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## 7. SELF-HYPNOSIS AND LUCID DREAMING

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## 7. SELF-HYPNOSIS AND LUCID DREAMING



*“It isn’t until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are – not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within – that you can begin to take control.” – Oprah Winfrey*

### **OVERVIEW**

In this module, we will cover the following topics:

- Understanding self-hypnosis
- Discovering how self-hypnosis works
- Safety measures in self-hypnosis
- What is lucid dreaming?
- How to induce lucid dreaming
- The applications and effects of lucid dreaming

## SELF-HYPNOSIS

A hypnotherapist describes self-hypnosis as “a process or technique used to deliberately feed positive information or suggestions directly into one’s own subconscious memory for the purpose of changing a physical or mental behavior pattern” (Di Peri, 2014, p. 79). It involves relaxing the body, which causes the objective mind to recede, allowing direct access to the subconscious.

### WHAT IS SELF-HYPNOSIS

In previous sections, we have seen that hypnosis is a state of heightened suggestibility where the hypnotist communicates directly with the subconscious of a subject without the interference from the conscious mind. Self-hypnosis involves the same principles but without the guidance of another person. As such, an individual put him- or herself into a state of hypnosis with the aid of different techniques. As with “hetero-hypnosis”, or hypnosis induced by a hypnotist, the subject only enters into the hypnotic state when s/he is ready to do so and then controls the response to suggestions. This may require one or many attempts to achieve as any pressure may lead to unconscious resistance.

To overcome this anxiety, conditioning is usually required. It may also happen that a person who has achieved a hypnotic state doesn’t realize it. Many experts believe that everyone can be hypnotized or hypnotize themselves as it is just a matter of increasing the suggestibility that each of us already naturally possesses. As the time required and the technique vary from person to person, it often takes some experimentation to be successful.

Also, most people need to be conditioned for hypnosis, which involves pre-induction conditioning exercises that we will discuss later. Only one out of ten people respond to the first attempt at self-hypnosis and, on average, it takes about a month of trying before achieving self-hypnosis. When in the self-hypnotic state, a person gives himself audible or mental suggestions and can use a prerecorded script. After that, s/he wakes up, usually by counting to five, or enters a sleep state. The latter can be effective since the suggestions often spill over into the subconscious mind as he goes from a conscious to an unconscious state.

A study by Bibby, McConkey, and Lim (2001) compared the experiences during three phases—suggestion, test, and cancelation—in self-hypnosis and hetero-hypnosis. They found that subjects were equally likely to pass an ideomotor item (arm levitation) and a cognitive item (age regression) during self-hypnosis as they were during hetero-hypnosis. However, they retrospectively reported the experience of hetero-hypnosis as being “more real and involuntary”, and the experience of self-hypnosis as involving “more active thought” (p. 45). But, although the two types of hypnoses produced distinct experiences, the differences were not so significant and depended on the technique and phase. For example, self-hypnosis was experienced more during the suggestion phase and with age regression. Self-hypnosis has also

been associated with “greater receptivity to internal stimuli and vivid personal imagery” (p. 46). From these findings, it is important to highlight two conclusions:

1. The findings, methodologies and theories of hetero-hypnosis cannot be extended to the practice of self-hypnosis.
2. Self-hypnosis, even in a clinical setting, could have an advantage by encouraging a more autonomous and participatory role during treatment.

Therefore, the choice between self-hypnosis and hetero-hypnosis depends on a variety of different factors, including motivation and expectancy of the subject, openness and access to the setting and hypnotist, commitment and readiness to act, and the ability to focus imaginative thoughts.

## HOW DOES SELF-HYPNOSIS WORK?

As a form of hypnosis, that is self-induced, self-hypnosis makes use of self-suggestion and requires motivation to change and a carefully crafted script that is based on a well-defined goal. It also makes use of progressive imagery to induce a deep hypnotic state to subdue the conscious mind and allow direct access to the subconscious. According to Moss (1985), self-hypnosis requires four distinct steps.

