

How to Enter a State of Self-Hypnosis

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Before learning how to enter a state of self-hypnosis, let's briefly discuss what constitutes the state of self-hypnosis, and the role of imagination.

Meditation became popular years ago in various forms. While some people endeavor to "blank the mind" or silence the conscious thoughts while meditating, the meditative state of mind is a state of altered consciousness.

Self-hypnosis is also a meditative state, which I prefer to call meditation with a focus...such as imagining standing barefoot in the sand on a beautiful beach with a gentle breeze blowing, or being in a mountain meadow with a nearby waterfall that you can see or hear. While your conscious mind knows your location at any moment, simply *imagining* being in a peaceful place while physically relaxed helps you enter a state of altered consciousness.

Self-Hypnosis = Altered Consciousness

I frequently explain hypnosis to a prospective client by asking a question such as, "When is the last time you cried real tears during a powerful movie? Even though your conscious mind knew you were sitting in a theater watching actors and actresses, your subconscious accepted them as real characters because you were in a state of altered consciousness – or more accurately, a state of guided self-hypnosis!

Even though the "critical faculty" can be bypassed when we get engrossed in a good movie, that motion picture does *not* control us, it *only guides* us through its story. It could be said, then, that the movie is our hypnotist until the closing credits cross the screen. We could get up and walk out or turn off the DVD player if we wanted to, so we could more accurately say that the movie puts us into a state of guided self-hypnosis, similar to meditation because our brain waves are in the *alpha* state.

The Four States of Mind

There are four states of mind: beta, alpha, theta, and delta.

Beta

We are in the *beta* state for most of your waking hours. It's a good thing, too, since beta is like high gear, a good place for decision making, reasoning and logic. Brain waves are above 13 cycles per second, often greatly higher, and may or may not be rhythmic.

Alpha

As our brain waves slow to between 8 and 13 cycles per second, we enter the *alpha* state of mind. The door between conscious and subconscious is opened, and it becomes easier to access the memories and storage of new information. We may become mellow in this relaxed state, finding it easier to use the imagination, which is why our favorite actors and actresses become the characters they play while the movie fills our senses of sight and sound.

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Theta & Delta

Below the two conscious states are *theta*, the dream state, and *delta*, which is deep sleep or total unconsciousness. Whether or not you remember your dreams, you must pass through theta on the way to and from delta. Likewise, you must pass through alpha on the way to and from sleep. We enter a state of self-hypnosis at least twice daily, on the way to and from sleep.

Now that you have read about the alpha state, are you ready to experience it?

Entering Self-Hypnosis...

The number of ways of entering an altered state of consciousness are as limitless as the imagination. I'll describe the most common technique, and provide two other methods for the benefit of those who have difficulty responding to the first exercise, which is called progressive relaxation. If you have learned another method from another book (or from a seminar) use what you prefer as long as your chosen method works.

I suggest you read through this exercise once or twice to become familiar with the contents before you begin using the actual technique. The specific words you will use can vary from the typical session suggested here, but you should follow the basic format. Scripts are like training wheels, serving only as a guide to get you started.

Progressive Relaxation

Now let's begin the session. Find a comfortable place to recline or lie down. If you wear hard contact lenses, remove them. If you chew gum, throw it away. Also, be certain that your clothing feels comfortable. If possible, unplug your phone or turn on your answering machine - and make certain to put your pets in another room. Some animals seem to sense the mental peace you feel in the alpha state, and will want to be close. (Experience taught me that a cat suddenly pouncing on your stomach during relaxation can be quite a jolt!)

Now that you're comfortable, take several deep breaths. Close your eyes if you wish. Imagine yourself letting go of all of your cares and tensions as easily as you let go of the air from your lungs.

Background music is optional - but recommended if you meditate in an area where there may be distracting outside noise.

Think to yourself words like the italics on the following pages while fantasizing yourself being in a peaceful place. That peaceful place can be a beach, the woods, a waterfall, lake, stream, meadow, etc. Note the grammar is often imperfect, because the words are intended for the subconscious. Three dots indicate a pause...

As I now imagine a relaxing sensation entering my toes, my breathing continues to be free and easy - just as when I sleep. The relaxation becomes more and more real with each breath I take, moving up into my feet..

It feels soooooo good to relax that it becomes easy, comfortable, and automatic for the

relaxation to move up into my ankles... The relaxing sensation becomes more and more real with each breath I take. It now moves up into my calves. All my nerves and muscles just let go, responding to my desire to relax... The relaxation moves right on through my knees, going up into my thighs... all the nerves and muscles letting go into a deeper and deeper state of relaxation.

My hips relax. It feels soooooo good to relax, that the feeling continues right on into my stomach muscles and up around my rib cage.

