep*. In this book he proposed that the phenomenon be called neurohypnotism rather than mesmerizing. He also mistakenly referred to hypnosis as a 'condition of nervous sleep'. This is actually inaccurate as hypnosis is not the same condition as sleep, producing different types of brain waves. However, Braid's most important contribution was that he moved the world away from practice of animal magnetism and towards hypnosis.

Hippolyte Bernheim (1837–1919)

Bernheim, a French physician, incorrectly viewed hypnosis as a special form of sleeping, in which the patient focused on the suggestions made by the hypnotist. His important contribution is that he emphasized the psychological nature of hypnosis, thereby moving it away from its occult and magic associations

and more towards a psychological and medical model – a crucial step in the legitimization of hypnosis.

James Esdaile (1808–59)

Esdaile, a Scottish physician with the East India Company, was the first to document the use of hypnosis as a surgical anaesthetic in 1845. As the head of the Native Hospital in Hooghly, Bengal, he performed hundreds of surgical operations using hypnosis as the sole anaesthetic. Many of the surgical procedures were quite serious, including amputations and the removal of large tumors. His method of induction would last anywhere from two to eight hours. Sadly, this property of hypnosis fell into disuse and was forgotten with the invention of modern anaesthetic drugs.

Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–93)

Charcot, a brilliant French physician and neurologist, was named as the Superintendent of Salpêtrière Hospital in 1862, then the largest hospice in Europe with a population of over 5,000 ‘incurables’. He raised the profile of hypnosis within the medical profession by his extensive clinical work in neurology at the hospital. He hypnotized his patients in order to deliberately develop hysteria within them and thus document the treatability and psychological nature of the illness. However, he also got it badly wrong. He thought hypnosis was a symptom of a mental illness, which he termed hysteria. Freud hung out at his psychiatric hospital for a while and learned a limited form of hypnosis from observing Charcot’s work.

Pierre Janet (1859–1947)

French philosopher, physician, and psychologist Pierre Janet was personally selected by

Charcot (see the preceding section) to serve as Director of the Laboratory of Pathological Psychology at the hospital at Salpêtrière. He later served as Professor of Experimental and Comparative Psychology at the College of France.

Janet made important discoveries and contributions in the study of hysterical neuroses with the use of hypnosis. He viewed hypnosis as a helpful investigative and therapeutic tool in helping his patients with dissociative conditions. He thought hypnosis itself was a form of dissociation. He found that patients who could retrieve troublesome memories of their past were often freed of the negative effects associated with the actual event.

Unlike Freud, who gave up on hypnosis after only a few years, Janet believed in it strongly and promoted its benefits during his entire career. He was one of the first to point out the enormous role of suggested beliefs in hysteria. His work led to the theory of neurosis and psychosis by the subconscious persistence of emotional trauma. Janet is also the founder of the analytic tradition in psychology that greatly influenced Freud's psychoanalytic ideas.

Janet also contributed significantly to the work of Sigmund Freud. Janet and Freud developed Freud's post-hypnosis ideas. In particular, after Freud abandoned hypnosis, he developed – with Janet's help – his Big Idea, which became known as 'free association'. This technique involved invoking a dream-like state

in hysterical patients to allow them to speak directly from their unconscious about whatever came to their minds – especially in relation to their psychological problems. Although this technique is usually attributed to Freud, Janet’s influence was considerable.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)

Sigmund Freud is best known for developing psychoanalysis. He placed the concept of dual consciousness – the idea that each person has conscious and unconscious minds – into modern Western thought and thereby made an important contribution to the field of hypnosis.

Before Freud developed his theory of psychoanalysis, he visited a clinic in Nancy, France, to watch experimental treatments using hypnosis being conducted on psychiatric patients who had been diagnosed as hysterical – mostly women. (Interestingly, the term ‘hysteria’ is no longer used by psychiatrists.)

Freud was greatly impressed by the fact that hypnosis could help difficult patients access powerfully repressed emotions they otherwise would not have been aware of, or able, to articulate. Freud observed that by recalling some forgotten traumatic experience under hypnosis, many patients seemed to be cured of the emotional problems associated with the experience. In 1895 he and another doctor, Josef Breuer, wrote a book about hypnosis called *Studies in Hysteria*.

At this stage Freud was very keen on hypnosis, but he later abandoned the practice. By his own admission Freud was not very good as a hypnotist. He simply gave up when he had a few failures and was unable to get clients to talk about traumatic events. He didn't have access to the techniques that most hypnotherapists use today to build rapport and make a patient feel safe before recalling – let alone discussing – traumatic events from the past. Freud also realized that simply recalling forgotten memories connected to a current problem did not necessarily remove the patient's problem.

He chose to abandon hypnosis and focus on the patient's avoidance of pain and study how the mind represses difficult feelings. He did this by developing the more active approach of talking to patients that is common in counselling and psychotherapy today. Freud's preference of psychoanalysis over hypnosis dealt a temporary blow to hypnosis . . . at least in Europe.

Clark L. Hull (1884–1952)

Meanwhile, America, psychologist Clark Hull was conducting extensive experiments in hypnosis in the 1920s and 1930s. Hull greatly de-mystified hypnosis and described it as a normal part of human nature. Hull viewed trance states as a natural part of normal consciousness, no different from daydreaming or reverie. Hull wrote that the patient's imagination played an important role in invoking the trance state. He put forward the idea that some people were more responsive to hypnosis than others. Hull's writings were a major influence on the godfather of modern hypnosis, Milton Erickson.

Milton Erickson (1901–80)

Milton Erickson resurrected and reinvented modern hypnosis after Freud buried it. He is considered the founder of modern hypnotherapy.

Erickson is a fascinating figure, both in his life story as well as the hypnotherapeutic advances he singly developed. He grew up in a rural Midwest American community, partially disabled from polio. He hypnotized himself to overcome the intense pain he experienced as a result of the disease. He also devoured dictionaries (not literally!) and learned the nuances of words.

He later trained as a psychiatrist, but his love of language helped him to develop a conversational style of hypnosis – termed the permissive style – that was the antithesis of the old-fashioned authoritarian hypnosis.

Erickson found it easy to hypnotize his patients by letting them talk first about their lives and interests. An expert listener with strong observational skills, Erickson noticed the content and style of speech of his patient and could induce trance simply by adopting a similar style of speech. His therapy sometimes included made-up stories or metaphors that he invented based on the patient's interests.

Erickson was a kindly figure, but he was also very versatile with an extremely unconventional approach to hypnosis. He used authoritarian techniques if that is what the patient could most

benefit from. (Don't forget that, like Freud, Erickson was also a psychiatrist, and many people during Erickson's day expected their medical men to dominate them.

Erickson is essentially the cornerstone for the study of modern hypnosis. It would be difficult to meet a hypnotherapist today who was not in some way influenced by Erickson's writings, teachings, audio/video recordings, and methods.

Ernest Rossi (1933–present)

Rossi is an American psychotherapist and teacher who focuses on the mind- body connection in healing. Rossi worked closely with Erickson on several publications.

He is also a widely published author of books and scientific papers on hypnotherapy and healing. His ideas are pioneering in terms of how hypnosis can influence the body even at a cellular level.

Ten Qualities to Look For in a Hypnotherapist

If you are thinking of going to visit a hypnotherapist you want to know that you are going to see someone who is doing their utmost to help get you through whatever issue it is that you are seeing them for. Unfortunately, out there in the big wide world there are many charlatans purporting to be hypnotherapists but who are, in fact, just after your money. Fortunately, there are many others who are professional, well trained, and who offer an exemplary service (and we like to include ourselves in this category!).

Here is a list (in no particular order) of some of the qualities to look for in your hypnotherapist. By taking these into consideration when searching for your therapist, you can separate the wheat from the chaff.

Confidentiality

What is said to your therapist stays with your therapist. In other words, your therapist does not go around telling all and sundry about what went on in the therapy room during your sessions. If your therapist does need to talk to others about your case, she'll do so in such a fashion that your identity remains protected.

So, how do you know that your therapist is confidential? A legitimate therapist will be a member of a bona fide ethical organization and subscribe to the organization's ethical code of conduct. Ask to see your therapist's ethical code of conduct (check the Appendix for a sample). If she doesn't have one, or subscribe to one that doesn't emphasize confidentiality, then say "Thanks, but no thanks!"

Honesty is the cornerstone on which trust is built. Before you can do therapeutic work, both the therapist and patient need to feel that their communication is open and truthful.

Both parties need to feel okay about each other for effective change to occur.

Also, from another angle, honesty is important when understanding the qualifications and experience of your hypnotherapist. Beware of those who claim to hold professional

qualifications that they don't really have. Your hypno- therapist should be honest and upfront about her training, experience, and your therapy.

If you have any concerns about what your therapist is saying or claiming, contact her training institution or professional body, and check her out. If your therapist won't let you know the contact details then just say goodbye and seek out a more reputable one.

Well-Trained

Make sure that your therapist is appropriately trained. That means that she has attended a prolonged classroom-based training, balancing theory with practice. Beware the therapist who learned their profession through correspondence courses, or through a single weekend of training, or a similar short course. After all, would you let a doctor loose on your body who had trained in this manner?

Don't be afraid to ask your potential therapist about their training. If they are not forthcoming then beware. Any therapist worth their salt lets you know about it (after all, they are proud of their own achievement) and are more than happy to furnish you with details of their training institution so that you can check them out.

Empathy

Your therapist should be able to understand what you are experiencing with regard to your problem. That means she understands your experience and your feelings and always offers

you a professional service reflecting this understanding. Of course, your therapist is not you and only you fully understand your experience. However, through empathy your therapist is able to show a genuine positive regard for you and whatever issue you are seeing them for.

Ethics

Your therapist should always work in an ethical way. That means that their conduct is always appropriate. ***Your therapist should:***

Tell you their fee and availability in advance.

Explain the process of therapy to you.

Answer your questions honestly.

Not prolong therapy unnecessarily.

Ensure that you are as comfortable as possible during the therapy process.

Show a professional regard towards other therapists and therapies.

Work within their own level of competence.

Ensure the confidentiality of anything that you may tell them.

On top of this, they will always keep their relationship with you at a professional level. In other words, they should neither become friend nor lover! If this happens, then stop seeing them for therapy. What you do afterwards is entirely up to you.

As we repeat throughout this book, all responsible hypnotherapists subscribe to a professional code of ethics, as determined by a professional body or training institution. If you want to know what your therapist's ethical code of conduct is,

just ask to see it. The Appendix has a sample code of ethics from the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis.

Experience

How experienced in general is your therapist? How long have they been in practice? How much experience have they had treating your particular symptom? These are all questions you may want to ask. However, length of time in practice on its own does not a good therapist make. You should also find out about their experience of training (see the previous 'Well-Trained' section), what their experience of clinical supervision is and, wherever possible, the experience of other patients. The last point can only be done through talking to someone you know who has been to see your particular therapist. (As a matter of confidentiality your therapist NEVER gives you detail of others who have been to see them!).

All helping professionals (counsellors, hypnotherapists, psychotherapists, and the like) undergo clinical supervision, which involves going to see another professional in order to discuss cases.

Professionals need to be supported and receive new perspectives on the work they do with their patients. Clinical supervision also ensures that the therapist continues to improve their clinical work to provide the best treatments possible for patients. No matter how experienced a professional, your hypnotherapist should be involved in regular supervision. It's okay to ask if they are.

You may be thinking that it is better to see a seasoned therapist than to see a newly qualified one. Well, that is not necessarily the case. If your therapist has been trained properly, then there will be little difference. However, do take into consideration everything else in this chapter.

Tidiness

Your therapist should be of a smart appearance and keep a tidy therapy room. By doing so, they help you feel comfortable, confident, and at ease, both with them and the process of therapy. Not feeling comfortable in your surroundings results in an adverse effect on your ability to go into trance and enjoy good therapy.

Punctuality

Your hypnotherapist should be punctual for appointments (and that goes for you too!). Obviously, for one reason or another there may be an occasional slight delay to your appointment – we have to be realistic here. But on the whole, you should be able to see your hypnotherapist at the time you have booked. If they are constantly late in starting your appointments, then perhaps question the professional regard they have for you. Oh, and if you are late for an appointment then don't be surprised if you only get the remaining time allocated for therapy. Don't expect your therapist to delay another patient on your behalf.

Non-Judgmental

Your therapist is not there to judge you! No matter how embarrassing you think your symptom is your therapist has heard

it all before. A good therapist listens to what you have to say with genuine empathy (see the previous ‘Empathy’ section). After all, she is there to help you.

Active Listening

Listening may seem to be an obvious quality to look for in your therapist, as you are talking and your therapist should be listening. However, it is something that is worth highlighting. When listening to what you have to say your therapist should be doing so in an active manner. In other words, she will look as if she is paying attention to you rather than picking her nails or gazing off into space! At the same time, she will be encouraging you to talk further by asking appropriate questions and acknowledging your replies.

Beware the therapist who just loves to talk about herself. Obviously, a little bit of personal banter and history is important and may be relevant, but if she keeps on and on about how wonderful she is and that stunning holiday she just had in Mauritius, then she is not focusing on you and that means that your therapy is more than likely to be less effective.

Ten Tips for Choosing a Hypnotherapy Training Programme

Perhaps you have been for hypnotherapy and your experience has so inspired you that you now want to become a hypnotherapist yourself.

Or perhaps you are reading this book because you want to find out about this thing called hypnotherapy before you commit yourself to some training. Either way, this chapter is for

If you are thinking of becoming a hypnotherapist, it is important that you choose the right institution to train you. The following list will give you important pointers in helping to make the right decision. After all, you will be parting with your hard-earned money and time, and will want to invest them wisely!

Making Sure the Institution Is Accredited

The institution you are thinking of training with should be accredited by an outside body. Accreditation means that the institution meets a certain standard in training that follows established guidelines.

The sponsorship of some programme is obvious – for instance, those that fall within the university or government system. Others may be more obscure, but offer genuine and valid accreditation. Whilst others will be bogus, simply taking money so that any Tom, Dick, or Harry can get their course validated.

Don't be afraid to investigate what the accrediting body is all about by phoning them up, looking them up on the internet, and so on.

Training for Clinical Hypnosis, NOT Stage Hypnosis!

Remember, you want to train as a clinical hypnotherapist not a stage hypnotist. Question the validity of any course that teaches

this obnoxious branch of hypnosis. You want to train to help people, not to have others laugh at them!

Of course, many institutions explain the ins and outs of stage hypnosis because you will have to be able to explain it to your patients.

Looking at Length of Training

Find out how long the training takes. If the claim is that you'll be a fully qualified therapist after only one or two weekends, you're wasting your money if you sign on for such a programme. Most bona fide institutions offer training that takes at least a couple of years to reach full qualification.

If you are feeling a little disheartened reading this, don't be. The 'quick route to becoming a therapist' schools are only interested in your money, not in your integrity as a professional therapist. Ask yourself this question: 'Would I be happy seeing a doctor who had only learnt medicine over a couple of weeks- ends?' If your answer is no, then don't go anywhere near these institutions.

If your answer is yes, then we think that perhaps you need to pay a visit to a hypnotherapist (a properly trained one at that!).

Going through the Interview Procedure

The institution should interview you before accepting you for training.

This is to ensure that you are the right type of person to become a therapist (in other words, not barking mad or a serial killer!). Be upfront about any personal issues you may have, because the

interviewer also ensures that training is safe for you. Very few issues would prevent you from training – your interviewer will be able to go over these with you.

Don't forget that the interview is also an opportunity for you to interview your prospective training institution. You need to make sure that the institution's approach is the right one for you. Many institutions allow you to sit in on a lecture to get the feel of the course that you're considering attending.

If this courtesy isn't offered, don't be shy about asking for it.

Watch out for those institutions that make wild claims that you can be earning thousands a week by the time you finish training. This is just a ploy to get you to part with your money. The only one making thousands will be the institution! Building a practice takes time and effort, as any reputable training organization will point out.

Sitting Still for Classroom-Based Training

Correspondence courses are anathema to all genuine therapists! Your training must be classroom based. That means that by far the majority of your training is through lectures and practical sessions, held in a classroom environment by professional therapists and lecturers. Classroom training allows you to question and understand the theory whilst practicing in a very safe environment.

Of course, you're also given homework in the form of assignments and required or recommended reading. This is to give you a wider insight and understanding of the material and techniques taught in the classroom.

Checking the Experience, Background, and Variety of Lecturers

Your lecturers are your most important source of knowledge. Find out about their backgrounds and experience as therapists. Most institutions only employ active therapists (and rightly so), as they will be able not only to teach you the theory and techniques, but also give you a wide variety of case examples that put things into context for you.

Having a range of lecturers is also useful, because each therapist has their own individual approach to the way they do therapy. Being taught by different people exposes you to varying styles, helping you to develop as a therapist in your own right.

A very useful addition to any training is the tutorial system, in which you meet up with a tutor outside the classroom to go over course material in order to make sure that you understand it. A session with a tutor also gives you a chance to practice the variety of techniques you have been taught so far.

Tutorials offer a very personal addition to your training, and give you an opportunity to cover aspects of your learning experience that may not be appropriate, or possible, to do in class. Many

institutions now have tutorials as a compulsory part of the course curriculum.

Talking to Previous and Current Students

If you want to, your institution should allow you to get in contact with their students or graduates, so that you can get an unbiased opinion of the course you are considering undertaking.

Offering Continuing Professional Development

Look at the training opportunities your prospective training institution offers, for after you have qualified. Continuing professional development is very important, because it allows you to remain fresh and informed throughout your career as a hypnotherapist.

Make sure that the institution you choose offers short courses that allow you to keep abreast of developments in hypnotherapy, or courses that allow you to examine aspects of hypnotherapy in much greater detail.

Supporting You After Training

A respectable institution provides support for its graduates through tele- phone, Web sites, or clinical supervision. That means that you can always access help on hand to guide you through every difficult case that you have in your therapy room – no matter how long it was since your graduation.

Visiting Your Former Selves

And now you seemingly enter the world of the mystical to find out how to travel back in time to visit yourself before you were even born. We are, of course, talking about past-life regression (PLR), a therapy technique that many find baffling and many more find exceptionally fascinating. PLR is an approach to helping you overcome your problem, based on the concept of reincarnation; a belief that your soul is reborn into different bodies and that you have lived a life (or lives) before your current one.

For many in the Western world, the idea that we have lived other lives before this one is frankly laughable. We have one life and once it's over, that's your lot. End of story. But many millions of people throughout the world, both Western and Eastern, are just as convinced in their belief in the concept of having lived many lives in the past. And it is from this belief that the very powerful hypno- therapy technique of past-life regression has been developed.

Examining Past-Life Regression

Past-life regression (PLR) is one of the techniques that people often associate with hypnotherapy. PLR is a technique used in hypnotherapy that works with a person's belief in reincarnation. PLR takes you back in time, in your mind, to visit a life, or lives, you lived before. PLR has wonderful esoteric connotations of the mystical hypnotist with staring eyes, lulling his subjects into a trance, and then parting the curtains of the mists of time as they travel back to some major historical event. All very nice, and it

looks wonderful in those low-budget movies; however, the reality of PLR is actually quite mundane.

