

Bruce N. Eimer, PhD

## REAL HELP FROM HYPNOSIS

### The Benefits Go Far Beyond Weight Loss and Smoking Cessation...

**H**ypnosis is best known for helping with weight loss and tobacco addiction. But research now shows that it also can be used for such conditions as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), high blood pressure and diabetes to help relieve symptoms and reduce one's need for medication.

#### WHAT IS HYPNOSIS?

The main idea behind hypnosis is that the mind and body work together and cannot be separated. Unconscious negative thought patterns and unresolved emotions can cause

physical and mental illness...and the subconscious mind can be used to help resolve these issues.

During hypnosis, the doorway to the subconscious mind is opened. In this state, suggestibility heightens, mental absorption increases, senses become more acute and the imagination communicates with the subconscious to create change.

Hypnosis is not meant to replace standard medical treatment, but it can enhance the effectiveness of traditional treatment methods, including medication and surgery, for many conditions. In addition, it's simple, safe, effective and has no side effects.

#### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Recent research confirms that hypnotherapy can help treat a wide variety of medical problems. For example, it significantly reduced pain in IBS patients—ultimately allowing these patients to take far less medications and have fewer doctor visits.

Similar research has demonstrated the effectiveness of hypnosis in reducing blood pressure in individuals with hypertension and blood sugar levels in people with diabetes. A study currently is being conducted on hypnosis and hot flashes in postmenopausal women.

#### HOW HYPNOSIS WORKS

Unlike modern treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, which require patients to *consciously* shift negative thought patterns, hypnosis bypasses the thinking mind and relies on the subconscious to relay messages.

The therapist induces a trance by having the patient focus on a single object such as a flickering candle... a sound such as a ticking clock...or a physical sensation such as breathing. The therapist then leads the patient into a peaceful, twilight state through relaxation and breathing exercises. This state awakens the imagination and produces heightened suggestibility. The therapist then can implant carefully selected suggestions in the patient's subconscious mind, which accepts these suggestions as already fact, and the new behavior becomes automatic.

**Example:** For a patient who suffers from panic attacks, a hypnotherapist would induce a trance state and suggest specific *posthypnotic cues* (actions, thoughts, words or images that will trigger a desired response *after* hypnosis). The patient can use these posthypnotic cues in his/her everyday, waking life to achieve a calm state on his own.

**During the trance state, the hypnotherapist might say:** "Whenever you feel anxious, you'll notice and feel the ring on your finger and take a

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#### WHEN TO TRY HYPNOSIS...

Research shows hypnosis helps the following conditions and more...

- Addictions
- Allergies and asthma
- Anxiety and stress
- Diabetes
- Digestive disorders
- High blood pressure
- Hot flashes
- Insomnia
- Pain
- Phobias
- Skin conditions
- Weight gain

slow, deep breath. This will make you feel grounded, safe and secure.”

In general, people who can visualize, daydream or imagine can be hypnotized. The number of sessions needed depends on the person and his specific situation. Some people solve a problem after one session. For others, it takes longer. Patients typically have five sessions that last about 50 minutes to one hour each.

Each session with a licensed health professional trained in hypnotherapy related to the patient's specific problem costs about \$150 to \$300. Even though there is significant research-backed evidence supporting the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy, they often are considered “alternative” or “complementary” therapies and are rarely covered by medical or mental health insurance. However, some hospital-based pain-management centers do provide insurance-covered hypnosis.

**Caution:** Anyone can call himself a “certified hypnotherapist” or “clinical hypnotist.” Most states don't regulate the practice of hypnosis. Choose a

licensed health professional—a psychologist, psychiatrist, medical doctor or clinical social worker—whom you trust and feel safe and comfortable with.

To find a qualified clinical hypnotherapist, contact the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH) at 630-980-4740 or [www.asch.net](http://www.asch.net).

#### DO IT YOURSELF

After you have successfully entered a hypnotic state in a clinician's office, a qualified hypnotherapist can teach you *self-hypnosis*. Used regularly, self-hypnosis gives you the ability to relax at will, builds your capacity to control your mind and body and furthers the process of positive change.

**How self-hypnosis works:** First, choose one or two suggestions to repeat to yourself four or five times during self-hypnosis. *Examples:* For high blood pressure, you might repeat, *I stay relaxed as I complete my daily responsibilities...* for pain you might say, *I can manage discomfort.*

The next step is to put yourself into a trance, which allows you to enter a state of heightened suggestibility. This can be done by focusing your complete attention on something (as described earlier). Then your focus can move to your breathing. Feel your belly expand on inhalation and contract on exhalation.

To relax more deeply, imagine slowly walking down a set of 20 stairs. Feel the soft carpet under your feet, the smooth, polished wood of the handrail. With each step, your relaxation deepens. At the bottom of the stairs, you find a door. You open it and enter a place where you feel happy, content, safe and comfortable. Maybe it's a balmy beach, cool meadow or favorite room. Notice the specific details of this “favorite place.”

Once you master this deep relaxation, use positive suggestions and positive imagery to help change undesirable attitudes and behaviors and limiting beliefs. When you're ready to emerge from this hypnotic state, walk back up the stairs and into the present moment. ■ ■