With each breath I go deeper and deeper relaxed. The relaxation moves on into my lower back, going right up into my shoulders - just as though gentle fingers have just given me a soothing back rub. The soothing feeling of relaxation moves down through my elbows, going right on out through my hands and fingers... With each breath I take, I just go deeper and deeper...

The back of my neck relaxes... My scalp relaxes... It feels soooooo good to relax that the feeling of soothing comfort moves into my forehead and temples. With each breath I just go deeper and deeper. My cheeks relax. My jaw muscles relax... My entire body now feels completely relaxed...

At this point you may very well be in a light or medium state of alpha consciousness from this sample induction. If you practice self-hypnosis at night before going to sleep, you may find yourself sound asleep long before you finish the exercise. Some of my clients tend to fall asleep before getting past their knees. If you still feel considerable awareness, however, you may wish to deepen the relaxation by using additional self-talk as follows:

As I now count from ten down to one, I become deeper and deeper relaxed with each number - just drifting down into a very soothing tranquility.

Number Ten - deeper and deeper, relaxing physically...

Number Nine - deeper and deeper, relaxing mentally...

Number Eight - deeper and deeper, relaxing emotionally...

Number Seven - deeper and deeper, relaxing totally...

Number Six - every nerve and muscle relaxes completely...

Number Five - each number taking me deeper and deeper...

Number Four - the deeper I go, the easier it is to go deeper...

Number Three - just drifting into total relaxation...

Number Two - just drifting into deeeeep hypnotic peace...

Number One - waaaaaaaaaaaaay down deep...

Again, some people may benefit by also fantasizing a peaceful place with pleasant sights, sounds and feelings. Others may prefer to use the script as written, without the added "safe place." Make your own choice. If you prefer, you can record this script into a tape player, changing all the "I" and "my" words into the second-person format.

You may experience time distortion - finding that time seems to condense or expand (ten minutes seems like two - or twenty). Also, you may notice that your mind tends to wander. In fact, your

thoughts may wander considerably as you go deeper into the alpha state. You may have to keep bringing yourself back to each new number, sometimes forgetting the last number counted. If this happens, just go on with the first number that comes to your mind. Some of you may have to count down twice to get deeper, or count from a higher number. Many people start the countdown with 20 - and some even start with 100. You make the choice.

You may return to full beta awareness by simply telling yourself that you feel wonderful and wide-awake at the count of five. Then count from one to five either mentally or out loud. If you wish, use the following script as a guide...

Now, I am going to count from one up to five and then I am going to say "fully aware." At the count of five, my eyelids open and I feel calm, refreshed, relaxed, fully aware, and normal in every way.

One... Slowly, calmly, easily, and gently returning to full awareness once again.

Two... Each muscle and nerve in my body is loose, limp, and relaxed, and I feel wonderfully good.

Three... From head to toe I am feeling perfect in every way... physically perfect, mentally alert, and emotionally serene... and when I get behind the wheel of your vehicle, I am totally alert in every way, responding appropriately to any and all traffic situations.

Number four... My eyes begin to feel sparkling clear, just as though they were bathed in fresh spring water. On the next number now, my eyelids open and I am then calm, rested, refreshed, fully aware, and feeling good in every way.

Number five... Eyelids open now. I am fully aware once again.

Take a deep breath, fill up your lungs, and stretch.

While some clients find that they can enjoy progressive relaxation during the first attempt, most others find that they must practice the technique several times first. A minority of clients may discover the need of other techniques; so some of my readers may be asking an important question: "What if I don't respond to progressive relaxation?" I can best answer that question by providing additional options...

Alternate Exercises

A minority of people may find their patience wearing thin trying to enter self-hypnosis with the technique described above. Although you certainly have the option of choosing a hypnotherapist to help you, one of the following alternate inductions may help you attain an alpha state...

Eye Fixation

Get comfortably seated, reclined, or lying down. Stare at an object, such as a candle or a dim light. A candle works well, because the flickering produces eye fatigue (although you may use any object if your eyes are sensitive to light). Take two or three very deep breaths before you begin. Now stare at your chosen object, and imagine your eyelids are getting heavier and heavier with each breath you take. Say to yourself...

As I try to keep my eyes focused on the candle [light, or other object], my eyelids become heavier, droopy and drowsy... The harder I try to keep my eyes open, the more they want to close... As I breathe deeply and slowly, my entire body just wants to relax and let go... relax and let go... until my eyes just want to close all by themselves...

Repeat this until you find your eyes getting so tired that they have to close. Once your eyes finally close, continue with the deepening described in the Progressive Relaxation script.