Hypnotherapists are not taught to tear apart the fabric of the space-time continuum – nor do they have the power! If you believe in reincarnation, then your hypnotherapist may consider using PLR.

Many people who believe in reincarnation think that traumatic or upsetting events that occurred in a life they lived before are the root cause of problems they're experiencing in the life they're leading now; especially if they feel that they didn't have the opportunity to resolve those events before the end of that particular past life. PLR gives you the opportunity to resolve those events and by extension, resolve those issues in your current life that stem from them.

So, do you need to believe in reincarnation for PLR to be effective? The answer is no. To understand why this may be, have a look at the next section, 'Beliefs about PLR'.

In general, however, if you don't believe in reincarnation, your therapist won't touch PLR with a bargepole.

Beware of a therapist who pushes her belief system onto you. It doesn't matter whether your therapist believes in past lives or not. Any therapist worth her salt works with your belief systems, not hers. Your hypnotherapist should not try to influence you either way with regard to your beliefs in reincarnation – or hers.

Okay. So, is PLR real? Who knows? As yet there is no absolute proof one way or the other. Remember, we are dealing with belief systems here and that means, if you truly believe you have lived before, then it is very real . . . for you!

Many people and therapists believe in the powerful therapeutic results of PLR, but don't necessarily believe in reincarnation. So, what do they believe PLR is? Here are some of the most popular theories:

PLR accesses genetic memory. One school of thought believes that certain memories are encoded in our genetic make-up. In other words, some- how memories are stored in our genes. When you experience PLR, these memories are dragged up out of your DNA and once again experienced.

PLR accesses the collective unconscious. This idea comes from Jungian psychology. Carl Jung was around at the same time as Sigmund Freud. One of the many psychological theories he developed is that of the collective unconscious. Jung believed that we all store in our unconscious a whole host of memories that are shared by everyone, and which are passed down to us from our ancestors. PLR provides a means of accessing the collective unconscious and experiencing these memories.

PLR is a dissociative experience. This theory says that a person experiencing a PLR is creating a new existence in their mind from various pieces of their existing memory. Basically, you create a person and an existence through which you can 'observe' your problem, and its solution, in a metaphorical way – so that you're split off, or dissociated, from the problem. The distance provides

a safe way to deal with the problem and the unconscious means to apply the solution.

PLR accesses memories from past lives. Okay, we're back where we started. In this model, you believe that you've lived before and can access these past lives through hypnosis. As you access past lives, you can also influence them by helping your past self to resolve the unresolved issues that occurred in the life.

Whatever the truth of the matter about what PLR is, when it boils down to it it's your belief that is most important. So, if you truly believe that your problem stems from something that happened to you in a past life – and who's to say you are wrong? – then discuss this with your therapist. If she judges that it is right for you to explore this idea, then she will be happy to take you back into your past existence.

Reasons to revisit past lives

So, why do you want to go back and visit your past lives? Usually for one of two main

You're simply curious and want to find out about who and what you were before you came. You believe that the problems you're having stem from events that occurred in a life, or lives, you experienced prior to this one.

Many therapists happily help you explore your past lives for no other reason than you're interested in who you were. But it is the

second reason that explains PLR's most common use in the therapy room.

As you go through life, you have many conflicts and experiences that you need to work through and resolve. However, there are also many that you don't. Obvious so far, but this is where past-life theory kicks in. Past-life theory has it that some unresolved issues may well be so significant, that when you pass into your next life, they continue to affect you, creating some of the problems that you may now be experiencing.

That doesn't mean to say that the unresolved issue you had in a past life will manifest itself in exactly the same way in your current life. Far from it, what you're likely to experience is something that is almost a metaphor for the past problem. For example:

Weight issues: It may be that you were starving in a past life, and your weight problem is an attempt to prevent that from occurring in this life.

Psychosomatic pain: It may be that you had a violent accident in a past life where a part of your body was seriously injured. In your current life you experience a pain for which there is no demonstrable cause, in a similar area of your body.

Psychosomatic pain refers to pain that is purely in the mind. In other words, you are feeling pain somewhere in your body, but there is absolutely no physical cause for that pain.

Phobias: Maybe you were locked in a dark room, or cell, in a previous existence. That experience then filters through to your current life where you have an irrational fear of the dark.

Personality issues: Perhaps you were an oppressed peasant in a past life, always having to hold onto your emotions and feelings. In your current life you vent these feelings by being overly aggressive or emotional.

These are only a few examples of an almost endless list. In order to resolve these problems, you may need to go back to the life where they first occurred. If you can resolve the issue in the past, the likelihood is that the problem in the present fades away too. Of course, after your past-life issues are resolved, you may have work to do on your current life, helping you to adjust to the positive changes that PLR has brought about.

Often, your current problem is an accumulation of unresolved issues from a whole variety of past lives, each needing to be dealt with and resolved.

Journeying to Your Past Life

Okay, you and your therapist agree that it's a good idea for you to go back and sort out those unresolved issues experienced by a past you.

The PLR session, or sessions, will be very similar in nature to any other hypnotherapy session, with just a few differences.

Revealing any past-life memories

Along with taking a normal case history, your therapist may also ask you about the following:

Your belief in reincarnation. Your therapist wants to know what your understanding of PLR and reincarnation is. After all, she'll be working with your beliefs. She also needs to know of any past experiences you had visiting former lives, either through a therapist or spontaneously. (On rare occasions, some people spontaneously slip back into a past life when they are dozing, just about to fall asleep, or as a dream experience.)

Why you think that a past life experience may be responsible for your current symptom. What tells you that your solution lies in a past life?

When you think about your symptom, what indicates that its cause lies way back, before you were born?

Just because you believe that your problem comes from a past life, that doesn't mean that your hypnotherapist will automatically take you there. She will consider many factors before taking you down that route.

Whether you're aware of the particular life responsible. Some people are very aware of the life responsible for their current problem long before they go for therapy. If you know, let your hypnotherapist know too.

Keep in mind that this may be only one of several lives contributing to your problem (then again, it may be the only one!). You may need to visit other lives before your problem is solved.

Any relevant dreams you've had. When you dream, you allow your unconscious to roam freely, and your unconscious may well access a past life. When you awaken, you may be aware that this particular dream holds something of significance.

Any spontaneous thoughts you have been having about past lives.

Is your unconscious trying to tell you something? Do you have spontaneous thoughts about events from a past that doesn't seem to belong to you? Could this be your unconscious saying 'Hey, this is where the seat of your problem lies!'?

Let your hypnotherapist know about any experiences on this list, because your awareness of your past lives may be pointing you in the right direction.

When many people think of reincarnation, they often make the erroneous assumption that they were someone famous in a past life. In actual fact, it is extremely rare to come across well-known manifestation of a past life is that of a very ordinary person. Is it likely that you were Henry VIII? No! A cook in the court of Henry VIII? Yes!

Choosing a route

There are many approaches to taking you back to a past life, none of which require magic or any special powers, so let's leave that idea to the fantasists!

What route will you travel on through the centuries? Well, the path you take depends on the creativity of both you and your hypnotherapist. Your hypnotherapist may ask you to imagine one of several scenarios:

You're walking down a long and comfortable corridor. On either side of you are doors, with each one leading to a specific past life. Your therapist may invite you to find a door that is particularly attractive to you, for whatever reason, and to imagine walking through that door into the relevant past life.

You're walking up a safe and well-lit tunnel. When you reach the end, you step out into your past life.

You're climbing a gentle hill and when you reach its summit, you step out into another past life.

Or maybe you step into a time machine, or through the pages of a book, or through a mirror, or . . . the possibilities are endless.

Even though you think you know which life you need to visit at a conscious level, your hypnotherapist may want to be unspecific when she takes you back. She may use a phrase along the lines of 'And you can step through that door into the life that is most relevant to the reason you are with me today'. She isn't ignoring you; she just knows that your unconscious mind will recognize the most important life you need to visit. Consciously you may think you know, but your unconscious often knows best in these cases. Let it be your guide!

Reaching a dead end

You step through the door with excited anticipation of entering into and exploring that past life and nothing! Zilch! Not a sausage! Nothing except a big sense of disappointment.

So, what's going on? Why aren't you getting anywhere on this journey? Well, there can be several reasons, the main ones being:

You're not ready to go back. Perhaps it was too early to try a PLR. Maybe you need to do some more work in the present before you attempt to go back into the past. Yes, you believe in past lives, but maybe you have fears about going there. Perhaps you don't fully trust your therapist yet, as that all-important rapport (see Chapter 13) hasn't been sufficiently built up yet.

You can address whatever issues are putting up the roadblock with your hypnotherapist, and try PLR once they are resolved.

The route back was not right for you. If you don't like the method of transportation (maybe the enclosed space of the tunnel makes you nervous, or the height of the hill seems too steep), the likelihood of reaching your past life destination is minimized. Why? Because if you feel a little uptight and tense, your unconscious mind protects you from taking a path that is not right for you.

To resolve this, discuss your feelings with your hypnotherapist and agree on a route that is more acceptable to you.

Something in your current life needs to be resolved before you can go back. Maybe an issue in your current life is demanding attention. Sometimes these issues can be very selfish and won't let you go back despite your strong desire.

Your therapist can use techniques such as dissociation, or a regression, to the event in this life, to help clear the current life roadblock (which, by the very fact it's demanding attention like this, needs to be addressed), and therefore re-opening up your path into time.

The problem doesn't stem from a past life. If the genesis of your problem is not in a past life, you can't go back to resolve it.

Of course, after you resolve your current life problem, your therapist can take you back through the portals of time just simply to have the experience, if you wish.

Whatever the reasons for not getting back to a past life, they can be cleared up. With a little perseverance from both you and your hypnotherapist, your past lives will open up like the pages of a wonderful history book.

What to Expect during Your PLR Session?

Ready to go back in time, but are a little unsure as to what to expect? Well, read on, because these sections cover what you may find happening during your PLR session.

But wait! Before you go back to a past life, we need to point out one thing. One of the experiences that often take people unawares during a PLR session is that when they get back to their

past life, they may well find that they are the opposite sex. That means a man may well have been a woman in a past life and vice versa. Let us just point out here and now that this is not a reflection of your sexual orientation, nor does it mean that you have a deep-seated desire for a sex change! It just means that the quirks of time travel do not recognize the gender boundary, and it is entirely possible that you were a member of the opposite sex in many of your past lives.

Setting the scene

During your PLR session, you are not necessarily going to step out of your current life and straight into a full, technicolor awareness of your past life. Your mind may need a little help orientating to this new experience and your therapist helps you get settled in through a process of questioning. She wants to find out from you:

- Who you are? No, she won't just ask 'Who are you?' Your therapist needs to help you build up your awareness and may ask you:
 - What you're wearing
 - How old you are
 - Your name
 - Where you are. Your therapist may ask you to tell her:
 - What you see around you
 - The name of the place you're in
 - The date
 - The time of day

- What you're doing. Your therapist may ask you to:
- Describe what you are doing (obviously)
- Explain why you're doing it
- Share how you feel about doing it
- If anyone is with you. Your therapist may ask you:
- If anyone is with you (er, again, obviously!)
- If so, who that person (or persons) is and why they're with you
- How you feel about having that person (or people) with you

This may seem to be quite an interrogation, but it is very important in helping you really get into the character and experience of your past life. Once you are fully there, you can get on with exploring all that it contains. Who knows, you could be an ancient Greek standing on a cliff top, or a Victorian gardener going about his business, or even a proud Mayan mother tending to her children.

If you step into your past life and see nothing or hear nothing, bear in mind that you may be blind or deaf in that life, or perhaps you are in a dark or very quiet room! I (Peter) once carried out a PLR with a patient who reported that they could neither here nor see anything when we were trying to set the scene. In a moment of inspiration, I asked that they reach out and tell me if they could feel anything. A moment later they reported that they could feel a wall. It turned out that in the life they were visiting they were both deaf and blind.

In most cases, you experience the past life as if you are there, so don't be surprised if your voice changes a bit and you feel the emotions you felt back then.

Visiting those important times

You're in a past life, so now what? Is this the part of the life you need to visit? Not necessarily. This may only be your entry point to that life; a quite mundane period that allows you to adjust gently. On the other hand, you may step out into the thick of things; right into the heart of the matter, at the point in that life where the problems you're experiencing in this one began.

Wherever you start off, your therapist will ask you to visit the important times in that life relevant to your problem. Keep in mind that there may be more than one event in more than one life. This is an insight gaining exercise, helping both you and your therapist understand how your problem got started. As you visit these times, your therapist may ask you what's happening, how you're feeling, and what you feel you need to do in this situation.

You may find that all your hypnotherapist does is ask you to experience these times. At times, you may feel the need to let out some emotion. If you do, go ahead, and let it out. It may be that this pent-up emotion has been festering away inside you in your current life, contributing to your problem.

By the way, if the thought of crying or laughing, or even shouting in front of your hypnotherapist is embarrassing, let us reassure you. Your therapist is very used to seeing displays of strong

emotion and welcomes them as a healthy release for you. If you don't feel any of these emotions, don't worry – there may be none for you to feel at this time.

Being present at your death

Right, put on your black armband and bring in the doom and gloom brigade, because this is where it gets a little morbid – but for a very good reason. How you meet your end in the life you are visiting, may have a very strong relevance as to why you are experiencing your problem. For example:

Was your death violent? If it was, it could very well be a contributing factor to your problem. The way in which you shuffled off this mortal coil may be representative of the reason you're seeing your therapist. Maybe you drowned and now have a phobia of water. Maybe you starved to death and now have a weight problem. Maybe you were poisoned and you now have irritable bowel syndrome.

If your death was peaceful, it may not be a contributing factor to your problem. However, what happened to your body after your death may be, so read on.

What happened to your body after your death? In many cases, this can influence a current life problem. Maybe your body wasn't discovered and you have an unexplained sense of being lost in your current life. Or perhaps your body was unceremoniously cremated and you now have a phobia of fire. It could be that your body was misidentified and you were buried under the wrong name, and you now lack a sense of who you are.

Was anything left unfinished at your death? Were there things you needed to do, but couldn't as your life be cut short? Were there people you needed to say something to, but didn't get the opportunity to do so? Any unfinished business can follow through and cause havoc in your current life. Maybe you had unpaid debts in your past life and are too frivolous with your money in this one. If you didn't show enough affection to a loved one you may find that you are now too emotional in relationships. It is possible that you were harsh with someone without getting the chance to apologize and now find that you carry a sense of guilt with you wherever you go.

Healing past hurts

You've been through it all; lived and died, and now have an understanding of why your problem started. Is that it? Is your problem resolved? Maybe. For some, the very act of gaining understanding is enough to kick a problem out of their lives forever. However, that isn't true for every person or every problem. Not to worry. There is another step to take in your PLR session to help ensure that your problem is truly dead and buried.

To round off your session, your hypnotherapist gives you the opportunity to 'heal' that past life. In other words, to go through it and make amends, to change what needs to be changed, to say what needs to be said and so on. How can she help you do this? A very popular way is to visit the point of death (here we go with the morbidity again!), and as your spirit leaves your body, allow it to go through the life and to heal whatever it is that needs to be healed.

Resolving past-life problems

The problems of past lives manifest in many ways. Often, just going back and seeing the cause becomes the cure. Check out these examples:

A patient came for therapy with a severe pain in her right shoulder. The medical community could not find anything wrong with her, nor could they provide her with any lasting relief from the pain. Eventually, a friend of hers suggested that the pain may be present as a result of something that happened to her in a past life. Desperate to get the pain sorted out, she came for PLR hypnotherapy.

She entered into a life in which she was a Native American. Her village was attacked by a rival tribe, and during the onslaught, she was shot in her right shoulder by an arrow. She didn't die from the arrow but from an infection that set in afterwards. She carried the pain of the wound and the infection into her current life. During a PLR session, she floated out of her body and laid her spirit hands over the wound in her shoulder. When she removed them, the wound had healed. When she came out of trance, she reported that the pain she had been experiencing in her shoulder had finally gone.

A man came to see us because he didn't feel 'grounded' (his words) in his life. He had a strong belief in reincarnation and sensed that his feelings came from an event in a past life.

When he visited the relevant life in Tibet, he found that he had met a violent end and that his body had been left unburied. He immediately made the connection between his not feeling 'grounded', and the fact that his body had not been put into the 'ground' after his death.

In his spirit form, this unburied Tibetan found his sister from that life, and guided her to his body. She picked it up (she was very strong!) and carried it up a mountain and buried it beneath a tree near their village.

Several days after this session he called to say that he felt so much better, more grounded, and able to concentrate on the important things in his life.

A patient came for therapy who had very strong feelings of frustration that she couldn't pin to anything specific. She visited a past life where she was a wealthy landowner in Edwardian England (and very surprised to find that she was male). She'd had a good life and had died very peacefully, but unexpectedly, in her sleep. Unfortunately, prior to her death, she had a very nasty and prolonged argument with her best friend that resulted in their not talking to each other anymore. She recognized that she was to blame for the argument and decided to make amends and apologize. Unfortunately, she came to this decision on the night the Grim Reaper came a-calling and she never got the opportunity. She expressed an incredible sense of frustration over the fact that she had died with all that bad feeling between them.

In her spirit form, she was able to visit her friend as he dreamt and, after several lengthy dream conversations, was able to give her apology and have it accepted. She then left that life with a sense of freedom and lightness. She subsequently went on to leave her boyfriend and her job, go on the holiday of a lifetime, and returned to enter a career she had always wanted to be in, but had been afraid to try. Who says hypnotherapy doesn't change your life for the better?

Completing the journey and returning to the present

So that's it, the life is healed and there is nothing left to do. Just wake me up and I'll be on my way then. Wrong! There is plenty more to do. After all, you don't mend the hole in a tire, but not put it back on the bike. You need to put your past life back where it belongs, and then make sure that nothing else needs fixing:

Sever the tie to the past life. After you heal a past life, many therapists suggest that you sever the tie you have to that life, so that you can be sure that it will no longer influence you or encourage your problem to return. How they do this depends on the therapist. Some have you imagine cutting a silver thread that attaches you to the life. Some have you imagine that that you are permanently shutting and locking the door to that life. Others may be less specific and have you cut the connection in whatever way you feel is right for you.

Your therapist should suggest that before you sever any tie, you bring with you all the positive learning that the life gave you into your current existence.

Come out of the past life. It is important that you are formally brought out of the past life. If you simply emerge from it, you may be somewhat disorientated. Don't worry; the disorientation will pass in time. But to avoid this, the general rule of thumb is that you're brought out of a past life the same way you were taken into it. If you stepped through a door, you step back through a door. If you walked down a tunnel, you walk back up a tunnel, and so on.

Check that there are no other lives you need to visit. Before you are fully re-oriented back into your current life, your therapist should help you to check that there are no other lives that need to be visited. After all, more than one life may be contributing to your problem, and you want to clear the lot out in order to really ensure that it has been dealt with.

You may find that you can do this in one session, or it may need to be done over several sessions, depending on how much needs to be worked through in each life.

Whether you are doing it for fun, or using it to solve a problem, you will find that every hypnotherapist will have their own particular approach to carrying out PLR. Whatever your reason is, you will find that a visit to your past selves can be a very interesting, rewarding, and ultimately problem releasing experience for you.