**Step 1: Motivation.** Without proper motivation, an individual will find it difficult to practice self-hypnosis

**Step 2: Relaxation:** The individual must be thoroughly relaxed and must set aside time to perform this act. Additionally, distractions should be eliminated as full attention is needed.

**Step 3: Concentration:** The individual needs to concentrate completely as energy is generated each time the mind focuses on a single image.

**Step 4: Directing:** This is an option used only when the individual wants to work on a specific goal. The individual must direct their concentration on visualizing the desired result.

Self-hypnosis requires a thorough and systematic process, from planning to exit, to be effective. Garver (1984) suggested the following eight steps to successfully achieve a state of self-hypnosis, communicate suggestions to the subconscious, and dehypnotization.

1. **Plan the suggestion first and keep it positive.** Before attempting to enter a hypnotic state, the person must first define their goal in precise terms, and use this as a basis to formulate their suggestion, which must be stated in a positive way with the liberal use of vivid visual imagery. In other words, acknowledge the positive outcome in detail without reinforcing detailed descriptions of the problem. In short, the person should imagine himself in the situation in

question, responding to that situation is exactly the manner that they wish, feeling good about it, with a few key positive words or phrases simply stated.

2. **The entry cue.** The person could use the cue that they have used in hetero-hypnosis or try various alternatives, such as holding and letting go a deep breath, eye fixation, or hand levitation.
3. **Neutral imagery.** To start the imagery, the person should imagine himself in a relaxing but neutral setting away from whatever contributes to their problem. The main idea at this stage is that it should be an enjoyable, relaxing, or fascinating experience not linked to a problem that needs solving.
4. **Move to suggestive imagery.** After relaxing for a few moments in this neutral place, the person mentally places himself in the suggestive imagery environment where the problem typically surfaces but seeing themselves responding exactly as they want to in that place. They insert their positive suggestion with this visual imagery and return immediately after to the neutral imagery.
5. **Return to neutral imagery.** From the suggestive imagery, the person returns to the neutral imagery to prevent the conscious mind to have time to evaluate and screen what has been said in the suggestion and sabotage or question its effectiveness. When shifting quickly to and away from the suggestive imagery, only the subconscious mind processes the suggestion.
6. **Re-orient.** Reversing the hypnosis process, the person becomes more aware of where they are, body position, the texture of the chair, etc. They are relaxed and ready to end the hypnotic state.
7. **Post-hypnotic suggestion for post-trance feeling.** It is important that the person also formulates a post-hypnotic suggestion for the post-trance feeling. Most clients in hetero-hypnosis are informed that they can feel refreshed, relaxed, and comfortable when they return to the waking state. But in self-hypnosis, the post-hypnotic suggestion should be more detailed and fit the post-hypnotic goal. If it is to enter a natural and deep, restful sleep, or feeling alert and energized, the post-hypnotic suggestion should reflect exactly that.
8. **Exit cue.** This is usually similar to cues used in hetero-hypnosis, such as counting from one to five; or to suggest that the person will return to full alertness within 30 seconds, feeling the way they suggested. The same cue should be used consistently.

It is clear that, for self-hypnosis to be successful and produce the desired results, the imagery and suggestion have to be positive and motivate changing behavior to achieve the benefits. As mentioned before, the process is well-planned and systematic, as is illustrated in the example below.

## SAMPLE SCRIPT TO INDUCE AND EXIT A TRANCE

### Inducing a light hypnotic state

You can induce a hypnotic state in many ways. This is one of the simpler induction techniques to reduce tension and stress.

***1. Find a comfortable position in a quiet, dimly lit room where you won't be interrupted.***

Relax as much as possible. If you want, take off your shoes and loosen any tight clothing.

***2. Focus on an object across the room.***

The object can be anything—a smudge on the wall, the corner of a picture, it really doesn't matter. Just choose an object that is above your normal line of sight so that you have to strain your eyeballs a wee bit looking up to see your spot.

***3. As you look at your spot, silently say to yourself:***

“My eyelids are becoming heavier and heavier.”

“My eyelids feel as if heavy weights are pulling them down.”

“Soon they will be so heavy they will close.”