This eye-fixation technique works well as an alternative for some who might fail to respond to progressive relaxation. A Boeing employee told me some years ago that he could stare at a candle and simultaneously imagine his arm feeling lighter than air. Within seconds his arm floated in an apparent weightless feeling. He demonstrated his ability in my office, putting himself into a rather deep trance within one minute. Naturally, his ability made my work much easier! He combined eye fixation with a variation on mental misdirection, discussed next...

Mental Misdirection

Some hypnotherapists use the imagination to create a physical response, misdirecting the conscious attention in order to produce a trance. You can do this for yourself by taking one of the exercises described in Chapter 2 of my book, *Master the Power of Self-Hypnosis* (Hunter: Sterling Publishing, 1998) and holding the imaginary water bucket a little longer.

Get comfortably seated or reclined. Now hold your arms up in front of you and imagine you are holding a bucket in one hand, and a hundred helium balloons with your other hand.

I now imagine that a cord is tied to my wrist, and a hundred helium balloons are tied to the other end of the cord, tugging my arm upward. I can SEE the balloons and FEEL them tugging...

I'm holding an empty bucket in the other hand, and someone pours water into the bucket. I can SEE the water pouring, HEAR the water splashing, and FEEL the bucket getting heavier as it gets fuller and fuller... heavier and heavier... pulling my arm down... heavier and heavier, fuller and fuller... as my other arm gets higher and higher...

As the bucket gets heavier and fuller, my arm just wants to release the bucket as I release myself into trance... The harder I try to hold up the bucket, the heavier it gets...until I release the bucket and release myself into trance... When I release the bucket, my arm drops and I just drop off into deep, hypnotic peace... or I can release myself into total relaxation...

If you feel responsive to your imagination by now, you can drop both arms down and proceed with the counting as described earlier in this chapter; otherwise continue...

Someone DOUBLES the number of helium balloons, while someone else drops a rock into my bucket... The bucket is getting SO HEAVY that it would be so easy to just release the bucket and release myself into trance... It's so easy to release the bucket and just release myself into

trance...

Drop your arms into your lap now, and proceed with the counting previously described for deepening your trance. Use the awakening technique described above when you are ready to return to beta consciousness.

Very few of my clients use mental misdirection to enter self-hypnosis; but some of my students report satisfying results. You may wish to try all the techniques described in this chapter several times, and choose the one you like the best.

Personal Observations...

Some people drift off to sleep practicing self-hypnosis, so be sure to set an alarm unless you have time for a nap!

Many people remain very aware and start noticing distracting sounds or distracting physical feelings, such as uncomfortable clothing or an itch, etc. When you enter a light state of alpha, you have an increased awareness of anything perceived through the five senses. Rather than thinking that you might not be in hypnosis because of hearing background noise, etc., recognize your increased awareness as a signal that you already reached a light trance state!

If the counting fails to deepen you to your satisfaction, you may try other helpful techniques involving additional use of your imagination. For example, if desired, you can use an imaginary elevator to help you go deeper. If you don't like elevators, use an escalator, slide, or steps. You could also be floating into a cloud, walking into the woods, lying on a beach listening to waves of relaxation, or you may be getting into an imaginary Jacuzzi. (Note: Do NOT do this exercise while sitting in a real Jacuzzi!) Again, you may incorporate these deepening techniques with any of the induction exercises described in this chapter. Another deepening technique involves adding a peaceful place to the meditation. (A later chapter contains an empowerment exercise to help you enjoy your peaceful place.)

The degree of success varies from person to person. Some of you may find the progressive relaxation technique works great the very first time. Others may have to practice all the above techniques (as I did) until finding the best one. In fact, I had so much stress when I first tried self-hypnosis that I had to go to a hypnotherapist for post-hypnotic suggestion to help me learn self-hypnosis. Even simple meditation had proven difficult previously, because others instructed me to simply "blank out" my mind. Well, that's difficult at best if not almost impossible for me to do, because even when I relax, my mind still runs a thousand miles per second. (That's why I create my own safe place in my mind when relaxing. You may find benefit in doing likewise.)

Practice entering self-hypnosis through each of the exercises in this chapter at least once before attempting any of the other self-hypnosis exercises in this book. As you develop your ability to relax, you may find yourself able to enter an alpha state easily by taking two or three deep breaths and thinking the word "relax" each time you exhale. Numerous clients create what they call a "centering" technique to help them enter the alpha state more easily each time; and some of my students refine their centering into a signal for quickly entering the alpha state. Employing such a trigger for instant

self-hypnosis has many benefits.

If you feel you need help, find a qualified hypnotherapist in your area to work with you. If you wish, you may record your voice on a cassette tape for any of the above scripts and listen to the suggestions to relax. If you prefer this method, remember to change the to the "you are" format rather than keeping the first person format.

Good luck!

For additional reading material, please read the FAQ posted at my website:

www.royhunter.com/hypnofaq.htm

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