Past lives are not the only ones you can visit. Some therapists will work with you to find out what happens during your inter-life experience. In other words, exploring what happens between each of your lives. Yet other therapists will have you experience

future lives – those that you have yet to live after you kick the bucket in this one.

CHAPTER 4

Removing Your Phobias

Are you scared of the dark? Do you freeze with fear whenever a cat saunters nonchalantly across the road in front of you? Do you go apoplectic at the very thought of visiting the dentist? Does the idea of taking a flight to some sunny holiday destination send ice-cold tingles of dread down your spine? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then you have a phobia!

Phobias are one of the most common reasons people seek hypnotherapy. Many millions of people in this world have phobias. Most manage to get along in life without the phobia interfering too much in their day-to-day existence; in other words, the phobia is mild. However, a significant number of people have phobias that greatly restrict their life in one way or another, and when these phobias get really bad, people seek out therapy.

Rationalizing the Irrational: Defining Phobias

Phobias are not something you are born with. They are something you learn. You learn to fear an object or situation of some kind, and that fear is accompanied by many irrational thoughts and behaviors.

Explaining phobias

A phobia is an abnormal fear of an object or situation, experienced immediately when confronted by the object or

situation, directly or indirectly, through seeing it on television, or in a magazine or book, for example. In general, fear makes you avoid whatever it is that triggers your phobia. So, a phobia involves fear and avoidance, but what else makes a phobia a phobia? Well, you may have a phobia if you experience any of the following:

Excessive or unreasonable fear: Some situations may induce just a mild fear response considered normal or non-phobic, something most people would experience in that situation. Your fear is excessive or unreasonable if you find yourself frozen in place, perhaps wanting to escape, possibly trembling, or sweating in that situation.

A fear of heights is a phobia if you are paralyzed by fear on the third rung of a ladder, or if simply watching someone standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon on television makes you break out in a sweat.

You recognize that the fear is excessive or unreasonable: You know that what you are experiencing is out of proportion to what you should be feeling. You know, for example, that going to visit your dentist should only give you a mild anxiety, not that ‘running down the street shrieking your head off’ anxiety you experience when you walk in through the surgery door.

The trigger of phobic response always causes anxiety: You either have the response, or not. You can’t be scared of mice one moment and think that they’re cute the next.

You avoid whatever causes your phobic response: All phobic avoid whatever it is that they are afraid of, which is a logical response, really. If you can't avoid it, then you suffer the experience with intense anxiety or stress. For example, imagine that you have avoided flying for years, travelling wherever you needed to go by car, bus, or train. However, for one reason or another, you find that you need to travel by plane somewhere. Getting you on the wretched thing may mean that you have to be dragged kicking and screaming, or else you have to be pumped full of enough tranquilizers to stop a rampaging bull elephant in its tracks!

Phobic fear most often causes physical and emotional reactions, including any, or all, the following:

Your breathing may become shallow and your heart race, with just the thought of the possibility of encountering the object of your fear.

You feel tense and anxious, altering your life to avoid any encounter.

You feel a sense of shame or embarrassment at harboring an obsessive fear, which may, in turn, cause you to withdraw from people who don't understand your terror.

As your fear looms large in your mind and in your life, you spend a great deal of your time, energy, and thought on it, which actually fans the flame of your phobia.

Oh, and just so you know, phobias can sometimes be accompanied by a panic attack, too. During these nasty episodes, your fear rockets through the roof and rational thought flies out the window, causing your breathing to become very rapid and shallow, which is known as hyperventilating. Hyperventilating increases the amount of oxygen in your blood and brain. You may think that more oxygen is a good thing, but too much oxygen in your system increases the symptoms you experience during a panic attack, resulting in more fear, trembling, sweating, weakness and tingling sensations in your limbs, and irrational thoughts that you are going to die.

To stop hyperventilating, put a paper bag over your nose and mouth, and breathe into it. This causes you to breathe in carbon dioxide and subsequently brings down the level of oxygen in your system.

Comparing phobias to plain old fear

Phobias involve fear. But does that mean that all fear is really a phobia? The answer is no. One or two things about the fear you experience when you have a phobic response make that fear very particular to a phobia.

Fear is a natural survival mechanism. In the ancient past, when humans lived in caves, the fear response kept us away from things that could harm us. If we didn't have it, you probably wouldn't be reading this book today, because the human race wouldn't exist. Imagine for a moment, that we didn't develop a fear response. You have just left your cave for a nice stroll around your Paleolithic neighborhood. On your way you notice

a rather large and cuddly looking pussycat, fast asleep under a tree. You go up to it (remember, no fear) and start stroking it. The next thing you know: snap! You're a sabre- toothed tiger's hors d'oeuvre! Apply that to the rest of the human race and it wouldn't last for very long.

Put fear into the equation and things are different. You're having your little caveman stroll and see a bundle of fur curled up under a tree. From past experience, you know that similar bundles of fur tend to attack you. As this register in your brain you begin to feel fear. The fear that you feel makes you become very wary, you back off and return to your cave.

Many feelings of fear stem from a rational sense of survival; you fear what may physically harm you. You may also fear what others around you fear, or fear the unknown, or fear what may happen to others close to you.

The fear you experience with a phobic response is an irrational fear. Basically, it is a fear of an outcome that statistically won't happen. For example, air travel continues to be far safer than any other form of transportation, so being afraid of dying in a plane crash is an irrational fear. Likewise, phobias are born of fears of an improbable result you believe will happen when you encounter the object or situation. For example, it's highly unlikely that you will actually have a heart attack if a spider comes near you.

You may be thinking ‘So what about a phobia of snakes? They can hurt you, so that must be a rational fear!’. Yes and no (you probably knew we were going to say that). If you walk down the street and come face to face with a boa constrictor slithering along then yes, the fear you experience would be a rational fear. If you were flicking through a magazine and came across a picture of a snake and let out a shriek of fear, then that would be an irrational fear – a phobic fear. After all, the wretched thing won’t leap out of the page at you, will it? Therefore, there is no threat to your survival.

Pointing out triggers

So where do phobias come from in the first place? How do you develop them? After all, no one sets out to deliberately become scared of something. Unfortunately, we don’t have a simple answer. The causes of phobias are as varied as phobias themselves.

Starting with stress

When you experience severe stress, such as being stuck on a crowded bus in a traffic jam, or having a project deadline looming at work, your objectivity and ability to rationally analyse the situation may be compromised. The feelings you have as a result of the stress such as anxiety or fear – can attach themselves to whatever you are stressed about.

Even though this is not always the case, when it does happen that means that if you enter into a similar situation, or come across a similar object, then you experience anxiety or fear.

Remember, a phobia can occur to anything, so any situation in which you find yourself stressed has the potential to turn into a phobia.

Going through an extremely rough patch with your significant other obviously causes a lot of stress. This feeling can become attached to any confrontational situation and therefore result in you developing a phobia of confrontation.

However, your mind is a fickle thing and sometimes the fear is attached to something unrelated; you become scared of that and not of whatever it was that frightened you in the first place.

A patient came for therapy with a phobia of buttons (quite a common phobia, as it happens). He felt okay when confronted by buttons attached to clothes, but experienced an incredible sense of dread and anxiety when faced with a loose button lying around; convinced that it would suddenly lodge itself in his windpipe. He experienced the fear to such an extent that he couldn't enter a room if he knew there was a loose button somewhere inside. On top of wanting to get rid of his phobia, he also wanted to understand where it came from. Using a regression technique, he was taken back to a time in his early teens when he had been summoned into his headmaster's office in order to atone for some transgression or other. This was in the days when headmasters were still given free rein to take out their sadistic frustrations on their pupils, and our patient ended up being given the cane!

What came to light during the regression was that as he was bent over the headmaster's desk receiving six of the best, he caught sight of a loose button. The stress and anxiety he felt by being given the cane transferred to the button, and from that moment on he began to fear loose buttons in general.

Picking up a phobia from another person

A classic way to assume a phobia is to inherit it from someone who serves as a role model for you. Through witnessing that person's phobic response, you learn to be afraid of whatever it is that they are afraid of.

A mother who is afraid of mice passes on that fear to her daughter. A son picks up his father's fear of spiders. When you witness your role model being scared, you believe that the object that he is afraid of is something that you need to be scared of too. Obvious really, if he is scared of it, then there must be something terrible about it. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily true!

However, you don't pick up phobias only from family members. Anyone you are in close contact with be it a friend, neighbor, or complete stranger – can transmit their phobia to you. Even witnessing a phobic response on film or television can do the trick!

Building up to a phobia

A single experience of something mildly anxiety provoking may not necessarily end up with you developing a phobia of it. However, if you're repeatedly exposed to the same, or similar,

experiences then the anxiety can become cumulative, reinforcing each experience with more and more fear until, wham! – you’re slapped in the face with a full-blown phobia. It’s as though you didn’t see it coming.

Take for example flight crew members who frequently experience varying degrees of turbulence during the flights they make. They appear to cope (and in most cases they do so very well), but for a few members there is an underlying feeling of anxiety that gets reinforced with each bout of turbulence, accumulating away in the back of their mind until it springs forth in the form of a full-blown flying phobia.

Creating a phobia from past trauma

A trauma is an event that produces a severely painful physical or emotional experience – and could realistically lead to your death or injury. A trauma can lead to the development of a phobia of whatever it was that caused you that pain. Even witnessing such an event is traumatic and can result in the development of a phobia.

You’re driving along in your car and some idiot swerves in front of you. Unfortunately, they misjudge the distance and crash, tinkle! You both end up with a trip to the garage to get the major dents in the bodywork of your vehicles beaten out. A car crash comes under the heading of a trauma and is a very frightening experience for all concerned. The next time you think about getting behind the wheel to drive, you may very well begin to experience anxiety. Perhaps you begin to avoid driving.

Unfortunately, the more you avoid driving because of the anxiety, the more the anxiety builds. The more the anxiety builds, the more likely you are to end up with a full-blown driving phobia!

Examining the Various Types of Phobia

Each individual phobia has its own particular characteristics. To be helpful, medical science has divided phobias into the following categories:

Animal and insect phobias: The heading say it all. Any type of animal can be included in this category, from cats and dogs, through to cows and wombats! Insects are traditionally objects of fear, and any of the thousands of species that survive on this planet can become a phobia's worst nightmare.

Natural environment phobias: These are phobias about some aspect of your environment. For example, it may be that you are afraid of the dark – typical in children, but also afflicting many adults too. Or maybe you are scared of heights, or water, and so on.

Blood, injection, and injury phobias: It's never pleasant having an injection. However, for some this can prove to be the object of a very severe phobia. In fact, any medical procedure that is invasive can come under this category. The sight of blood too, is often the trigger for a complete freak-out!

Situation phobias: All phobias that are the result of having to do some- thing, or of having to be in a specific place, come under this heading. If you have a fear of flying you belong under this

category, for example. Fear being in a lift or elevator? You're here too. Shake and tremble before going to school? This is your category. Get the picture? Perhaps the two most famous situation phobias are claustrophobia, a fear of enclosed spaces, and agoraphobia, a fear of open spaces.

Miscellaneous phobias: A bit of a cop out, this heading! Anything that doesn't come under the other headings in this list belongs here. For example, a fear of clowns (honest!), a fear of falling down when standing away from a wall (honest, too!), or a fear of getting ill (now that one you've heard of!), are all included in this category.

You can develop a phobia to anything. So, don't worry if you have a phobia you think is strange. It's a dead cert that someone else has had it before you.

Table 11-1 offers a very incomplete list of the variety of phobias out there. (We can't list everything on the planet!) Don't worry if yours isn't there. It doesn't mean that it doesn't really exist, or that you are unique; all it means is that for whatever reason (not enough space, for one thing) we didn't include it.

No matter how strange some of these phobias seem to be, they are very real fears for the people who experience them.

Before we get to the table, one phobia deserves special mention, if only for the sheer audacity of its name. And that is the phobia of long words, ironically known as hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia. Who says scientists don't have a sense of humor!

Table 11-1 Phobias A to Z

What the scientists call it What it actually means

Acrophobia A fear of heights

Agoraphobia A fear of open spaces or crowded places.

It can also mean a fear of leaving somewhere you feel safe

Apiphobia A fear of bees

- 1.** *Bromidrophobia A fear of body smells*
- 2.** *Cardiophobia A fear of the heart or heart disease*
- 3.** *Claustrophobia A fear of confined spaces*
- 4.** *Coprophobia A fear of faeces*
- 5.** *Dendrophobia A fear of trees*
- 6.** *Dental phobia A fear of dentists or dentistry*
- 7.** *Emetophobia A fear of vomiting*
- 8.** *Erythrophobia A fear of blushing or of the color red*
- 9.** *Frigophobia A fear of the cold or of cold things*
- 10.** *Gerontophobia A fear of elderly people or of growing old*

11. *Hippophobia A fear of horses*
12. *Ichthyophobia A fear of fish*
13. *Isolophobia A fear of being alone*
14. *Kainophobia A fear of new things*
15. *Koniophobia A fear of dust*
16. *Ligyrophobia A fear of loud noises*
17. *Lygophobia A fear of darkness*
18. *Mechanophobia A fear of mechanical things*
19. *Molysmophobia A fear of being contaminated*
20. *Necrophobia A fear of death or dead things*
21. *Ornithophobia A fear of birds*
22. *What the scientists call it What it actually means*
23. *Social phobia A fear of negative evaluation in social situations*
24. *Spheksophobia A fear of wasps*
25. *Technophobia A fear of technology*
26. *Zoophobia A fear of animals*

Specific phobias

If you're phobic about only one thing, you have a specific phobia. This used to be called simple phobia, but as any phobic will tell you, there's nothing simple about a phobia. Perhaps in recognition of this, science changed its name.

A specific phobia means your irrational fear is attached to one thing, and one thing only. You're scared of heights and nothing else, for example. And it is only when you are in the presence of the actual phobic stimulus, or when you think about it, that you feel the fear.

More complex phobias

A complex phobia develops when the specific phobia you started off with spreads into other areas of your life. For example, you have a fear of snakes. You only felt scared when you thought about them, or when you were confronted with one in the zoo or on television. But now, your fear is starting to spread. You see a rubber snake in a toyshop and go apoplectic. The hosepipe lying on the ground fills you with fear and dread – after all, it looks like a snake!

Unfortunately, your phobia is generalizing out and you are starting to fear other objects. This can lead to you becoming multi-phobic. In other words, you begin to develop phobias for other things. If this continues, your life can become more and more restricted. In the end, you may end up with agoraphobia – fear of open or crowded spaces – and become increasingly

confined to your home. Being out, in the outside world, becomes an object of fear itself.

Some people are naturally multi-phobic, meaning they may well have more than one specific phobia, each one contained in its own little phobia world, bearing no relation to the others. A multi-phobic person may have a fear of flying. And a fear of wasp. And a fear of cats. And so on.

Removing Your Phobia through Hypnotherapy

One thing about phobias is that you can avoid dealing with them for only so long. Eventually you have to face up to the fact that you must sort out your phobia. Why? Because your phobia is making your life unbearable and increasingly interferes with your family, social, and work life. Have no fear (get it? Have no fear?); your hypnotherapist is there to help.

A hypnotherapist can take several approaches to helping you get rid of your phobia. What all approaches have in common is that they bring your fear under control. In fact, hypnotherapy allows you to confront the thing that freaks you out, with a sense of calmness and appropriate relaxation. You no longer avoid whatever it is; in fact, you look it straight in the eye and thumb your nose at it! You put your fear into proper perspective.

This doesn't mean to say that you go from being unable to climb up a ladder to standing on the very edge of the Empire State Building, looking down on New York City below. It simply means that you're able to deal calmly with those everyday occurrences of whatever it was that you were phobic about.

Your therapist won't spring surprises on you. Many phobic come to hypnotherapy fearing that their therapist will suddenly produce whatever it is that they fear. That approach went out with the Ark! You won't suddenly have a spider dumped in your lap, nor will your therapist shut you in a room with his pet canary to cure your bird phobia. Of course, if this is what you want, it can be arranged. However, by far the majority of hypnotherapists don't work this way. If you are at all concerned about unpleasant surprises, ask your hypnotherapist, in advance, about the approach they plan to use. If they intend to do something you don't agree with, say 'Thanks, but no thanks', and find someone else.

Starting with the basics

You've done it. You turned up for your appointment and are about to undergo hypnotherapy. So, what can you expect? Well, for a start, your hypnotherapist is going to take a good case history. As part of that case history, your therapist wants to know as much about your phobia as possible. Be prepared to tell your therapist

When your phobia first started: This gives an indication of how your phobia came about in the first place, and may provide a pointer as to the therapy technique your hypnotherapist will use. When your phobia first became a problem for you: Could you cope with the fear to begin with? What was it that eventually turned your fear into a full-blown phobia?

Your worst phobic experience: This can be important as it may be a major contributing factor to the continuing build-up of your phobia.

Your last phobic experience: How long is it since your last experience?

How did that affect you?

Whether anyone close to you has the same phobia: This may indicate whether you picked up the phobia from someone else. If you didn't get it from the person who shares your phobia, perhaps that person could be reinforcing your phobia, because they talk about their own phobic responses in front of you.

Specific information about your phobia: The specifics are important, and your therapist will want to find out as much as possible about how you experience your phobia. For a fear of heights, your therapist may want to ask you about the heights you can cope with, whether you cope if there is a barrier between you and the drop, how you feel if you see someone else standing in a high place, and so on.

For a fear of cats, your therapist may want to know if you cope more effectively with black cats or ginger cats, if a sleeping cat is less scary than a moving cat, how you feel when you see pictures of cats, and so on.

How you want to be after your phobia is gone: It's no good just focusing on the negatives, your therapist also wants to help you focus on the reason you are sitting in their therapy room. And that means finding out from you just how you want to be

when you encounter that phobic stimulus. Remember, you can't make things perfect – you must be realistic. Most spider phobics don't want to have one of their nemeses crawling around on their hand. Rather, they want to feel okay about picking one up out of the bath, on the end of a piece of newspaper, and flicking it out the window.

We'll let you into a little secret. Even though you probably assume that the therapy occurs only when you are hypnotized, the truth is that the taking of the case history information is very therapeutic in its own right. Being able to talk about your problem to a sympathetic pair of ears is a great set-up for the formal hypnotherapy to come. And don't worry; your therapist has heard it all before. No matter how strange you think your phobia is, your hypnotherapist has, more than likely, encountered it at some point. Oh, and he won't laugh, either!

Approaching the trance

So, what can you expect to happen in the trance? Your hypnotherapist may use several different approaches, alone or in combination with each other.

It may take more than one session to help you get rid of your phobia. Be prepared to carry out any homework assignments your therapist gives you to do between sessions – such as self-hypnosis – because these help the therapy process along no end.

Being hypno-desensitized

A very popular approach based on a behavior therapy technique, created by behaviorist Joseph Wolpe, has the rather posh title of reciprocal inhibition. What that means is you can use one feeling to override another. The feeling you get when you experience your phobia is anxiety. Your therapist uses relaxation to override the anxiety. After all, you can't be relaxed and anxious at the same time!