Repeat these sentences to yourself about every 30 seconds.

***4. Focus on your eyelids.***

Soon you will notice that, indeed, your eyelids are beginning to feel heavier. Feel this heaviness deepen with time. Don't fight these sensations, just let them happen. Let your eyes close when you feel they want to close themselves.

***5. As your eyes begin to close, say to yourself: "Relax, and let go."***

***6. When your eyes close, take in a deep breath through your nostrils and hold that breath for about 10 seconds.***

***7. Slowly exhale through your slightly parted lips, making a “swooshing” sound.***

At the same time, let your jaw drop and feel a wave of warmth and heaviness spread from the top of your head, down your body, all the way to your toes. Continue to breathe slowly and smoothly. As you exhale, silently say the word "calm," or some other relaxing word, to yourself. As you breathe, let the feelings of relaxation deepen for another few moments.

### **Going a little deeper**

After you induce a light hypnotic state, you are ready to move into a deeper state of hypnosis.

***1. Take a deep breath and hold it for about 10 seconds.***

Exhale slowly through your lips while saying the word “deeper” to yourself. Continue this process for several breaths more, saying the word “deeper” to yourself with every exhalation.

***2. Imagine that you're stepping onto a descending escalator, a long, slow escalator that will take you into a state of deeper relaxation.***

As you begin your descent, silently say to yourself,

“I am sinking slowly into a deeper state of relaxation.”

***3. As you descend, count backward on each exhalation, from 10 to 1.***

When you reach the bottom of the escalator, imagine that you are stepping off this escalator and are stepping onto a second descending escalator. As you imagine your descent, deepen your trance with each breath, again counting backward from 10 to 1.

***4. Continue to deepen your trance until you feel you have reached a comfortable level of relaxation.***

You may need only one escalator ride, or you may need several. With practice, a deeper trance will come more easily and more quickly.

**Get me out of this trance**

Alright, you are now in a deep hypnotic state. You are feeling quite relaxed, and your mind is totally at peace. You can choose to remain in this relaxed state, and simply enjoy the benefits of relaxation and calm. You can also give yourself a suggestion that can extend this relaxation beyond the trance state. Here's what to do:

Simply count slowly backward from five to one. Say to yourself beforehand,

“When I reach one, my eyes will open and I will feel totally awake and refreshed.”

As you count, notice your eyes beginning to flutter and begin to partially open as you approach one.

**HOW TO OVERCOME POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN SELF-HYPNOSIS**

When a person decides that they require self-hypnosis, they acknowledge that they have a problem or need for self-improvement. Usually, the objective mind resides in the alpha consciousness, which questions and represses subconscious information. When in a hypnotic state, extreme mental discipline is required not to think of the problem and its negative aspects while in this state. Otherwise, the problem is

reinforced, creating more of a barrier to be overcome. This is often experienced as a failure of hypnosis or oneself, and, even more, effort and determination is required to reverse the process. Instead, as explained before, the suggestion and imagery have to be carefully formulated and enacted to ensure that it instills a positive experience of the desired outcome.

Audiotapes of affirmations designed to overcome a variety of problems are available (Di Peri, 2014). In addition to selecting from ready-made induction and suggestion scripts, there are also software applications, such as Neuro-Programmer 3 that offers a feature to design and add one's own script (see <https://www.transparentcorp.com/products/np>). Alternatively, a script can be audiotaped with any recording device for later use.

Also, subconscious information is deeply embedded, which requires continuous repetition of positive or counteracting suggestions, often over an extended period of time, to affect it. It requires patience and resilience to achieve change through hypnosis, including self-hypnosis. Although self-hypnosis sessions are not tedious, time-consuming events, at least 21 applications of the self-activating procedure are required for most people, before the desired pattern of behavior is established as a norm.

In contrast to the widespread misconception that hypnosis, including self-hypnosis, is not safe as it is a means of taking away control, this is not true. It is actually an effective way to enhance control over people's beliefs and perceptions such as pain, anxiety, habits, and stress, all of which involve a degree of subjective experience. However, anyone interested in trying hypnosis is encouraged to choose a therapist or health care professional that has been trained and licensed or a well-substantiated and proven technique from an established provider.

