

Hypnotherapy

What is Hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy is a research-supported therapy intervention that can be used for a wide range of conditions. The American Psychological Association (2014) defines *hypnotherapy* as “the use of hypnosis in the treatment of a medical or psychological disorder or concern.” *Hypnosis* is defined as “a state of consciousness involving focused attention and reduced peripheral awareness characterized by an enhanced capacity for response to suggestion.”

During hypnotherapy, your hypnotherapist guides you into a heightened state of awareness/focus called a **trance**. A trance is a natural state of mind which we all frequently experience (losing track of time while watching a movie, driving on “autopilot” while focused on a thought). During hypnosis, you learn how to deliberately bring yourself into this state of being in order to make positive changes in your life. It is in this state that your mind becomes more receptive while bypassing the more analytical parts of the brain, which is why it can be a helpful addition to typical therapy sessions.

Myths about Hypnotherapy

1. ***I will be unconscious.*** You are still conscious and aware of what’s going on around you while in trance, yet you are relaxed and focused on specific thoughts. Most people report “observer self” still chiming in with thoughts, such as “Am I really hypnotized?”, “I don’t feel anything different.”, or “What was that noise in the hallway?”
2. ***I will not remember what happened to me, since it’s basically deep sleep.*** People are often surprised to see that they remember much of what happens while in trance, as well as everything that is said. Hypnotic trance feels like relaxation—not sleep.
3. ***I will no longer be in control, and my hypnotherapist can make me say/do embarrassing things.*** You are in complete control throughout the entire process, and you will not be able to be forced or made to say/do anything against your will. It’s often said “All hypnosis is self-hypnosis.” Similarly, if any point you decide you no longer what to continue, the process can be stopped by simply telling your hypnotherapist.
4. ***You will be cured after one session.*** While everyone’s healing process is different, do not expect drastic changes within one session. Much like therapy, many of the changes are progressive can take multiple sessions.
5. ***Everyone can be hypnotized.*** Some people naturally have more hypnotic ability than others, and research suggests that roughly 95% of the population is hypnotizable to some degree. Most people find that hypnotic ability is similar to musical ability in that it increases with practice.

Hypnotherapy can help with:

- Anxiety Disorders
- Depression
- PTSD
- OCD
- Phobias
- Sleep Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Pain Management
- Stress Management
- Healing of Trauma
- Self-esteem Problems
- Behavioral Changes (weight loss, smoking cessation, etc.)
- Performance Enhancement (sports, public speaking, etc.)
- Subconscious Exploration
- Past Life Regression

What can I expect in a Hypnotherapy Session?

Your hypnotherapist will first answer any questions or concerns that you might have before starting. You will be asked if you want the positive reinforcement parts of your session audio recorded on your own phone/device for you to listen to later, and you may be given options for relaxing music to listen to during your session.

The first stage of the hypnotherapy process is called the **Interview Phase**, in which you answer questions regarding the problem to be addressed as well as questions about positive, affirming aspects of your life. Think of this phase as the “priming phase.” After this 10-15-minute stage, the hypnosis portion of the session will begin. During the hypnotic process, you will be asked to close your eyes or stare at a spot on the wall.

The next stage lasts roughly 10-minutes and is called the **Induction Phase**. The hypnotherapist will guide you into a relaxed trance through guided imagery, deep breathing, and/or progressive muscle relaxation.

Following this stage, you will enter into the **Working Phase**, in which the hypnotherapist will guide you in working on your goals. This phase can last anywhere from 15 to 45-minutes and may include memory regression, thought/feeling/behavior exploration, or subconscious associations. Many times this phase will not be audio recorded, as it may contain material that you do not want reinforced (such as trauma memories).

After the working phase, you will be guided through a 5 to 10-minute **Healing Phase**. This phase is meant to help positive reinforcements, lessons, and messages sink into your subconscious.

The **Waking Phase** is the end of the hypnosis process in which you are slowly brought out of trance. This phase typically lasts no more than 5 minutes.

Hypnotherapy sessions sometimes end with very little processing of the actual hypnotherapy experience. The main reason for this is to allow your brain to process the experience at its own pace. Even though you may not feel different, your subconscious will typically continue processing for hours, days, and even weeks following the session. You are encouraged to write down any insights/realizations that you experience during this time, as you and your hypnotherapist may want to explore these during a typical counseling session or another hypnotherapy session.

TO RECORD OR NOT TO RECORD?

Hypnotherapy sessions are typically recommended to be recorded, and many people find that they continue to listen to their recordings for years to come. The purpose of this is so that you can continue the process of reinforcing positive changes outside of your hypnotherapy session. The only phases of your session that would be recorded are the **Induction**, the **Healing**, and the **Waking Phases**. The reason for this is so that only the positive material is reinforced following the session. Should you choose to have your session recorded, be sure that you have enough space on your phone/device to record roughly 15-20 minutes of audio.