Several approaches to hypno-desensitization exist. A very common one is for your therapist to help you create something known as an anxiety hierarchy. Simply put, an anxiety hierarchy is a series of events you come up with regarding your phobia, ranked according to how much anxiety they produce. You rank these events from 0, which means that you feel no anxiety, to 100, which means that you feel the worst anxiety you can imagine. In hypnosis, your therapist gently takes you through the hierarchy, starting with the events ranked at 0, whilst giving you suggestions that you are calm, relaxed, and in control. He will then question you to find out whether you are indeed calm and relaxed. If you are, he then moves onto the next scene on your hierarchy. If at any point you feel anxious, your therapist will emphasize suggestions for relaxation so that you begin to feel relaxed again.

This is where the reciprocal inhibition really comes in letting the relaxation wash away the anxiety. Don't worry, your therapist won't force you up the hierarchy too quickly, nor will he take you beyond the point at which you feel comfortable. By creating the association of relaxation with the various images from your

hierarchy, you change the way your mind thinks about your phobia. When you encounter it in real life, you find that you cope very well indeed.

Going back to regression

This approach is sometimes used by analytical hypnotherapists who believe that to get rid of a phobia you need to understand and deal with its origin.

Your therapist basically takes you back into your past, to the time when the phobia began.

Your hypnotherapist asks you to witness what happened, and perhaps to ‘alter’ the event in your mind, so that you experience yourself coping well in that situation.

Of course, you won’t alter the real event but rather your perception of it. By doing this, you create a domino effect that tumbles into the present, wiping out that irrational fear.

Accessing positive resources

This approach also uses regression, but this time to get resources from your past. These resources are positive feelings that allowed you to cope and feel good before; feelings such as relaxation, confidence, an inner sense of self- control, humor, and so on.

While in trance, you’re asked to create an image that represents your phobia. You’re then asked to drift back in time and pick up wonderful, positive feelings that help you cope, and bring them forward to the present. You then are guided to fuse your positive resources to the image you created of your phobia.

By doing this, the resources overlay the anxiety the image produces (good old reciprocal inhibition!), and helps to alter the way you think about what- ever it is you were scared of. When you are out and about and eventually encounter your phobia; you're fine – calm and relaxed and wondering what all the fuss was about.

Trying the fast phobia cure

This one is worth a brief mention as many hypnotherapists use it. It comes from a school of therapy called Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), which hypnotherapists have adapted so that it can be carried out in trance.

The fast phobia cure essentially disrupts the way you maintain the thoughts and images you hold in your mind about your phobia.

Following EMDR

Not strictly hypnosis this one, though many hypnotherapists are trained in its use. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a very powerful technique originally developed as a treatment for trauma. However, it has also been shown to be very effective in the treatment of phobias.

In EMDR, you are asked to follow your therapist's fingers with your eyes as you hold certain images or thoughts in your mind. The idea is that this speed up the way your mind processes upsetting events, allowing you to get rid of that phobic fear.

Picturing your life without your phobia

The images, feelings, thoughts, and pictures you had in your mind with regard to your phobia are what encourage and egg on the phobia in the first place. After the main part of your therapy is complete, your therapist will take you forward in time, in your mind, so that you experience yourself coping effectively and thinking and feeling in a more positive way about whatever it was that used to cause your phobic response. This technique is called pseudo orientation in time

The idea is to reinforce those changes made during therapy to the images, associated thoughts, and so on, which have been causing your anxiety. This allows you to view your phobia differently; to no longer view it as something that strikes terror into your heart, rather to view it as something you know you can cope with very effectively. It is the icing on top of the proverbial therapy cake.

Confronting Your Phobia:

A Contract for Action

If the icing on the cake is pseudo orientation in time, then the cherry that tops it off is the contract for action. No, this doesn't mean getting your lawyer in to look over some complicated legal contract.

Far from it; the contract for action is simply an agreement between you and your hypnotherapist that, after your complete therapy, you will go out and confront your phobia. Some hypnotherapists may even write down what they want you to do

in the form of a contract and ask you to sign it (remember it's only symbolic, and definitely not legally binding!).

You may be thinking that this sounds very daunting. And, yes, it may seem daunting to you now, but remember that you're asked to do this only after your therapy is complete. So, you should be feeling fine about your phobic object or situation. Also, as it's you who is making the choice to go out and confront your phobia, you are in complete control of the situation.

So, why would your hypnotherapist ask you to do this? Well, simply to find out if your therapy worked. You can lie back in trance imagining whatever your therapist wants you to imagine, listening to his suggestions to your heart's content, but unless this translates into your real life, you still have your phobia. And after all, you went to see your hypnotherapist in the first place so that you can face up to your phobia.

Part of what makes a phobia a phobia is avoidance, so don't avoid going to see your hypnotherapist. Don't let that anxiety build and your phobia get worse. Pick up the telephone now and book your appointment.

Finding a Hypnotherapist

Finding someone you trust to help you repair anything you value can be difficult. How do you find the right person? How do you avoid being ripped off by a charlatan? Even if you meet someone who seems pleasant, honest, and qualified, how do you know that they will do a satisfactory job?

These questions are even more relevant when you are looking for someone to work on personal issues, particularly hypnosis. This chapter helps you become an informed consumer where selecting a qualified hypnotherapist is concerned.

Looking Out for a Hero

It's always ideal to have a strong recommendation from someone you know and trust when looking for a hypnotherapist. But this is not often possible. So, we help you to cut through the confusion surrounding exactly how to choose an excellent hypnotherapist for you.

The hypnotherapy resources in the Appendix of this book includes a list of professional organizations of hypnotherapists throughout Europe, the US, Canada, and Australia. If you have access to a library or the Internet, you can contact these organizations to ask for a list of qualified hypnotherapists near you.

Knowing what to look for

Do not be impressed by a string of letters after someone's name particularly if you don't know what the letters mean! These letters may reflect a recognized, quality hypnotherapy training over a number of years or they may be letters gained from a few training weekends.

There are broadly two streams of practicing hypnotherapists:

Those with professional training, linked to a creditable hypnotherapy organization: A professional undergoes a very lengthy, involved training. This training, which can take from anywhere from two to four years, depending on national requirements, includes many lectures, supervisions, practical sessions, and examinations to ensure that the trainee understands and can demonstrate a certain level of expertise.

Those who took the fast track: Fast-trackers have only minimal training often just a couple of weekends, perhaps less than a month often with no quality control.

It's safe to say that a lengthy training (a minimum of two years) is more likely to represent a quality training.

Training length

How exactly do you know whether your hypnotherapist's training is a quality one or a non-quality one? Length of training is one of the first things to look at. If the training programme is not about two years long as a rule, it may be an indication of a less than reputable training.

Keep in mind that requirements vary from country to country. For example, the United States requires PhD-level training to become a qualified hypno- therapist in certain states, whereas this level of training is not required for professional status in the United Kingdom.

This is not to say that UK hypnotherapy training is less rigorous than in the US. For example, the London College of Clinical

Hypnosis (LCCH), which runs training centers across the UK and Europe, provides an extremely thorough training for medical and nonmedical practitioners. Its training programme is approved by a variety of national professional organizations. So, similar to US trainings, the LCCH trains doctors, dentists, and lay practitioners to become hypnotherapists.

However, the UK places less of an emphasis on obtaining the research component/dissertation associated with earning a PhD in the US, hence European trainings tend to be around two years duration rather than four.

You can try a couple of methods to find out about your potential hypnotherapist's training:

Ask the hypnotherapist directly

Look at the qualifications after their name on their brochure or Web site, and do either an Internet or a library search on these qualifications. The qualifications will be associated with a hypnotherapy training organization, which will provide you with training information regarding that qualification.

Training organizations

It is important to determine which organizations are the quality ones and which are the 'fast-tracking' ones. Check the Appendix for reputable hypnotherapy organizations. These national hypnotherapy organizations can help guide you to a qualified therapist.

We strongly recommend that you identify practitioners through a professional hypnotherapy organization, as opposed to random adverts you may come across.

This is not to imply that legitimate, professionally qualified hypnotherapists don't distribute leaflets, or advertise in creative ways – sometimes they do. However, mixed in with the legitimate adverts are significantly less qualified practitioners whom you probably wouldn't want to work on your worst enemy. . . or, perhaps you would!

Some therapists make special offers at different times throughout the year, such as special prices for stopping smoking in the New Year, or summer holiday discounts.

Check with the main professional hypnotherapy organizations – listed in the Appendix – to ensure that the advert you are looking at is from a respectable practitioner.

Cruising the information superhighway

The Internet is a fabulous way to find out about hypnotherapists, hypnosis, and its many possible applications. We list the main accrediting hypnotherapy organizations, in both America and Europe, in the Appendix. Use their Web sites not only to find a hypnotherapist registered with them, but also to discover more about the various areas of hypnotherapy.

The Internet makes it so easy to find anything you want; you may be attempted to bypass these organizations and just search on a phrase like hypnotherapist + your city name. We strongly advise

against this approach to finding a hypnotherapist. Why? Because you want to ensure that you get a well-trained, professional, qualified hypnotherapist.

Try looking for hypnotherapy training organizations and compare the type of training they offer. Most of these organizations have a section on their Web site to help you find a therapist who's trained with them.

For example, you could start your Internet search by searching on a phrase such as hypnotherapy training on a popular search engine. As you link to the organizations that result from your search, you'll quickly get a feel for the type of organizations that appeal to you. You can then find a hypnotherapist from one of those organizations or societies. Happy shopping!

Even if you don't have Internet access, you probably have a friend or relative who does. Failing that, most local libraries now have Internet terminals and will be glad to help you

If possible, get a recommendation from someone you know who has had a positive experience with a hypnotherapist. This is by far the best possible means of finding a good You can casually mention to people that you read an article about hypnosis and are interested in experiencing it for yourself. You don't have to share your specific problem. (In fact, please avoid telling your work colleagues about deeply personal problems – they may say things that are unhelpful based on their own discomfort.)

You may be surprised at how many people around you have seen a hypnotherapist. Many times, you hear straightforward success stories of people who have stopped smoking, had their phobias removed, and achieved other goals through hypnosis.

Don't be too quick to judge if you hear a report that someone tried hypnosis but it didn't take away their problem. Admittedly, sometimes the hypnotherapist is at fault, but people often sabotage their own therapy or otherwise make choices to continue, or resume, the habits they went to a hypnotherapist to be cured of. A hypnotherapist can help you sort out your problems; it's your responsibility to help that process along.

If, for any reason, you don't feel comfortable asking friends or colleagues for referrals, you have a couple of alternatives:

Ask a medical doctor: Your family doctor or GP may know of a hypnotherapist who has helped their own patients. Many hypnotherapists receive referrals from local GPs and you can be sure that your doctor won't recommend anyone that they don't have a good relationship with.

Ring a clinic where hypnotherapists practice: You can often find where hypnotherapists practice by looking up 'hypnotherapist' in the Yellow Pages. The listings you find there may range from individual private practices, to psychology departments based in colleges and universities, to health clinics.

For example, I (Mike) work sessional in a clinic in South London, along with a couple of other hypnotherapists. We often receive new clients from people who have seen the Web site and just rung the office. If you talk to the clinic receptionist or office manager, they may even be able to help you to determine which particular practitioner may be best suited to help you, if you can broadly describe your objective. But again, if you don't want them to know the nature of your visit, you don't have to.

Now that you have names of a hypnotherapist, or perhaps a couple, what next? The enthusiasm of a friend does not necessarily mean that their hypnotherapist is the right one for you. At this stage, you're in a position similar to when one friend says to another,

'You really must meet my friend – you two will have so much in common.' Then when you actually do meet said friend, both of you find that you don't exactly click. You may even feel awkward around each other after your mutual friend has told each of you about each other so enthusiastically. You definitely want to avoid this type of experience when shopping for a hypnotherapist, but how do you do this? The following subsections tell you how.

Researching by word-of-mouth

If you received a referral from a friend, ask the friend questions about the hypnotherapist they told you so fondly about. Find out how their hypnotherapist made them feel, what background the hypnotherapist has, and even their physical appearance (you

wouldn't want to go to an obese hypnotherapist to help you to lose weight would you?).

You can also ask your friend about the hypnotherapist's background. Your friend may not have a lot of information, but it can be useful if you decide to meet with their hypnotherapist. Knowing how someone came into the work they're doing, particularly someone in a helping profession like hypnotherapy, can tell you a lot about that person.

You have a greater chance of success in your own hypnotherapy if you feel positively about your practitioner. Knowing a bit about their background can be a great help in that way. If you feel positively before you even meet them, it can only be an aid to your therapy.

Making sure your hypnotherapist is professionally trained

You can ask the hypnotherapist directly where they trained, how long the course was, and what qualification they hold. Sometimes therapists put this information on their brochures. You can also find out about their training from the Internet (see the preceding 'Cruising the information superhighway' section for tips on how to research), or through professional hypnotherapy organizations.

Keep in mind that different countries have different standards of training. Make sure that you understand the standards for the area you're in. Don't assume the qualifications are the same as in

the country you're familiar with. Don't forget that you can ask directly.

Just to repeat, the training is a really crucial factor. The rule of thumb is, the longer the training, the higher the chances are that you will find someone who is a more proficient hypnotherapist.

You can then call each practitioner and speak with them – briefly – about how they work, whether they're experienced with your problem, and what their rates are.

Most practitioners will appreciate your asking considered questions, because your way of being serious about ensuring being successful in your therapy.

Asking the right questions

Most hypnotherapists do an initial assessment the first time you meet. The point of this meeting is to let both of you get to know each other, in order to determine whether you're comfortable working with each other.

Little or no therapy may occur during this first meeting, but you can expect to be asked lots of questions about your background in terms of how as it relates to your problem (more on this in the next section), and you can take the opportunity to ask questions of your own.

Using your instinct is key here. Some questions you may want to ask include:

How long have you been working as a hypnotherapist? You want some- one who has a few years of experience at least.

What's your professional background? Earlier sections in this chapter discuss the need for a substantial training. Added bonuses may be if the hypnotherapist has other qualifications such as medical training, or is also a counsellor, or psychotherapist. How did you choose to become a hypnotherapist? The answer to this question can tell you a lot about the person's motivation. If you get any answers about the decision being based on making money, ring another therapist!

Have you treated clients with my problem before? Hopefully, yes!

What approach would you take in working with me to achieve my goal? The hypnotherapist should be able to briefly outline the process, but if they say that they will need to see you again before discussing treatment, this is also legitimate.

How many sessions will the treatment involve? You should be wary of any quick answers, with the possible exception of one-session stop smoking.

If therapy needs several sessions due to working on serious psychological issues, ask whether the session fees remain the same, or whether the therapist would consider a discount.

You can probably find other questions to ask, but hopefully this list will get you on your way. Try not to overdo the questions, but make sure that you find out all you need to know without being

unduly fussy. You're aiming to find someone you trust, so it is important to get your questions answered.

Selecting Your Therapist

Any hypnotherapy session is a collaboration between you and your hypnotherapist. That means you work together towards a common goal. You can think of it this way: both you and your therapist are travelling in a car. You are the driver and your therapist are the navigator. You know where your journey's end is, but you're not sure how to get there.

Your navigator – the hypnotherapist – is there to give suggestions as to which route to take. In order to get to your final destination, the pair of you have to collaborate as you travel along on that journey. Choosing the right navigator for your journey is an important part of reaching your destination.

Don't feel pressured into choosing a hypnotherapist before you're ready, but once you make a decision, it's courteous to inform any other hypnotherapists you met with that you will not be working with them. You can do this via their answering service, or by a postcard, if you don't want to speak to them.

Weigh up the information you gathered from telephone interviews about each therapist's qualifications, experience, and personality. (Give extra marks for a sense of humor, which isn't essential, but it sure helps!)

You may have more specific criteria as well. For example, if your issues are related to gender, choosing someone of the same gender may be relevant to you. Likewise, choosing a therapist of the same race, nationality, sexual orientation, and so on may be a priority for you. But be flexible on these issues, if possible. There is much to be said for choosing someone who is not from your exact background. Sometimes a different perspective is invaluable.

Sift through all the information you gathered, then choose the person who made you feel most comfortable and had the attitude you most appreciate. Let that person be your hypnotherapist.

Trusting your gut instinct in choosing a therapist is a good step to take in your hypnotherapy because ultimately, hypnotherapy gives you the tools and encouragement to trust that your unconscious can heal you.

CHAPTER 5

Hypnosis Gastric Band And Weight Loss

A Gastric Bypass Worked Magic

Margie struggled with her weight for many years. Thirty pounds were making her miserable. One day she watched a daytime talk show that changed her life. The guests on the show spoke of having had a new type of surgery called gastric bypass in which their intestines were bypassed so that only a portion of the foods they ate could be absorbed. They were enthusiastic while

describing what sounded like effortless weight loss without dieting or exercise. One comment that really struck Margie in particular was, “The food just went right through me and was unabsorbed.” This was in April.

In June, Margie’s husband, Howard, looked at her and casually asked, “Have you lost weight?” She got up abruptly and left the room without saying a word. He dismissed her reaction, thinking that she was being overly sensitive about her weight. A few days later, noticing that she was radiantly happy and she did look thinner, he asked again, “Are you losing weight?” She again left the room abruptly without a word. Howard wondered if something was wrong. While noticing that she seemed happier, he also noted that she was preparing sumptuous meals and luscious deserts that were usually taboo. This scene replayed until a week later when he followed her to the bedroom and told her that she looked thinner, and he wanted to know if she was all right, or if some health problem was causing her weight loss. She said, “I don’t want to talk about it.” He persisted and she admitted, “Nothing is wrong. I am just afraid that if I talk about it the spell will be broken.” Margie told him about seeing people on TV who had gastric bypass surgery. They lost weight, did not diet, and could eat what they liked because the food went right through them. She said that when she lay in bed that night, she told herself that she had gastric bypass surgery, and now the food went right through her. She then pretended what it might be like to lose weight this way. A few days later she was troubled by diarrhea and frequent urgent trips to the bathroom. She called the physician’s office to make an appointment, and the nurse asked her to describe her problems. She told the nurse about the

diarrhea and heard herself saying, “The food goes right through me—it’s as if I’ve had a ...” and hung up the phone thinking, “Oh my God! It’s working!” She realized that almost immediately after a meal or snack, she had to go to the bathroom. She felt just like the guests on the TV show.

Margie’s energy was up, and her spirits were even higher. By the end of the month, she had lost eighteen pounds. She was eating whatever she desired. To Margie, it seemed to be magic, and she feared that speaking with others might undermine her belief and change its power. Howard observed that she had lost weight and was eating without restraint, but he also noticed changes that she was unaware of. She was no longer snacking, her food choices were much wiser, her portion sizes were smaller, and she had much more energy and was more active. She was eating better because she felt better. As the years passed, whenever her weight needed adjustment, she would give herself an imaginary gastric bypass until she regained her perfect weight. You certainly don’t have to give yourself a gastric bypass, but this story vividly illustrates the power of belief. Just imagine what beliefs you can make true for you.