Other risks, real or perceived, are:

1. **Driving or operating any machinery or equipment.** As hypnosis and sleep are closely related, don't engage in anything that you would not do when drowsy.
2. **Getting "stuck" in hypnosis.** One may stay in deep relaxation for a while, especially if enjoyable but it is not possible to get permanently "stuck." To ensure exiting the hypnotic state at the preferred time set an alarm for about 15 minutes after your self-hypnosis session is scheduled to end.
3. **Using badly scripted suggestions.** Carefully phrase your suggestions and avoid negativity, confusing grammar, and unintentionally embedded commands that can sabotage otherwise helpful suggestions. Keep the suggestions positive, clear, and simple.
4. **Having a bad experience.** It is possible to relive a traumatic experience while in a hypnotic state but avoid it by keeping self-hypnosis sessions to simple and constructive topics with well-defined goals and a suitable script.



5. **Feeling tired and listless.** The secret to coming out of self-hypnosis feeling awake, energized, and motivated is to set that expectation for yourself before the time.

Most importantly, accept that self-hypnosis does not work for everybody, at least not initially. Prepare properly, be willing to focus your attention, and be patient.

### Now watch this video

#### **Hypnosis for Self-Esteem Through Mastery [15:18]**

Lisa Machenberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJUKXsylvM8w>



## **LUCID DREAMING**

Lucid dreaming was first coined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but the scientific application of the concept has only started to accelerate in the past three decades or so. Only then, scientists established that lucid dreamers were able to demonstrate that they were consciously aware of being in a dream state, primarily by using eye movement signals. Their perception of time was not affected but they had control and awareness of their dreams.

### **WHAT IS LUCID DREAMING?**

Basically, a lucid dream is any dream in which a person is aware that he is dreaming. It also implies that the person remembers the dream after waking up. The term was first coined by Dutch psychiatrist Frederik Willem van Eeden in 1913. In a lucid dream, the dreamer has greater chances to exert some degree of control over their participation within the dream or be able to manipulate their imaginary experiences in the dream environment, making it similar to a hypnotic session.

According to Holzinger (2009), there are seven different conditions of clarity that a dream must all fulfill to qualify as a lucid dream:

1. Awareness of the dream state (orientation);
2. Awareness of the capacity to make decisions;
3. Awareness of memory functions;
4. Awareness of self;
5. Awareness of the dream environment;
6. Awareness of the meaning of the dream;
7. Awareness of concentration and focus (the subjective clarity of that state)

In other words, it lucid dreaming means to be consciously aware within your dream. It is said that when one has a lucid dream, it transform the dream from a faint, fuzzy memory without any control, to an intense and incredible experience where one's participation is intentional.

## INDUCING LUCID DREAMING

Like self-hypnosis, lucid dreaming is intentionally induced to enable exploring the deepest thoughts of one's subconscious. Once a dreamer becomes lucid, they are able to interact with and control their dreams by changing the scenes of the dreams, the characters, and the experiences. By developing techniques such as WBTB (Wake-Back-to-Bed, wake after some sleep and then return to bed), auto-suggestion (instill belief that you will become lucid), and MILD (Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams, fall asleep while focused on your intention to remember that you are dreaming), lucid dreaming is initiated. To achieve highly lucid dream states, a systematic and progressive process is required, as well as lots of practice, trial-and-error, and patience.

### **Step 1: Improve your dream recall**

This is probably the most important aspect of lucid dreaming. It is done by planting the seed, telling yourself regularly and before you go to sleep that you will remember your dreams. Repeating it like a mantra will help plant the suggestion in your subconscious mind.

Also, start a dream journal. Keep it by your bedside and make notes the moment you wake up. Another option is to record an account of your dream on your phone or another device.

Discuss your dreams with friends and on online forums. Reinforce your desire to have lucid dreams and reinforce the message in your subconscious.