Talking to the Mind of Your Body with Messages and Suggestions

During the trancework, you will hear my voice speaking to two parts of your mind. One part of your mind is your conscious thinking mind. That is the part of you that is excellent at telling time, making change, learning how to read and write; it is your

“thinking mind.” Throughout the trancework, you’re thinking mind will continue doing its normal activity of having thoughts. So, you don’t have to worry about clearing your mind, or emptying your mind, or putting your mind totally at peace. Simply notice that your mind will continue “thinking,” and your job is to unplug or disconnect just enough so that you do not have to react to those thoughts. You give them permission to stream by. If your “to do” list keeps popping up, for example, just allow it to stream by, rather than dwell on it. The other part of your mind I will be speaking to is what we call your subconscious mind—

“sub” because it is below your thinking level of awareness. It is the “mind of your body.” Your subconscious mind has the wisdom to manage your body’s trillions of cells, your body chemistry, and all the body’s functions of breathing, digestion, the nervous system, the endocrine system, and the immune system. The mind-body has an immense amount of wisdom, and, in doing your hypnosis, you are accumulating and acquiring additional wisdom that the mind of your body will act upon, consistent with your motivation, your beliefs, and your expectations, to help you with your weight loss.

You always have the opportunity to adjust and tailor the words being spoken or the images described to best fit you. This tailoring process is very important. It has to fit you, because it is your self-hypnosis, and all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. As we’ve said, hypnosis is not something done to you. It is something that you are being guided to experience, and as you experience it, you are learning it. Repetition and rehearsal create solid ability and knowledge within you. You might even call it subconscious

knowledge because your subconscious mind can carry it out for you without your having to even think of it. So, the thoughts and ideas that may have been troubling you about your weight, or your inability to lose weight, are now being changed to something that supports your perfect body. And your mind-body is memorizing the experience so that it can refer to that experience instead of the unwanted results of the past.

For example, if you believe that you are a “yo-yo” dieter because you have always regained the weight you have lost, you may use your trancework to suggest, “Every day I am losing weight, and my body remembers how to make this a permanent ability. I am achieving my perfect weight.” Subconscious knowledge, or the mind-body wisdom that is learned from your trancework, is very much like when you learned to ride a bicycle or drive a car. When you were first learning, there seemed to be many things to pay attention to at the same time, but very quickly your mind-body took on this knowledge so that now you can drive safely, and you do not even have to tell your feet what to do.

One of our clients, Amy, told us that when she first began using self-hypnosis, she would tell her body what she wanted her ideal weight to be. She would carefully and vividly dial in the set-point of body weight with an image of adjusting a thermostat to the number of pounds she desired. She focused her attention on these images. Her mind-body responded with some creative outcomes. She discovered that her weight fluctuated within only a plus-or-minus-five-pound range around the set-point she imagined. As if automatically, when her weight increased, she would experience a craving for fruits and vegetables and would forget about desserts. She also felt more inclined to exercise and

would feel full before completing a meal. She described the results: “It is as if my body has an autopilot to make these adjustments automatically for me now.”

Perfect Mind—Perfect Weight

Perfect mind and perfect weight.” The phrase may sound like a myth to you. What are perfect mind and perfect weight? They are the realistic terms you can use as you pursue weight loss. “Realistic?” you ask. “How can anything be ‘perfect,’ let alone my weight and my thoughts about my weight?” Well, remember what we said about the power of belief and believing. Would it serve your interest to ever desire or aspire to anything less than perfection for yourself? Indulge us here for a while as we explain why you can think of your mind and weight as “perfect.”

Perfect weight is the weight that is right for you. It is the weight that is achievable and consistent with what you want and what you are willing to give yourself and except for yourself. More importantly, your perfect weight gives you the body that is healthy, the body that moves with ease, and the one in which you feel good about yourself and happy. And what is perfect mind? You already have a perfect mind. It is flawless. However, there may be some thoughts in that perfect mind of yours that are giving you unwanted results.

There may be something you hold in mind, perhaps habits or patterns, which give you unwanted results. But you can use your

perfect mind to align your thoughts to give you what you want. You can use your mind to achieve the body weight you want.

In the Twinkling of an Eye

Your present body is the result of your thoughts and beliefs. You have acted out these thoughts and beliefs through your lifestyle, which created your present weight. You have not made any mistakes, despite what you might be thinking of yourself; rather, you have just experienced unwanted results. These unwanted results are a direct consequence of misaligned thoughts and beliefs about yourself that have become patterns of behavior or lifestyle. The Self-Hypnosis Diet is about using your perfect mind to align your thoughts to give you the results you want. You really can use your mind to achieve the body weight you want.

Let us look at some of the learning that has taken place in your life that has gotten you to where you are now with your body weight. Did you wake up one morning, and there you were with the extra pounds? Or was it a gradual accumulation over time? Or maybe you have known nothing else since early childhood. Whatever the case, there are many factors that created your present body:

- Food Choices
- Eating Habits
- The Self-Critic In You
- Economic Background
- Emotional Background

- Influence Of Family
- Influence Of Friends
- Cultural Background

These and many other factors were learned in your life and became your beliefs, which in turn became patterns of action that produced your present body.

We will be more specific. Notice which of the following factors seem true for you in your earlier years. That is, think about what you did learn in your childhood about food and eating.

What types of groceries did your family purchase?

What foods did your parents cook, and how were they usually prepared?

Did you eat exclusively at home or frequently grab fast food?

Were you served fresh, wholesome, home-cooked foods, or did you eat mostly processed and highly refined foods, fried foods, and “junk” food?

- Was there mindful attention to nutrition, or was there reckless disregard for what your family ate?
- What did you learn about eating mindfully?
- Were you taught that healthy food choices led to healthier bodies?
- Did anyone teach you how to know what is healthy food and what is not?
- Were your food choices based on what tasted or looked good or cost less?
- Did your family or school teach you about healthy lifestyles and sound nutrition, or was your “nutrition

education” via TV commercials and food manufacturers’ advertisements?

What did you learn as a child? What became your beliefs about eating, food, and your body? Examine your socioeconomic or sociocultural origins, and see if they had an influence on how and what you learned to eat. Over thirty-five years ago, sociological studies pointed out weight problems in the lower and working class based on their consumption patterns of what has been referred to as “poverty- level foods,” such as hot dogs, canned meats, and processed luncheon meats.

Cultural groups have also been studied to understand how their dietary patterns and foods, such as cooking with lard or eating a diet of high-fat and fried foods, may result in greater body fat. These influences are easily accepted since they are “normal” to the group or class.

Next, let us look at your adolescent years. During adolescence, were there any changes in your weight? As a boy, were you encouraged to heap more food on your plate? “Look at him eat! Surely he is going to grow into a big man!” (There is a telling metaphor!) Or were you admonished to eat less? When you were a budding young girl, did a wise woman take you under her wing and share with you the marvel of menses and the wonderment of body changes, including the natural increase in body fat with the development of breasts and wider hips? Were you aware during puberty that unless your body naturally increased body fat by at least 22 percent, it would not properly mature and produce menses? Or was all that “hushed up” as an embarrassing

development? It was probably during adolescence that you learned there is a stigma regarding overweight people. Spend a few minutes writing down the factors that seem to be true for you in your earlier years. Ponder the experiences and influences that are still shaping your present body.

In high school, the athletes in school sports were always a healthy weight, and so were the cheerleaders and homecoming queens. What early beliefs about your popularity and selfimage may have formed from your social interactions in high school? What did you learn about physical activity, and what habits did you create? Were you introduced to physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle, through sports or family outings of hikes or walks? Or was the blaring TV a standard fixture, enticing everyone to the couch?

Next is a question that most people have not been mindful of during their development. As you were growing up, was the focus of self-care centered on fashionable clothing, makeup, and hairstyles, or on wholesome food, regular physical activity, and intellectual and spiritual nourishment? What about now? Spend a few more minutes writing down the factors that seem to be true for you in recent years. What experiences and influences formed the thoughts, which turned into the beliefs, which turned into your present body?

After high school, you probably moved away from home. Suddenly you were no longer captive to your family's lifestyle. Did you become more mindful of your choices, or did you begin eating with disregard? If you entered into a close relationship,

what compromises or agreements regarding food and physical activity did you enter into also? Most relationships develop out of similar interests, such as food preferences and eating styles. Ultimately, the relationship includes eating patterns and preferences that are a result of compromise. Have your relationships encouraged wise food choices and healthy eating? Perhaps you have experienced pregnancy. Did you learn how to have a healthy pregnancy and nourish a healthy baby within you? Or did you add pounds onto pounds? After giving birth, did your lifestyle help you regain your normal weight or inhibit it? If you were active in sports or league games, did your career or family responsibilities take priority and remove these fitness activities from your routine? Did you adjust diet and exercise accordingly, or did the weight starts to accumulate? Did an injury, accident, or illness occur that disrupted a regular physical activity that was supportive of healthy weight?

As you can see, how you got to where you are now was certainly no accident. You learned from the people around you—or you absorbed from your environment—how to make food choices, how to eat, how to take care of yourself physically and emotionally. Whether the ideas you learned were good and healthful or not so good and not so healthful, they became your beliefs, and became you and your body as it is today. Remember, you did not do anything wrong, but you have experienced the results of living and eating that were consistent with your thoughts and beliefs.

Your Perfect Mind Relearning

It is easy to understand how you acquired or “learned” to weigh more than your perfect weight. And it will be easy to make new choices, to relearn new patterns, and to create new and more healthful habits. How do we learn? We learn by modeling another person, studying books (like this one), using other resources, and practicing the actions that produce the results we seek. The most effective and lasting learning involves practice and repetition. How you practice is supremely important.

Pretend for a moment that you are a violinist. You are rehearsing for a grand symphony performance in New York City. Your piece has a segment of five bars that are very difficult for your fingers to play correctly. There are two ways for you to practice. The first, which is very ineffective, is to play that difficult segment quickly, over, and over and over again, continually playing the same mistakes, but hoping your fingers will finally play it correctly. The second way to practice, which is always successful, is to play the segment very, very slowly, mindfully “teaching” your fingers how to move, creating the “muscle memory” for the correct movements, until your fingers have learned the movements and can play the entire segment correctly and at the proper tempo with little, if any, conscious attention.

The important point here is that you are giving your attention to practicing correctly. By being mindful of what you are practicing, and how you are practicing it, you are learning the new patterns that are replacing the old patterns. You are practicing the activity that produces your perfect body weight.

You, too, can create “muscle memory” by practicing mindful eating (eating slowly, chewing thoroughly, swallowing the last bite before you take the next bite) or a more mindful, slower fork-to-mouth movement. You can also practice an entire dining style that becomes conditioned as a mind-body memory or learning, which quickly becomes automatic. As it becomes automatic or second nature, you do not have to even think about it.

Practice the Results You Want

Let’s put some thought into determining your perfect weight. After all, you need to practice the “perfect” you before it can become real for you. First, however, we must debunk several false “ideal images” in our culture. Think for a moment about what comes to mind when you consider the “ideal body.” The svelte athlete and the tall willowy model are the false “ideal images” plastered on every glossy magazine cover and portrayed in every TV advertisement and Hollywood movie. We are talking about weight in this book, so we won’t even mention the perfect hair, perfect teeth and smile, perfect nose, flawless complexion, and perfectly sculpted body. Right now, we’re just focusing on weight. In reality, these “ideal images” are slyly crafted composites, created through the lens of a camera, with layers of make-up, and crews on the sidelines with brushes, sprays, glitter, and other photographic magic. Underneath it all is often a young person, sadly emaciated, with a modeling career centered on food deprivation and skin-deep beauty. Not very pleasant, is it? Not very real either, is it?

So, throw away the “ideal images” of our culture, and begin your practice. Just pretend how your perfect weight will support you in every way. Dream about how healthy you will feel, how strong and energetic you will be, and how easily your body will move. Make believe how good you will feel about yourself, your renewed self-confidence and selfesteem. Visualize how much more you will enjoy your life, your friends, and your family. Envision it all. Think about your perfect weight and how it supports you in every way. Indulge in your fantasy, just as you did as a playful child. Indulge in your pretending, knowing that those reveries are just the beginning of creating the new patterns that lead to your perfect weight. In other words, start living as if you have already achieved the results you want.

Start Where You Are Today

A Chinese proverb says: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” You simply start where you are at this moment, taking your steps toward your perfect weight. Yesterday and tomorrow are not now. Start where you are today. You begin by discovering and experimenting with new patterns, new behaviors, and new choices that influence your perfect weight.

These new thoughts begin to crowd out those old patterns that gave you unwanted results. It is much like going on a clothes shopping spree. When you hang new clothes in your closet, you make room by folding up the old clothes and putting them in a bag for someone else. Making positive choices based on what you want and putting them in mind, along with doing your self-

hypnosis, will help you comfortably adopt all the new patterns, behaviors, and choices that influence your perfect weight. Let go of all hope for a better past, and proceed with what you can do right now. As you go forward making changes each day, you are accumulating a recent past that supports giving you the perfect weight you have chosen.

Everything Is a Choice

Everything is a choice. If you consciously agree with what you read here and what you hear during the trancework, your subconscious says, “Yes!” or “I’ll do it for you!” That is, your subconscious mind, your mind-body, will reflect what you choose and agree to accept or believe. Just as you can choose what to believe, you can choose what to learn. And with repetition and consistency, you are creating the learned responses that quickly become automatic or second nature. So, in essence, the choices you are making, along with the thoughts and actions you correctly practice, give you the results you desire.

Approach Your Goal Like a Hobby

Hobbies give us the satisfaction of learning new things and occupying our minds with pleasant experiences that lead to an outcome that also pleases us. Approach your weight loss effort as if it were a new hobby. Indulge yourself in magazines, tools, and books, perhaps even classes, and interest groups. Dedicate a special area of your home to your hobby. Just as other hobbies give you a refreshing break from work activities, let your weight loss hobby also serve to give you a refreshing alternative to your

job or work. Even when you are at work, you may find wonderful ways to incorporate time and attention to this hobby. In this regard, begin to explore all of the resources available to your new recreational interest, that is, your weight loss hobby. Be on the lookout for anything that serves your hobby interests. The Internet, bookstores, libraries, and newsstands are full of resources for you. You do not know where some of the simplest, yet most powerfully inspiring ideas will come to you. Do not limit yourself to diets and advertisements about weight loss. Let everything in this world now serve your hobby. You are creating this hobby. Enjoy it for yourself exclusively.

Magnificent Makeover

Now this is a very special idea for you to make your weight loss both enjoyable and effortless. You may be like many others who have found dieting and exercise to be monumental chores, smacking of obligation. It does not have to be that way. We propose that you approach your weight loss as if it were a very special prize or reward. Many television shows have selected individuals for a “makeover” where they may get the royal treatment in changing their appearance in some positive way. They usually do rapid makeovers with makeup, hair styles, and clothing. Allow yourself the luxury of accepting a magnificent makeover of your body weight. Put the idea in your mind that any weight loss activity is now part of your magnificent makeover. And this makeover is very special, for you are exploring, adopting, and integrating lifetime patterns of eating wholesome foods, enjoying healthy exercise, and keeping your body in the shape and condition that make you proud, confident,

and satisfied with yourself. Allow this magnificent makeover to be a very special prize, so special that you embrace all the new activities, new food choices, and powerful beliefs deeply in your subconscious mind. The trancework we have prepared for you is right on target for your magnificent makeover.

You Can Ask for Anything

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, a perfect weight may have sounded like a myth to you. But we are serious, and we want you to be serious and committed to putting these ideas into mind and practice. One of the nicest features about self-hypnosis is that you can ask for and bring into subconscious anything you desire. You deserve the weight that is perfect for you, the weight that lets your body move freely with vitality and health, and the body that you are proud of creating each day. Emotionally, these are the body and weight that lift your spirits, build greater confidence, and free you from past emotional and physical patterns that are no longer “perfect” for you. In your mind, you are giving yourself a magnificent makeover. Let yourself delight in all that contributes to your perfect weight. This is your body, your life, and your business. You are the only person you have to please. You are the only person who can make you happy. By the weigh, what others may think of your hobby, your methods, and your makeover, is none of your business.

Feeding Feeling

Grace's naturally stunning beauty and charm earned her a full scholarship to a prestigious modeling school. She dropped out after six months as her weight ballooned to over two hundred pounds, where it remained for the next fifteen years despite persistent weight loss efforts.

Jack, fifty years old, has been overweight since high school, despite playing sports, doing regular exercise, and making numerous attempts at weight loss. Whenever his weight begins to drop, he feels fearful until he regains the weight.

Mary has gained and lost the same twenty-five pounds through her adult life. She even knows the pattern and triggers, yet she feels helpless to change them and lose the weight once and for all.

Alex is a very successful executive in a competitive computer industry, who constantly struggles with his weight. He works hard, earns a high income, and can multitask better than most, but cannot control the size of his waist.

Ted was CEO of an international resource corporation. His friends watched as he progressively moved from being a picture of health to a health risk due to excess weight gain.

Grace, Jack, Mary, Alex, and Ted are real cases we saw in therapy for weight loss using hypnosis. Like many others, these individuals once thought that eating and food were the problems causing their excess weight. This chapter is about what they learned to be the true culprit—the emotional mechanisms that control or influence eating and weight gain. We will look at how underlying emotional issues are expressed in ways that cause and

maintain excess weight. We will explore the use of hypnosis to uncover the role of emotions and weight. We are not going to talk about eating disorders—such as anorexia, bulimia, and pica or other compulsive behaviors. This chapter is about the most common ways in which our bodies can subconsciously gain weight and keep it on.

The Mind-Body Mirror

Since these cases are from our mind-body medicine practice, let us briefly look at some of the typical ways that physical conditions are generated by the mind-body. There are many examples in which suppressed and repressed emotions find expression by manifesting as physical symptoms and conditions. Emotions and emotional conflicts that are not consciously acknowledged, expressed, or given voice can or will be expressed by the physical body.

Here is a very common example. When anger is not acknowledged and expressed, it may cause muscles in the head, neck, and shoulders to tighten and tense, which in turn creates a tension headache. This is the literal expression of something or someone that is a pain in the neck. Another person experiencing the same feelings of anger might be burning up over the situation, and experience heartburn, indigestion, or a fever. The skin is an organ that is highly responsive to emotions, and a condition of urticaria (hives) may erupt when there is someone getting under their skin or rubbing them the wrong way or when the person is itching to do or say something, or some emotion is erupting to the surface.

Jack Eats to Live

The case of fifty-year-old Jack was different, and illustrates another common emotional conflict. He was very active in sports throughout his life and exercised regularly, but would frequently overeat just enough to maintain excessive weight. He was only twenty to twenty-five pounds overweight, and despite wanting to lose those pounds, he described feeling “fearful” whenever he actually lost weight. When I took his history, he reported only one event that was “scary.” He told me that when he was ten years old, he had a serious illness that caused him to stay at home, out of school, for one year. He thought it was some type of tuberculosis. He told me that the illness was in the past, and he felt that it now had no influence or effect on his life. We used hypnosis to revisit that time and let him see if it had any relationship to his weight problem. While in the daydream-like state we call trance, Jack described having his bed in the living room because his bedroom had begun to feel like a hospital room.

He liked being in the living room because that was where all the action in the home took place. While still in trance, he began to laugh as he described the scene and told me that he used to think that if he stayed in the living room, he would be able to keep “living.” He also recalled seeing his parents’ fear over his loss of weight and frail body. They seemed to relax only after he had eaten enough. After the trancework, we discussed his perceptions of his parents’ fear that he was so thin he would die. In the 1930s through the 1950s, this was a common fear of parents whose children were stricken with serious illness. Jack

talked to his body and verbalized his now-adult rationale with his body. He wrote some affirming statements about his health and vitality on cards and kept them handy to read throughout the day. He reprogrammed his mind-body to accept his vitality and release the weight. In addition to losing excess weight, he also discovered that his nervousness about going to the doctor's office ceased.

Physical Hunger—Mouth Hunger—Emotional Hunger

Physical hunger is the sensation that your body creates to get the nutrients it needs to live. You feel this need to eat to satisfy the physical body, to regulate and balance blood sugar levels, and to fuel your body's vital energy and engine. Mouth hunger is the desire you might feel to keep eating after you are satisfied, because something tastes so good. Emotional hunger is the need to eat to feel better emotionally. And as we saw, you may not even be aware that your subconscious or mind-body is creating a desire to eat for an emotional reason.

If you feel that it is not easy to determine which type of hunger you are feeling, you are not alone. Most of us grew up in a culture that produced mixed messages about what our bodies feel and need. Here is an example. When you were little, were you encouraged to eat all of your food, to clean your plate? We would be surprised if you did not get this instruction growing up. But what did that message do to your ability to stay in tune with the signals that your body gives you about hunger? The admonishment to clean your plate teaches that even if you are

not hungry, do not listen to your body, just eat everything on your plate. No wonder your ability to decipher your body's hunger signals gets confused with other signals.

Unconscious Eating

In addition, to eating to satisfy hunger, you may have learned to multitask while eating. That is, you can be eating and actually be unaware that you are eating. Have you ever experienced eating while reading a book or watching television or driving a car, and discovered that you ate most of the meal and did not realize it until the food was almost gone? Or have you been engaged in conversation with someone while eating or even on the phone while eating and discovered that you paid more attention to the conversation than to eating, tasting, or feelings of fullness? The point here is that by staying in tune with the signals and sensations of your body, you can stay in better control of the feelings that cause you to eat as well as those feelings that let you know when to stop eating.

The Emotional Continuum

We would like to present the idea of an emotional continuum, where one end is negative emotions and the opposite end is positive emotions. On the negative end are the feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, anger, hate, and fear. At the positive end of the continuum are happiness, bliss, joy, compassion, contentment, peace, and love. In regard to the effects of emotions, we would like you to think of them as either positive or negative, with the negative end called fear, and the positive end called love. Reduce each of the emotions to its representative

effect of promoting either fear or love. When you identify the respective emotions and their effects as fear or love—one or the other—it will be easier for you to choose the ones you want and to release the ones you do not want. Eating for emotional reasons has, at its core, the attempt to get rid of fear. By choosing the positive, you produce the favorable conditions for happiness, which nourishes your perfect weight. Associating you're eating with the positive emotions (love) is one way of unlearning the negative patterns of eating and treating food as love. It is fine to love your food, but do not make food a substitute for love and the other positive emotions. Challenge and erase the negative emotions (fear) with what they require, which is not food.

Every time you have an emotion or are about to eat, check in with the emotional continuum line in your head.

The Antidote to Stress

Just as our responses to emotions can create unhealthy eating patterns, such as excess snacking and unhealthy food choices, so can our responses to stress. With repetition, these patterns become lifestyle habits that cause weight problems. Stress can have many effects on health and weight. Some of the effects of stress are immediate and direct, such as the increase in blood pressure when your shoelace snaps as you race to an appointment.

Your sympathetic nervous system can automatically prepare you to fight for your life, run for your life, or just freeze. Any threat, real or imagined, physical or psychological, can turn on the “fight

or-flight” response. Although this mechanism was intended to be our lifesaving defense, it is inappropriate for our civilized world. Our prehistoric ancestors needed a sympathetic response of fight or-flight to survive and find food rather than become food. Today, most of the threats that turn on this physical defense or alarm system are psychological in nature. The fear of being embarrassed when speaking in front of a group is a very common stress that can lead to anxiety and panic attacks. Embarrassment is a threat to the ego, not the physical body.

It does not matter if the threat is real or imagined, physical or psychological; your body has learned many patterns of response. We refer to the negative body responses as “stress” or “stressors.” Actually, any change is a form of stress.

Anything that causes your body to make changes in order to adapt is a form of stress. That is, stress is “forced adaptation.” Researchers have studied the range of stressful events and related them to illness. The relationship between stress and health is now accepted.

Some stresses are useful, and some can be harmful. What is important to know is that the antidote to stress is relaxation. You cannot be anxious and relaxed at the same time, because they are two distinctively different physiological states. By learning to achieve peace of mind, or relaxation, you can neutralize the effects of stress.

Comfort or Nourishment?

You may now have an awareness of how stress affects your weight. For most individuals, stressful events or negative

responses to those events can lead to excessive drinking or eating and unhealthy choices in food or behavior. Perhaps you have a special food that comforts you when you are stressed, frustrated, angry, or sad. We have had patients who can tell us which food comforts anger, which food comforts sadness, or which food they use as a reward or treat when they are upset or stressed. Certain food cravings may be more associated with emotional needs than with nutritional needs. One clue to identifying the foods that have become associated with emotional needs is to look at the foods or dishes that your parents fed you to “make you feel better.” You can think of such comfort foods as medicine and self-medication. You can tell if you are using food this way by looking at your satiation or satisfaction. That is, if eating a reasonable amount does not satisfy your hunger, it may not have been food that you needed. Obviously, this is an unhealthy and inappropriate use of food in response to stress. Rather than continue to eat, stop, take a breath, and look at other things you might need.

We must also say that there is a time and place to love our food for all that it gives us. The famous chef Paul Prudhomme says it well in talking about his cooking: “We have a responsibility as citizens to do what we can for each other. It makes people happy. They eat it, and when they see me later, they want to hug me, to touch me, because Louisiana food is emotional food. It has a lot of flavor to it. You put it in your mouth in bad times and it makes you feel good.” It is not bad to view food this way—it is only detrimental when not viewed this way in moderation. There is no need to label all our “comfort foods” as “bad,” for neither the food nor the comfort is bad. It is only when we are unaware

of what we are doing and why, that a problem is created or overlooked. The important things to be mindful of are our choices and self-control, so that we achieve and maintain a healthy body. ***Journaling Exercise:***

- List your comfort foods.
- Become aware of the times when you turn toward your comfort foods.
- Are you turning toward your comfort foods to enjoy them or to avoid an emotion?

One way to manage stress-related eating and emotional hunger is to talk about it. Talking makes you more mindful and stimulates your subconscious to answer some of your questions. You can also use your self-hypnosis to go into trance and ask your subconscious those questions. Be patient, for the answer does not come as a trumpet blaring in your ear. Your subconscious is gentle and provides more of an intuitive knowing or inner wisdom. Also, answer these two questions for yourself: What do you feel when you are physically hungry? What do you feel when you are emotionally hungry?

The very best way to avoid feeding your feelings is to have a better, more effective way to manage stress. We can think of none better than relaxation and peace of mind. The calming peace of mind you learn to achieve with self-hypnosis from this book and audio may be the most powerful antidote to stress you discover. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of peace

of mind and relaxation when looking for a way to remove food as a stress-relieving medicine in your life.

You Can't Eat Enough ...

The best reason for eating is to satisfy hunger and obtain vital nourishment and energy. Other good reasons include the pleasures of eating, savoring the tastes and aromas, and social sharing among family and friends. There are many poor reasons for eating, including easing guilt, suppressing anger, absolving shame, filling an emotional emptiness, lessening anxiety, and panic, and overcoming boredom, among a myriad of emotional reasons. Becoming aware of these motivators, along with the fact that you can't eat enough food to effectively suppress stress and emotions, will help you enjoy food and keep your healthy weight.

A Word about the Trancework

The trancework on the audio that accompanies this book includes suggestions for learning about any emotional barriers and factors influencing your weight. By discovering and understanding the relationship between eating, food, and emotions, you will be able to make healthier choices for yourself and pursue the removal of those barriers. If you feel you would like additional help with any emotional issues involved with your weight, please contact a counselor, or attend a support group, begin journaling, and read relevant books. Follow through on getting all the help you desire. Once you remove any emotional obstacles, you are free to enjoy a love affair with food.

Nourishing Your Love Affair With Food

Does a love affair with food sound like something luscious and romantic, or does it sound like a head-on collision with weight gain? What kind of relationship would you like to have with food and eating? In your personal relationships, there are two options: you can choose to be in a relationship with a person, or you can elect to be “single” or “unattached.” Even if someone else chooses to be in a relationship with you, you have the option to decline or run away. You don’t have that option with eating. You cannot remove yourself from food and eating any more than you can dismiss air and breathing from your life. Since your food cannot make the choices about its relationship with you, you must do the choosing. You cannot escape it. This question will always be valid: What kind of relationship would you like to have with food and eating?

We know individuals who tell us that they hate to eat and find it a nuisance to even bother with it, preferring instead to take a pill if one were available. We also know people who do not own a stove and have no intention to cook or learn how. Everyone has the freedom to decide what relationship they would like to have with food. But since you are reading this book, it is apparent that we have something in common. Like us, you may like to eat and want to enjoy food. In fact, we can choose to indulge ourselves in a passionate love affair with food and still enjoy our perfect weight.

You Can Eat Anything You Want and Keep Your Perfect Weight

At sixty years of age, we find that we can eat anything we want and keep our perfect weight. This ability seems more real to us than anything else. Let us repeat this, because it really does capture the essence of our relationship to food. We can eat anything we want loving every bit and keep our perfect weight. It is true for us, and it can also be true for you.

It Seems That Way, So It Is That Way

Here is how it is done. By creating a healthy lifestyle and a relationship with our food that produces the results or perfect weight we want, it seems like we can eat anything we want and keep our perfect weight. If it seems that way to us, it is very real to us. It is our reality. It is the reality we live in. Now, if you examine our lifestyle and relationship to food, you will see that we pay attention to what we purchase, cook, and consume, so that we get the results we want. Remember what we said earlier: there are no mistakes, only unwanted results. We are constantly fine-tuning our lifestyle so that we can eat anything we want and keep our perfect weight. Not only do we make wise choices about food (lots of fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains), we eat normal portion sizes, we move our bodies, and there are many foods that we do not eat because they produce unwanted results.

The bottom line is this: We pay attention to creating a lifestyle that produces the results we want for a healthy and happy body

that is our perfect weight. Within this lifestyle, we are wonderfully adjusted to the habits and patterns that reward us with that healthy, happy body. Our lifestyle is so rewarding that we love it, and to us it truly seems as if we can eat anything we want and enjoy our perfect weight. If we can do this, so can you. A good portion of our life revolves around food, and we may even eat more and enjoy eating more than you do right now, because we do it without guilt or negative emotions. We do not say these things to boast or separate ourselves from you, but rather so you will see that it is possible for you to enjoy a lifestyle in which it seems that you can eat what you want and have your perfect weight. What we propose is not a dieter's or restricted eater's lifestyle by any means. It truly is a loving relationship with food and eating.

You Make It Happen

Luck is not involved in having a healthy, loving relationship with food or anything else. But as anyone who has fallen in love knows, there is a special magic to being in a loving relationship. There is a magic that focuses your energy and uses your love to overcome any obstacle powerfully. The magic or energy that makes this happen is in your choices about what you want, or what motivates you, what you choose to believe, and what you expect. These basic ingredients cause other things to happen in your reality; for your perfect weight, this means wise food choices, exercise, and a lifestyle that produces the results you want. Another ingredient in your new relationship with food is your intention and attention. "Intention" is the mental idea of what you want. "Attention" is the focus or energy you place on

what you are doing that will give you the results that you want. For example, you intend to eat just enough to be comfortably full, and not overstuffed. Your attention focuses on chewing each bite mindfully and slowly, and noticing when your body has had enough food. A healthy and loving relationship requires both your intention and your attention to produce the results you desire.

To nourish your healthy love affair with food and eating, let's take a look at the parallel to a healthy marriage or partnership. Bear with us here, for there are some very useful insights that you can draw upon for your loving relationship with food and eating. In your relationship with food, we will primarily look at the elements of selection, which include homogamy, complementarity, and trust. These are the same concepts or filters involved in a healthy, successful relationship or marriage.

First, we would like to entertain the principle of “residential propinquity” which says that what or who is closest to you has a better chance for selection. Or simply put, you are more likely to meet and fall in love with someone near you than with someone who lives in another city, another state, or another country. Similarly, locally grown foods are easier to love. Locally grown foods are fresher and tastier and hold greater nutrient energy than food that was grown three thousand miles away and processed to last a long journey and to have a long shelf life. Select what is near you, foods that come from where you live. Farmers' markets are one of the matchmakers in your love affair with food.

Homogamy

One filter in creating a relationship involves homogamy, which means similar interests and values. You are more likely to meet and fall in love with someone if you mingle with people who share similar interests and values. For example, if you enjoy art museums, you are more likely to find a compatible partner if you enroll in an art class than if you mingle with people at a beach volleyball competition. The same is true with food. If you want your perfect weight, you are more likely to achieve that goal if you surround yourself with foods that support healthy weight, such as fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains, rather than with foods that are not compatible with your perfect weight, such as doughnuts, pizza, and French fries.

As in a relationship where you discover that the other person likes the things that you like, you may view your relationship with food as a mutual interest between you and your food. You love the foods that give you the perfect body weight, energy, health, and vitality, and those foods lovingly nourish you and your body. By eating foods that you love and that are healthy, you will enjoy eating in a new way.

Complementarity

This is the filter where the differences between partners enhance the relationship. The differences you each bring to the relationship can now serve each other's needs and make the relationship stronger. In a partnership, it can be that one partner likes to do yard work and the other dislikes it. One likes to manage the finances, pay the bills, and write the checks, while the other partner gets a stomachache when he or she sees the

money fly out of the checking account each month. The differences complement the partners because each one serves the needs of the other. In your love affair with food, you can let your food provide you with protein, carbohydrates, and oils that you cannot manufacture yourself. And in turn, you give your food the body movements that burn the calories and convert the inherent food energy into a walk through a lovely park. Your dinner gives you a symphony of exquisitely tasteful treats and pleasures. Through your sleep that night, your body absorbs the nutrients during digestion for healthy cells, energy, and vitality. The next morning, you take your body for a walk or to a yoga class or give it a workout that moves the absorbed nutrients to where they can now give you the perfect weight that you want. Seeing clearly what good benefits food provides can enhance your relationship with food. Next time you are eating, think of how much the food will nourish your body, and your perfect weight.

Trust

All loving relationships must be founded on trust. Trust is not “hit or miss,” nor does it happen automatically. Trust requires intention and attention to make it happen regularly so that it becomes a habit. Remember, intention is the mental idea of what you want. Attention is the energy placed on what you are doing that will give you the results you want. You must be able to trust yourself in choosing foods that will give you the result you want. Food must not just satisfy hunger; it must also create the body weight you desire and emotional well-being. Your food must not betray you. Foods that betray your health and perfect weight are those that provide calories without nourishment, such as fast

foods and other highly processed foods like packaged cookies, doughnuts, and soft drinks. Each day, you are creating your trust in your ability to choose the foods that work for your health and perfect weight, not against your health and perfect weight. By being mindful of your internal cues for hunger and fullness, you discover what is intuitively “right” for you, and that lets you give these foods your trust. You must also be able to trust the food you are eating to deliver the nutrients that satisfy your body’s needs and your hunger. By staying loyal to your relationship with food, you not only develop the ability to choose the foods that deliver what you need with pleasure, but you also develop a palate that appreciates these nourishing foods. These pleasurable foods are fresh, vital, and brimming with health and nutrients and great taste. If your food is not delicious and pleasurable, choose again. Over time, you discover that you can trust the relationship you have created to sustain the lifestyle and eating style that lets you eat whatever you want and keep your perfect weight.

Breaking Up Is (Not) Hard to Do!

Dump the foods that have empty calories and don’t nourish you. There may be things you eat out of habit, such as cake or white-flour dinner rolls; break up with them. Say goodbye to foods that make you feel guilty. Stay loyal and committed to the foods you love that are also healthy for your body and your perfect weight. Write a “Dear John” or “Dear Joan” letter in your journal. List the foods that you want to break up with (perhaps pizza or beer or cheese puffs or doughnuts), and write down why you want to break up with them. Do they make you feel guilty? Do they

betray your perfect weight by providing only empty calories? Do they just provide brief respite from emotional turmoil when you are mad or sad? Or do you eat them when you are bored?

Write a “love” letter in your journal. List the foods that you have a love affair with (such as fresh fruits and vegetables and brown rice) and write down all the attributes of those foods that are so attractive and lovable. Do they make you feel energized and strong? Do they make you happy? Do they satisfy your real hunger? Do they support your perfect weight?

It Is All about Loving: Spice It Up

Your love affair with food and eating is all about loving: loving what you are doing and loving yourself doing it. Project your feelings of love into this magnificent makeover you are giving yourself. Include your food, too; love it. Let yourself get passionate about the food and eating that create the results you want.

Every relationship needs some spice sometimes. What is your favorite spice? Pick up some recipes for Mexican, Thai, East Indian, Moroccan, or Mediterranean dishes and start experimenting with flavorful spices. The spices will help you enjoy the palate changes that are taking place in your makeover and weight loss. Spices also help you feel better in other ways. For example, use turmeric or ginger to reduce tissue inflammation, capsaicin in chili peppers to release endorphins, and garlic to boost your immune system. On a trip to Santa Fe, we bought a book about cooking with chili peppers, and now we make our own very tasty and spicy Chili Colorado (red chili

sauce) that gets us up and dancing. Spices also bring new life and new possibilities to foods you might be bored with. Unprocessed foods like vegetables and lean protein can taste a million different ways depending on which spices you pair with them. Spices liven up your love affair with food. Experiment with them to spice up your eating experience.

Color, Texture, Aroma, Taste, Chew

Train yourself to put more attention on the sensory pleasure of eating a meal. Before you sit down to a meal, write these words on five separate cards: color, texture, aroma, taste, chew.

Sit down and serve yourself the portions of food that you want on your plate. When your plate is ready, place the cards next to your plate. Close your eyes and sit calmly for one or two minutes with the meal before you. Because your visual sense is the most stimulating, by closing your eyes, you are immediately slowing your body down. These moments with your eyes closed give you time to focus on your sense of smell.

Make a game of noticing the different foods you placed on your plate. Focus on the aroma of the foods and any spices. Perhaps you may wish to use this time to quietly recite an affirmation about the nourishment of your food and the perfect body weight you are fueling.

Open your eyes and begin eating your meal. Stay tuned to the sensory richness of this meal. The card with the word “color” is a reminder to notice and appreciate the colors on your plate. See

if you can taste each color or smell it. The card that says “texture” is your reminder to feel the texture of each food with your mouth and tongue. Is the texture crunchy, smooth, soft, slippery, or hard? Notice the aroma as you hold the food on your fork or spoon near your nose before putting it in your mouth. Really smell the food to increase your sensual pleasure of eating. “Taste” is the reminder to notice the flavor of what you put in your mouth. Is it tangy, salty, sweet, sour, bitter, spicy? Notice other aspects of your food: is it hot or cold or tingly? Move the food around in your mouth with your tongue. Allow all the taste buds to experience the food’s flavor. Lastly, “chew” the food slowly and pay attention to chewing as an act of relishing each mouthful. Think of “chewing” as part of loving your food. Allow yourself to feel the love and pleasure of your dining experience as you focus attention on the physical experience.