### **Step 2: Perform reality checks**

Reality checks refer to the realization that you are dreaming when you are dreaming. Do 10 to 20 reality checks throughout the day to enhance your self-awareness and programs the question in your subconscious. It will help you spontaneously perform a reality check in a dream and become lucid.

### **Step 3: Learn to meditate**

Meditation tunes you to your internal state and helps you feel peaceful and relaxed. It produces mental effects such as hypnagogic hallucinations, feelings of euphoria and sudden insights, and trains you to actively enter altered states of awareness on demand. It also helps you become more self-aware and to recognize the nature of the dream world. Start by introducing a simple 10-minute breathing meditation into your daily routine. There are good examples available online (see <https://soundcloud.com/user581427547>).

### **Step 4: Study and trial induction methods**

The previous three steps will already produce spontaneous lucid dreams but if you want the same experience regularly with more meaningful control and insights, it is best to do some reading about different induction methods. This will help you identify the best induction methods for you as well as what to do with your lucid dreams when you have them.

### **Step 5: Try advanced techniques**

To make the lucid dreaming experience, even more, intense, try some advanced techniques such as the Wake Induced Lucid Dream, or WILD, involves training yourself to go directly from waking to a lucid dream state. It is challenging and requires effort, determination, and patience but the payoff is huge.

## **APPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS OF LUCID DREAMING**

The technique of lucid dreaming is used in many clinical and self-improvement applications, including the treatment of nightmares and PTSD, chronic pain management, enhancing creativity and internal locus of control, personal discovery, and performance. Other potential applications of lucid dreaming are still being discovered and researched. Also, similar to self-hypnosis, lucid dreaming is an aid to:

- Improve concentration
- Increase control of emotions
- Increase recall
- Enhance problem-solving
- Lessens muscle tension
- Increase control of disposition

As such, lucid dreaming can involve many adventures and explorations that can simulate a rehearsal for a desired life and self. It allows for creative problem-solving, stimulate ideas, and opens possibilities regarding interpersonal relationships. After all, many people argue that life is little more than an elaborate dream. Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century famously said: “We are asleep. Our life is a dream. But we wake up, sometimes, just enough to know that we are dreaming.”

In this sense, as is the case with self-hypnosis, an altered state is used to communicate with, and influence, the subconscious using suggestions. It is also useful to integrate the conscious mind and subconscious and reduce potentially harmful conflicts between the two realms, producing harmony and balance in everyday life.

## **KEY POINTS**

1. Self-hypnosis is a process or technique that involve deliberately feeding positive suggestions to oneself while in a highly suggestible state.
2. After pre-conditioning exercises, a prerecorded script is typically used to deliver mental or verbal suggestions to the subconscious.
3. On average, about a month of practicing is required to successfully achieve self-hypnosis.
4. Self-hypnosis typically has an advantage by encouraging a more autonomous and participatory role during treatment.
5. The process of self-hypnosis works while motivated and relaxed to focus on and visualize the desired outcome.
6. Once in a hypnotic state, the person first focuses on neutral imagery before moving to suggestive imagery after which reorientation takes place to return to a wakeful and energetic state.
7. A lucid dream a lucid dream is any dream in which a person is aware that s/he is dreaming and remembers the dream afterward.
8. Lucid dreaming means to be consciously aware on seven levels in a dream: Dream state, decision-making capacity, memory, identity, the dream environment, meaning, and focus.
9. Lucid dreaming is intentionally induced using techniques such as Wake-Back-to-Bed, auto-suggestion, and Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams
10. Self-hypnosis and lucid dreaming can be used to improve the effect of hetero-hypnosis by Improve concentration increasing control of emotions, recall, and control, improving problem-solving, and lessens muscle tension.

## **NEXT STEPS**

You have completed Module 7. Now move on to Module 8 where we consider the applications of hypnosis, including behavior change, pain management, relaxation, anxieties, and phobias.

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Assessment approx 100 words per question

- ☐ explain your Understanding self-hypnosis?
- ☐ how does self-hypnosis works?
- ☐ What is lucid dreaming?
- ☐ How to induce lucid dreaming?
- ☐ What are The applications and effects of lucid dreaming?