The more pleasurable your sensory experience, the more control you have over noticing colors, tastes, textures, aromas, and noticing when you are getting full. As you swallow each bite of food, pay attention to the sensations in your stomach. As you get full, your stomach will have a very comfortable feeling, and you will have less sensory pleasure with each extra bite. That is good, for that lets you be aware of when you have eaten enough—when you should push your plate away.

Clearing The Path To Your Perfect Weight

The path to your perfect weight will probably be fraught with pitfalls, land mines, and saboteurs. Any worthy goal has obstacles to be overcome. This chapter is about recognizing those obstacles, dismissing some of them, and taking bold action to eliminate the others. The hypnotic trancework focuses on thoughts and ideas at the mind-body level that will energize the process. Familiarize yourself with thoughts, old patterns of behavior, special social events, and everyday settings that might potentially sabotage your perfect weight. This is the first step toward clearing the path to your perfect weight. Once you are able to recognize the triggers to overeating, you simply need to practice ways to easily dismiss those seemingly troublesome obstacles. If this seems overwhelming, don't worry. As we've said, we will guide you in your trancework, so you may communicate exactly what you want to say to your magnificent mind-body.

Where Are You Right Now?

As you begin your path, assess where you are now. New numbers from the United States Government's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) confirm that overweight and obesity are still a major public health concern. According to data from 1999 to 2002, 65.1 percent of adults aged twenty or older were overweight or obese. The rate of obesity was 30.4 percent, and 4.9 percent of U.S. adults were extremely obese. Overweight is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher. Obesity is having a BMI of 30 or higher. Having a BMI of 40 or higher is extreme obesity.

To determine your BMI: Divide your weight (in pounds) by the square of your height (in inches) and then multiply that number by 703. Keep in mind that a person who is muscular with a low body-fat percentage may have a higher BMI because muscle weighs more than fat.

So, if you are 5'8" and weigh 185 pounds, your BMI is 28. To see where you are right now, compared with other Americans, look at these statistics: Nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults are overweight (BMI of 25 or higher, which includes those who are obese). Nearly one-third of U.S. adults are obese (BMI of 30 or higher). Less than half of U.S. adults have a healthy weight (BMI higher than or equal to 18.5 and lower than 25).

Getting Out of Your Way

Safeguarding your success and clearing the path begin with you. As you read in the earlier chapters, everything begins with thoughts and beliefs about what you want, how you want it, and what you can believe and accept. All self-defeating thoughts must be neutralized and transformed into affirmations of your success. For example, if you continually say, "My belly is the biggest part of my problem," what are you telling your mind-body? What is your mind-body going to make true for you? Here is the affirmation that neutralizes and transforms that statement and other statements like it: "My body is perfectly shaped." When you encounter thoughts that don't support your perfect weight, remember this affirmation, and follow these four steps.

1. You must believe it is possible for you to have the perfect weight you desire.
2. You must want it and feel you deserve it.
3. Accept any challenge as an opportunity to have your perfect weight.
4. Let yourself expect the results you desire, and commit yourself to removing any obstacle from within or without.

Letting Go of Old Patterns of Behavior

Patterns of behavior with food, eating, and exercise must become increasingly compatible with the results you want. Here are some ways to start shifting your perspective: • If you love junk food, you must let go of a daily diet of junk food and welcome some new, healthier foods that support your healthy weight.

- If you have an aversion to exercise and physical activity, you must welcome the daily physical activity that enlivens and strengthens your body.

The same is true for the subconsciously driven patterns that create cravings. You start by identifying incompatible cravings as obstacles and mark them for removal. This tells your subconscious that it has your permission to act on your behalf. The trancework contains suggestions that empower you to welcome new patterns of behavior.

Metabolic Obstacles

It only makes sense to rule out any underlying organic or metabolic obstacle to your perfect weight. The first one that comes to mind is thyroid function. In her book *The Thyroid Diet: Manage Your Metabolism for Lasting Weight Loss*, Mary Shomon notes that almost thirty million Americans have a thyroid condition, and half of them go undiagnosed. To see if you qualify, your physician can run comprehensive testing to determine whether you have any thyroid or other metabolic dysfunction.

Another common metabolic obstacle is the weight-gain effects associated with antidepressant medication therapy. Antidepressants come in three major categories: tricyclics (e.g., amitriptyline, such as Elavil), selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs such as Paxil and Zoloft), and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs, much less frequently used). Each can affect appetite, carbohydrate cravings, and metabolic changes that increase weight. If you are using an antidepressant, you may want to talk with your physician about using the lowest effective dosage, since it is usually the higher dosages that cause the greatest problem with weight gain.

Narcotics are another class of drugs that can influence weight gain. Narcotic analgesics (pain relievers) have two factors that may affect weight. First, all opiate derivatives or narcotics have a depressing effect on the central nervous system, which causes the natural peristalsis, or wavelike motion through the digestive system, to slow down, which in turn may slow other aspects of

metabolism. Second, individuals with pain usually have mobility problems that limit their physical activity. For some, the CNS (central nervous system) depressant effects may limit physical activity even further. Some of the nonnarcotic medications may have alternatives, but as with antidepressant use noted earlier, the effective dose and drug is the first priority.

You Control the Inertia

Inertia is the force that keeps a body at rest or in uniform motion. In order to move an object that is at rest, there must be a sufficient force to overcome the energy that is keeping the object at rest. You may have become comfortable with the amount of inactivity you experience, and this level of inactivity is the inertia that maintains your current activity level. Increasing your physical activity level requires enough force or energy to overcome the inertia. You can think of a ball that is at rest and the energy required to “get the ball rolling.” We recommend using stimulating rewards to overcome the inertia and propel you into physical action. Let it be simple. Climb the stairs instead of riding the elevator, and reward yourself with a cold, crisp apple. Or create a bigger reward. Set up a travel savings account as a reward for attending a fitness center. If the rewards do not overcome the inertia, they simply are not rewarding enough yet. The bottom line is that you control the forces that overcome the inertia.

Plateaus

Geographically, a plateau is a large land mass with a starkly level surface that extends far above the surrounding land. A plateau is an impressive landmark, and when one stands atop it, the view is spectacular.

Figuratively, a plateau is an unchanging or stable situation, time, or condition. Distance runners become ecstatic when they reach a “plateau” during a long run, for that brings them to a time when their gait is smooth, their breathing is regular, and they are “on a roll.” It is a time when they can assess how much distance they have covered on the run and how to pace themselves for the remainder of the course. They are neither pushing ahead nor lagging behind. They are steady and strong. They have “hit their stride.” They are “doing it.”

We invite you to embrace your weight-loss plateau with the same invigorating attitude. You’ve come a long way to reach a plateau. Take a look at the spectacular view. Perhaps you have initiated changes in physical activity or in healthier food choices. Perhaps you have cleared aside a few obstacles on your path. Perhaps you have broken down an emotional barrier. And for certain, you have lost weight.

Ponder your success and tap into what Eckhart Tolle calls “the power of now.” The “now” moment is very different from where you were “then,” when you first began to use selfhypnosis and make changes. The “now” moment allows you to see with great clarity what you have accomplished up to this point. But more importantly, the “now” moment allows you to see with even greater clarity the remaining steps to your perfect weight. On this

plateau, for example, you may easily see the path toward more time for self-care, such as a longer evening walk. Perhaps you will realize you actually want to get more serious about hiking, so you join a hiking club. Or maybe, up until now, you begrudgingly wrote your journaling exercises, but now you see writing as quite inspirational, and you set aside more time for writing. The view from high atop the plateau allows you to see new directions to your perfect weight that might have seemed unimaginable to you when you first began your weight loss efforts. Now it's time to take a deep breath, focus, and move ahead.

The Five Impossible Tasks

Sandra was exasperated that her weight loss had come to a standstill. She was truly stumped to come up with a way to move off her plateau. We gave her an assignment: “Use your hypnosis to go back in time. Imagine yourself at the time before you began your weight loss efforts that brought you to the plateau. Make a list of the five most unimaginable accomplishments that would affect your weight loss.”

When she returned, she was glowing with self-satisfaction. Her mood and spirits were up, and her weight was going down even further. She told us that when she was writing down the five unimaginable things to achieve weight loss at that time, it dawned on her just how far she had already come. What seemed unimaginable back then seemed like great ideas now. She signed up for a weight-training class, started jogging three times a week, organized herself to do her grocery shopping every Thursday evening, and decluttered her garage. But the most amazing “task”

to Sandra was that she stopped drinking wine. Before the plateau, she had always told us, “I could never give up my wine. I love it too much.” Sandra realized that when she felt stuck on the plateau, she was still in the mind-set of when she first began, and was not in the “now moment.” As soon as she readjusted her “view,” she was able to see what she could actually do now, so she could move herself ahead.

Brush and floss your teeth more often. Brushing is a sign that people care about their health. It cleanses the mouth and clears the palate, and may be that extra incentive against snacking.

Write It Down

As you walk along the path to your perfect weight, write down realistic goals in your journal. There is magic to writing things down, and a magic to the spoken word, too. Use these goals to formulate your own ideas and affirmations of what you want for your perfect weight. Keep your affirmations hidden from saboteurs, and pull them out each day to review them. Speak your affirmations out loud so that your ears bring the message in from the outside as well as bring what you absorb from within you. Tweak and adjust them so that, ultimately, you are absolutely clear about what you want. As you use the self-hypnosis on the accompanying audio regularly each day, you will find that after a month or so, you will be infusing your own ideas, images, and suggestion into your trancework.

Start scheduling social activity with friends and family away from the dining table or restaurant. Make dates to go for a walk or meet outdoors or in places where you might enjoy a cup of tea and a conversation. Keep the goal for your perfect weight a priority so that it happens. Make a date with every flight of stairs, and take a vow to forego the elevator or escalator. Park so that no one will dent your car doors. That is, park as far away as you safely can, so that you walk the distance.

Shhh—Keep It Secret

If you knew the exact time and place to purchase the next winning national lottery ticket, you would not broadcast the information. In the 1963 movie *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, before Smiler Grogan (Jimmy Durante) literally kicks the bucket when his car careens over an embankment, he tells onlookers he's stashed \$350,000 in stolen loot beneath "the big W" in the town of Santa Rosita. Thus, begins a mad dash to recover the dough. "The big W" for you is your perfect weight. Keep it to yourself. Only tell those who are partnering with you to help you achieve your goal.

Exploring Wholesome Foods And Other Wise Choices

We have all watched young children and how they absorb their world: eyes wide open, touching, tasting, smelling, listening, all with delight, total impulse, and energy and motion. We invite you to approach this

chapter with the same childlike curiosity. Allow your mind to explore every idea, fact, and suggestion, for this chapter is filled with sensible information on which you can base your lifestyle choices. You may pick and choose what appeals to you and your perfect weight, what nourishes your physical hunger, and what inspires and invigorates you.

Hungry for Wholesome Foods—Sensible “Eativity”

Our bodies are composed of billions of cells, and these cells are the basis of every function of the body: eyesight, fertility, breathing, brain functions, immunity, skin rejuvenation, movement, and digestion, among the thousands and thousands of functions. The food we eat is the only sustenance available to our bodies to create and replace these cells. The vitality of every one of those cells is dependent upon the quality of food that we eat. If we eat foods that are wholesome and nourishing, the cells will be strong and vital. If we eat nutrient- poor foods, junk foods, highly processed foods, foods high in salt, sugar, and bad fats, or highly refined foods, the cells will be weak and will struggle to perform their functions. Highly processed foods (which are nutrient-poor) are often very high in calories. A poorly nourished body craves nourishment, and if that craving just leads to more junk food, then there are far too many calories consumed with no nutrient satisfaction. Poor health and excess weight may follow. It can be an endless cycle until it is broken with wholesome foods. That is why 65 percent of Americans are overweight.

Their undernourished bodies are overfed with poor food choices. When we nourish our bodies with wholesome foods, we feel better, have more vitality, and are more physically active; and healthy weight is the result.

Everything we eat should contribute to our health and be absolutely delicious. Our clients hear us say this all the time. Everything we eat should contribute to our health and be absolutely delicious. It can be a little confusing to decipher exactly which foods are wholesome and contribute to our health. There is one simple statement to hold in mind that will clarify all the perplexing nutrition input screaming at us from TV, magazines, books, and grocery store shelves. The most wholesome foods, the foods that nourish our bodies the best, are closest to nature. These foods are fresh, alive with vibrant colors, aromas, and flavors. They are minimally processed; they are not canned, not frozen, not preserved, not artificially flavored, not colored with coloring agents, not hydrogenated, not genetically engineered, not sprayed with pesticides, not raised with agrichemicals, not heat treated, not homogenized. They are closest to nature. Now, you might be thinking that there isn't much left to eat after reading that. Maybe you just took a mental walk through your kitchen. Maybe you are frowning and standing in front of your favorite crackers, cookies, cake mixes, frozen TV dinners, ice cream, hot dogs, and pizza. The point is that there are so many highly processed foods available that it is often a challenge to even find the wholesome foods. But you need to find them. You want to be hungry for wholesome foods because they support your excellent health and perfect weight.

How to Know What You Are Really Eating

Another useful tool is learning to decipher the Nutrition Facts and Ingredients labels that are on all packaged, canned, and frozen foods. Both labels are important but for different reasons. The Nutrition Facts label defines quantity, and the Ingredients label defines quality. Walk into your kitchen and select a Nutrition Facts label from any packaged product. The label contains information regarding the approximate amounts of various nutrients in the specified food. As you will see, serving size and servings per container are stated first. The number of calories per serving and calories from fat are listed next. The section immediately following lists in grams the total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, total carbohydrate, dietary fibers, sugar, sodium, and protein contained in each serving. The micronutrients, the vitamins, and minerals, are listed next. In addition, the percent daily value (a set of standard nutrient intake values developed by the FDA) is calculated on the label, and is based on a 2,000-calorie diet. What this means is that if you're eating 2,000 calories a day, the percent daily value stated next to a nutrient listed on the product tells you what percentage of your daily needs for that nutrient are being met by that product. You should develop the habit of reading all food labels in your kitchen and at the grocery store.

When examining labels, make certain you relate the number of calories to the serving size. Often the stated serving size is very small, with a corresponding low-calorie advertisement. For

example, a candy bar may advertise only 50 calories per serving but the serving size is only a small part of it, not the entire bar. Now, if you have them in your kitchen (if not, look the next time you are in the supermarket), select the Nutrition Facts labels of two similar products such as crackers or cookies. Compare the categories of total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sugar. Notice that when a product advertises that it is low-fat, it is often high in sugar. And when it advertises low-sugar, it is often high in fat.

Now look at the Ingredients label, which lists the actual contents of a product. By the way, to read this label, you might have to put on glasses. The Ingredients label is notorious for being impossible to read, thanks to minute print, lack of contrast between letters and background, or being printed on the fold of the wrapping. The Nutrition Facts label may state that the total fat is 4 percent, but the Ingredients label will specify which fat or oil the food contains olive oil, cottonseed oil, partially hydrogenated sunflower oil, etc. Another example in which the Ingredients label clarifies quality involves carbohydrate content. If the Nutrition Facts label lists total carbohydrates as 42 grams, one can glance at the Ingredients label and see whether the carbohydrate is derived from white flour or a more health-promoting grain such as bulgur, brown rice, or amaranth. The Ingredients label also alerts the consumer about food additives and animal products, many of which are of concern.

A food additive is a substance added to food during its processing to preserve it or alter its color, texture, flavor, or value. Flavoring agents make up the largest single class of

additives and include salts, spices, essential oils, and natural and synthetic flavors. Additives that alter texture include emulsifiers such as lecithin, stabilizers, and thickeners such as guar gum, xanthum gum, and carrageenan. The additives used to preserve food are primarily chemical microbial agents such as benzoates, propionates, and sorbates. Antioxidants are added to food to prevent fats and oils from becoming rancid and to prevent discoloration of smoked or canned meats. Antioxidants such as tocopherols, vitamin E, retinoids, vitamin A, ascorbic acid, and vitamin C help retard spoilage. There is controversy concerning the safety of some additives, so educate yourself.

Pantry Purging: Taboo Foods

Keep in mind that the food you want in your pantry (and ultimately on your plate) is the highest quality that you can afford. High quality means: fresh, whole, locally grown if possible, homemade, nutrient-dense, organic (grown without the use of conventional agrichemicals such as pesticides, growth hormones, prophylactic antibiotics, etc.), and appetizing with real flavor (not masked with chemical flavors and artificial colors).

Take an honest look in your pantry and refrigerator. Start reading a few of the Ingredients labels. Now is the time to get rid of the foods that do not belong there, that you know do not promote your health and perfect weight. When you “purge your pantry” you make room for the nourishing, fresh foods that you will be buying on your next grocery shopping trip. Take a cardboard box

into your kitchen. You will be filling it with foods you no longer want to eat. At the end of this exercise, you will take the cardboard box out of your home. Throw it in a Dumpster or give it away.

Consider putting in a cardboard box food containing refined white sugar, high-fructose corn syrup or corn syrup of any type, glucose, and artificial sweeteners. The average American consumes two pounds of sugar weekly. This is not only in the form of refined white sugar, so just throwing away the sugar bowl isn't going to work. White sugar has many disguises, such as brown sugar, which is usually just refined sugar sprayed lightly with molasses to give it a healthy look, and turbinado sugar, which is only one refining step away from white sugar again, with just a healthier look but negligible nutrition. Corn syrups, such as high-fructose corn syrup and the light and dark corn syrups, are another refined sugar in disguise. They are chemically purified corn starch, hydrochloric or sulfuric acid, and water. Corn syrup is in soft drinks and candy, bakery items of all sorts, fruit juices, bottled spaghetti sauces, and ketchup, to name just a few. The average American consumes seventy-nine pounds of corn sweeteners every year. Do not eat them. They oppose your healthy weight. Read the Ingredients labels in your pantry closely.

Consider putting in a cardboard box food made with white flour, such as doughnuts and pastries, and conventionally produced crackers, cookies, breads, and muffins. White flour and products made with white flour are devoid of nutrients, as those nutrients have been eliminated during the processing of the grain. You are about to begin tasting a variety of grains: kasha, barley, brown

rice, quinoa, amaranth, spelt, rye, kamut, oats, etc. Many ready-to-eat breakfast cereals contain these grains, and there are many bakeries that bake breads with these grains. Whole grains and legumes are the only foods that contain all the macro nutrients. They are nutritional powerhouses. They have protein, carbohydrate, good oil, B vitamins, vitamin E, and fiber.

Consider putting food containing poor-quality fats in a cardboard box. This includes hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, margarines, cottonseed oil, and products containing them, such as microwave popcorn, most conventional crackers and cookies, cakes, pastries, potato chips, leftover fast food, etc. You will replace these inferior products with delicious and satisfying foods made with healthful oils. Once your eye learns to spot these unhealthy oils on the package's ingredient label, you will quickly discover the nearby healthy alternatives.

Consider putting nonorganic dairy and meats in a cardboard box. All conventionally raised dairy and meats in America are full of harmful agrichemicals. Of special interest are the growth hormones given to animals to promote weight gain (and thus more profit at the marketplace). If your goal is to lose weight, we do not recommend eating animal products that contain traces of growth hormones such as BGH. If you choose to eat animal products, choose grass-fed beef, free-range poultry, and eggs, and organically raised and produced meats. In addition, you should eat a minimum of dairy and limit that consumption to organically produced milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, and

butter. Dairy products signal trouble for many people. You may be one of them. The fat in dairy is saturated, so if used in excess it can create heart health problems. (Many of us look for low-fat milk, but we neglect to recognize the fat in ice cream.) One of the proteins in dairy, casein, is an allergy trigger for many people. Lactose, the carbohydrate, or sugar in dairy, frequently causes uncomfortable gastrointestinal symptoms because many people lack the digestive enzyme lactase. Be mindful of your dairy consumption and listen to your body's reactions.

Consider putting foods containing caffeine in a cardboard box. Coffee, black teas, sodas, and chocolate are all high in caffeine, which causes great fluctuation in blood sugar levels. In turn, this can lead to anxiety, sleep disorders, hypertension, and myriad other symptoms. These foods should be used very judiciously, if at all. A good dark chocolate, containing at least 60 percent cocoa, is an exception. Dark chocolate contains flavanols, antioxidants that help our bodies fend off free radicals, some of which are naturally generated in our bodies, but are also created when we eat unhealthy hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats found in highly processed foods. Flavanols also help boost the healthy HDL cholesterol and lower the not-so-healthy LDL cholesterol levels in our bodies.

Most probably, there are some very favorite foods in the pantry that you are discovering are taboo and, if you live with other people, there are probably foods in your pantry and fridge that are someone else's favorites. Everyone near and dear to you needs to eat more wholesome foods, not just you.

Make gradual changes (remember, small, simple “tastes” at the beginning) for some of these favorites.

Buy frozen yogurt to replace the ice cream.

Slowly replace chips and cookies with nuts and whole-grain crackers and cookies. Buy frozen cherries and pineapple pieces to replace artificially flavored popsicles.

- Buy whole-grain frozen waffles to replace cinnamon rolls made with white flour.
- Buy organic turkey hot dogs to replace high-fat, nitrated, all-beef hot dogs.
- Buy one of the excellent herbal coffee substitutes, and have one cup of regular coffee and one cup of an herbal drink. A latte is delicious when made with one of these botanicals. Or simply buy a decaffeinated coffee, as a first small “taste.”

Choosing wholesome foods always gives the body an opportunity to function optimally. If you don’t pump the highest-grade fuel into your Ferrari, the engine will start to knock, and you won’t get the highest performance. It’s the same with our bodies. We often take better care of our vehicles than our human bodies. It doesn’t make sense. We can go out and buy a new car, but we can’t buy a new body.

Pantry Staples: What to Put on Your Shopping List

We should eat about 60 percent of our daily calories in high-quality carbohydrates (grains, fruits, and vegetables), about 20–

25 percent in high-quality fats and oils, and about 15–20 percent in high-quality protein (plant proteins like nuts, seeds, and beans, or lean meats, or a combination of these). These combinations of nourishing foods are the perfect sustenance to create those billions of strong and vital cells that are your body.

The next step to filling your kitchen with wholesome foods is to make a shopping list. Following are suggestions that we feel are central to a healthy kitchen pantry and refrigerator. You may already have some products in your kitchen. Make a note of the items you feel you would like to incorporate into your cooking.

- •A bottle of Italian or Greek olive oil, a bottle of canola oil, and if you wish, a small block of organic butter (used sparingly), and a small bottle of sesame oil
- •Nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts), nut butters such as cashew butter or almond butter
- •Seeds (sunflower and pumpkin) and legumes (anything in a pod, so all beans, including edamame—soybeans) are high in plant protein and healthy oils.
- •Choose a grain for the week. We would suggest quinoa. It is light and delicious and cooks in fifteen minutes. But you can choose from a variety of whole grains (brown rice, oatmeal, kamut, spelt, buckwheat, wild rice, etc.).
- •Find a ready-to-eat cereal that contains a variety of grains (oatmeal, buckwheat, brown rice, kamut, etc.).
- Bread and pastas made with whole grains
- Frozen whole-grain breakfast waffles
- Crackers and cookies made with whole grains and healthful oils

- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Onions and garlic
 - •If you wish to eat dairy, 2 percent milk and plain yogurt (organic)
 - •If you wish, lean animal protein (organic chicken and turkey are best, organic turkey or chicken hot dogs)
 - •An omega-3 essential fatty acid source, such as flaxseed, walnuts, or pumpkin seeds
 - •Fish is an especially healthy choice for protein if it is from cold waters. Wild salmon, mackerel, sardines, and herring are all very high in omega-3 essential fatty acids also.
 - •A can or two of beans (such as pinto, black, navy, or kidney beans)
 - •A can or two of tomatoes and pasta sauce
 - •Five or more different colors of fresh vegetables (beets, tomatoes, squash, kale, spinach, carrots, purple cabbage, etc.)
 - •Five or more different colors of fresh fruits (cherries, bananas, blueberries, green apples, cantaloupes, kumquats, plums, etc.)
 - •A few herbs and spices like oregano, basil, dill, curry, and cinnamon
 - •A bottle of tamari sauce or soy sauce
 - •Browse through the tea aisle. Rooibos tea is a very flavorful caffeine-free herbal tea, which can be served hot or iced. Green tea is very healthful, but it does contain caffeine, although less than coffee and black tea. Those

are our favorites, but there are many from which to choose.

- If sodas are still a “necessity” for you, as an alternative buy some sparkling water and frozen concentrated fruit juice. (Mix a spoonful or two of frozen concentrate—grape is delicious—with iced sparkling water for a delicious, healthful zing.)
- If coffee is your thing, experiment with one of the botanical coffee substitutes. Remember, taste buds need gradual changes to adapt to new tastes, so just experiment with a cup and gradually increase as you are enjoying it. Coffee is one of the most heavily pesticide-sprayed crops in the world, so if you do buy coffee, buy organic and fair trade.
- Experiment with healthy sweeteners such as brown rice syrup, stevia, or maple syrup. Rapadura is very unprocessed sugar cane and is an excellent “first taste” when cutting down on white sugar. If this is too big a “first taste,” just begin to cut down on the amount of white sugar you use.
- A few bags of frozen fruit pieces (pineapple, mango, cherry)
- Frozen yogurt to replace high-fat ice cream or other rich frozen desserts
- Lastly, we always have a supply of good dark chocolate for dessert (60 percent cocoa or more).

Why You Might Consider Organics

There are many chemicals that become part of our food during certain stages of plant propagation, harvesting, and animal breeding. Agrichemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, prophylactic antibiotics, and growth hormones are not good for our health. Nor are they good for the environment. It is important, ultimately, to aim for organically produced foods. Organic means that animals and crops are grown without additives such as pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones. Pesticides are used on most crops to ensure higher yield through reduced insect damage or weed control. Research indicates that there may be health risks to ingesting pesticides. It is logical to assume that pesticides could be harmful to human health to some degree if they are potent enough to kill insects, weeds, and animal pests. Some fruits and vegetables are more heavily sprayed than others.

The Environmental Working Group in Washington, DC, (www.ewg.org) provides a list of the most heavily sprayed crops. The list usually includes strawberries, bell peppers (red and green), spinach, cherries, peaches, Mexican cantaloupe, celery, apples, apricots, green beans, Chilean grapes, and cucumbers. Exposure to pesticides can be reduced by 50 percent if an individual chooses to select fewer of these fruits and vegetables or to buy them organically. The use of prophylactic antibiotics and growth hormones is common in conventionally raised animals and poultry. These antibiotics and growth hormones remain in the animal and are ultimately ingested when you buy and prepare those animal products or eat them in restaurants.

They are not good for your health and do not support your healthy weight and healthy lifestyle.

Nourishing the Rest of Yourself

We all need to indulge ourselves with special “treats,” especially while making lifestyle changes. Even though these changes are good, they can still induce temporary stress. Consider the following “treats” to help ease you into your new lifestyle and perfect weight:

- •Take a few minutes each day for your favorite reading. Find a private reading room in your home (a room you can actually lock if you want to) where you can spend a few uninterrupted minutes blissfully thumbing through a magazine or favorite novel.
- •Learn how to knit. Knitting is a proven stress reliever, keeps the hands busy, and results in something very warm, soft, and cuddly.
- •Nourish your “skin hunger.” Get a massage.
- •As we’ve suggested before, unclutter your clothes closet. Put in a cardboard box (yes, just like the pantry) all the clothes that you have not worn for a year, that do not fit, that do not have the potential to be flattering when you reach your perfect weight, or that do not delight you.
- Browse magazines for a new wardrobe. We prefer natural fibers and comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.

- •We all love the aromas of delicious foods. Enlarge your aromatic knowledge and learn what natural fragrances and essential oils appeal to you (lavender, eucalyptus, cedar wood, and rosemary are our favorites).
- •Take the time to enjoy and play good music.
- •Find a sauna or steam room for a regular “detoxifying” relaxation.
- •Silence is golden. Sequester yourself in some quiet corner of the house, or take a serene walk in a park or along a quiet road.

Breathe In, Breathe Out

Breathing is quite literally “inspiration.” Deep breathing creates optimum oxygenated blood and ensures very efficient use of mind and body: from thinking to optimum physical activity. Breathe in through the nose for four counts, hold for seven counts, breathe out eight counts. Focus on the sound of your breathing. Notice how tension dissolves, stress is released, healing is facilitated, general well-being is apparent, and perfect weight is supported. Practice this breathing exercise at least twice a day, but no more than four breaths at each practice in the beginning.

Sleep: Be Still, Be Quiet, Be Tranquil, Be Calm, Be Inactive, Lie Still

As we have pointed out, recent research strongly suggests that adequate sleep promotes healthy weight and inadequate sleep

promotes weight gain. This seems fairly obvious. After all, when we are tired, we don't want to be active, and we usually want to snack more. Additionally, in *The Promise of Sleep*, Dr. William C. Dement writes that when people are sleep deprived, the resulting lack of energy means that they don't burn as many calories as when they are rested and more active. The body reacts by saving calories as fat, making weight loss much more challenging.

Research is revealing a deeper level of understanding of this simple concept of weight gain and sleep deprivation. A study at the University of Chicago, published in an article in the October 23, 1999 issue of the British medical journal *The Lancet*, explained that there are two hormones in our bodies that regulate appetite: ghrelin and leptin. Ghrelin sets appetite into motion in humans, and this hormone was found at higher levels in people who were regularly sleep deprived. The hormone leptin signals the body when it is satisfied and should stop eating. In sleep-deprived individuals, leptin was at much lower levels.

Rubin R. Naiman, Ph.D., in his book *Healing Night*, mentions that "Americans today are sleeping an average of about seven hours per night ... and 30 percent of adults obtain six hours or less of sleep per night."

Now you ask: "How do I get a full night's sleep, so my hormone levels of ghrelin and leptin support my perfect weight?" Here are ideas for more restful sleep:

- •Avoid napping during the day if you have difficulty sleeping at night.

- •Limit or omit the use of alcohol and caffeine, and avoid smoking, especially in the late afternoon and evening hours.
- •Get regular exercise, but not within three hours of retiring for the night.
- •Begin to calm your mind before bedtime by avoiding excess mental activity, which means do not read or watch TV, especially in your bed.
- •Do not go to bed hungry, but also do not eat a full meal within three hours of going to sleep. Protein especially triggers the body to become active.
- •Take a warm bath before bed to increase your body temperature.

So, sleep tight, and awaken the next morning refreshed, ready to eat well, happy, and eager to move along your path to success. Our bodies will always be asking for favorite not-so-healthy foods and other fine pleasures, and we will inevitably indulge the “child” within us. But we must hold high in our minds that the greatest indulgences to give our bodies are invigorating exercise, wholesome foods, creative pursuits, and deep, restful slumber.

Eleven Truths About Self-Hypnosis And Weight Loss

1. Self-hypnosis is an effective way to access your mind-body connection and to deliver ideas and images of your perfect weight to your subconscious. There is an abundance of clinical literature testifying to the effectiveness of hypnosis in influencing physical or mind-body functions. The studies done

for various medical conditions clearly demonstrate the power and clinical effectiveness of self-hypnosis. You do not have to wait for a hundred more studies to be published about weight loss and hypnosis. You can blaze your own trail right now. Your self-hypnosis can help you overcome obstacles and excuses by letting you choose, and subconsciously empower, the ideas, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors that will produce the results you want. It can also help you overcome obstacles and excuses by subconsciously acting upon your choices, ideas, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors that will produce the results you want.

2. Self-hypnosis lets you use the power of belief and believing. By focusing and directing this power within mind-body, your subconscious accepts and acts on your beliefs as true—even when they are false beliefs. It has been proven that individuals can hold a belief in mind that lets them walk over hot coals without creating a burn response. A cold object that is believed to be blisteringly hot can be touched and actually produce a burn response (a blister). You can choose what to believe and energize it with your faith or certainty of knowing it to be true for you. Your self-hypnosis lets you take advantage of the wisdom that “It is done unto you according to your faith.”

Your mind-body even accepts false beliefs, because it does not distinguish between what is real and what you imagine or pretend to be real. Become mindful of what you allow yourself to believe on a daily basis.

3. Self-hypnosis lets you reframe and reprogram subconscious patterns and responses so that they become

consistent with your motivation, beliefs, and expectations about your perfect weight. Many of your behavioral patterns, food preferences, and beliefs about your weight and yourself were created early in life before you had the awareness and intellectual sophistication to make choices about what was being learned in your mindbody. A good example of this is the effect that being a clean plate club member has had on confusing the sensations of hunger, fullness, and when to stop eating. Reprogramming this pattern with the belief that you do not have to clean your plate can help you clarify when to stop eating. Self-hypnosis lets you undo the subconscious learning that followed emotional and traumatic experiences. Whatever is learned can be unlearned by learning something else in its place. Your self-hypnosis provides the means to learn habits and patterns that give you the perfect weight results you want. This includes eating and hunger patterns, food preferences, the emotional relationship to foods and eating, self-image, the effect of trauma, and other subconscious dynamics affecting you.

4. Self-hypnosis provides an array of tools (hypnotic phenomena) that can help you achieve your perfect weight. These include: remembering and forgetting, altering sensory perception, time distortion, posthypnotic suggestion, and more. For example, you might use your self-hypnosis to assign a wonderful taste to foods that help you achieve your perfect weight, and assign an undesirable taste to foods that work against your perfect weight. Posthypnotic suggestions are another of the many tools or hypnotic phenomena available to you. You can hypnotically suggest that you will experience a wonderful feeling of fullness halfway through a meal and leave the remainder

uneaten. Or you may distort time or forget about cravings or desires for sabotaging snacks.

5. Self-hypnosis can alter the way you perceive obstacles to making changes in physical activity, exercise, and other behaviors that are necessary and enjoyable in achieving your perfect weight. It does not matter if your past has not included regular patterns of physical activity and exercise. That is in the past now. Your self-hypnosis can help you to view exercise as desirable and rewarding. It can help remove the obstacles to greater physical activity by helping you create the attitude that matches the behaviors to produce the results you desire.

6. Self-hypnosis is a very effective way to experience the antidote to stress relaxation. Selfhypnosis helps lessen the stress associated with changing habits, attitudes, and behaviors and can create an effective barrier and insulation to the ways in which stress can affect reactive eating behavior and physical function. You cannot be relaxed and anxious or stressed at the same time. They are two different physiological states. As you practice your self- hypnosis, your mind-body is memorizing the ability to produce a relaxation response. You can trigger the relaxation response when you find yourself in stressful situations that jeopardize your perfect weight. This can range from stress during holiday meals when others want you to eat massive quantities of the food, they serve you, to routine work stresses that you previously calmed by eating something. You can also produce a relaxation response when you are in the midst of removing an old habit and creating a new one.

7. Self-hypnosis can transform and redirect the strong energies of cravings and temptations into feelings and behaviors that safeguard your perfect weight. Your practice with self-hypnosis teaches you how to selectively detach or dissociate from your environment and your inner state. This lets you remember the detached state or become a detached observer and notice that “cravings are present”—and then choose what to turn that energy into for your purposes. You do not need to try to deny cravings and temptation; instead, simply detach from the feelings they produce and observe that they are present. Your self-hypnosis is an excellent way to rehearse your ability to detach well enough to then choose what you want to experience instead. This is also one of the ways that hypnosis is used to create hypnotically induced anesthesia.

8. Self-hypnosis can help you create a more pleasurable and loving relationship with food, eating, and your body, making your weight loss and lifestyle changes more effective and enjoyable. As you create and enjoy greater pleasure with new habits of eating and physical exercise, you will maintain them. A loving relationship with anything lets you enjoy your experience with it. Your self-hypnosis helps you do the inner work of loving that creates the results you want for your perfect weight.

9. Self-hypnosis is a form of focused concentration that effectively enhances your ability to mentally rehearse achieving the results you desire. Mental rehearsal has been used by athletes and performers for years.

Studies have shown mental rehearsal to be an effective way to practice one's mind-body for the actual performance. Your self-

hypnosis lets you rehearse the pleasure of your performance at special occasions, holiday dinners, and parties. You can hypnotically rehearse your food and beverage choices, your confidence in declining dishes or drinks, and satisfaction in handling the situation so very well. Rehearsing in mind, you are preparing your mind- body to serve your perfect weight and pleasure in advance.

10. Self-hypnosis effectively enables the repetition and practice of hypnotic suggestions that result in lifelong, permanent patterns of behavior, emotion, and belief about your perfect weight. Whatever you regularly practice with your self-hypnosis will become the conscious and subconscious patterns of the lifestyle that maintains your perfect weight. Before you know it, you will hear yourself telling others that you do not have to think about dieting or weight loss anymore. Your lifestyle is now in action, developing the patterns and habits that produce the results you want. Your self-hypnosis paved the way for many changes while letting you concentrate on discovering and creating your very own recipe for perfect weight.

11. The Self-Hypnosis Diet is not a diet. It provides the missing ingredient that helps you use your mind-body to establish lifelong patterns of eating and exercise that make it seem like you can eat anything you want and still keep your perfect weight.

Conclusion

Hypnotherapy has been used for centuries as a way of effecting change at an unconscious level - and therefore bypassing conscious barriers and challenges that make it difficult to break habits or overcome past trauma. Hypnosis or 'trance' is a completely natural state that you enter into spontaneously several times a day. When day dreaming for example or that common 'driving trance' where you arrive at your destination without remembering the journey because you were so absorbed in your own thoughts. Contrary to some perceptions you are not 'asleep' in hypnosis but in an altered state of awareness that allows you to focus internally and accept suggestions for change. You will only accept suggestions that are congruent with your values and your desire to change.

Hypnotherapy for weight loss is especially effective because compulsive eating is as a result of unconscious behavior usually in connection to seeking comfort, solace, or diversion. Hypnotherapy can break the connection and allow the unconscious mind to provide the same positive intention with another, more helpful behavior.