

Psychotherapy Guidebook

# HYPNOTHERAPY

Lee G. Wilkins

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# Hypnotherapy

*Lee G. Wilkins*

## DEFINITION

There are as many definitions of hypnosis as there are practitioners, yet no adequate theory of hypnosis is available today. Nonetheless, most would agree at this time that it is a mechanism that effectively lifts repressions, uncovers memories, encourages abreactions (the reexperiencing of a previous emotional event) and dreaming (in terms of affective experiencing), and enhances both motivation and a working alliance. It is also effective in activating a rapid transference reaction.

For the purposes of this article hypnosis will be defined as a normal psychophysiological phenomenon we all experience in varying degrees every day of our lives. This phenomenon can be deepened by an intense focusing of attention upon a specific inner or outer stimulus with a consequent blurring or blotting out of peripheral stimuli. It can be likened to tunnel vision with hypnotic psychophysiological concomitants.

The term Hypnotherapy covers the entire range of hypnotic techniques currently in use. Hypnoanalysis involves the use of both hypnosis and the

dynamic understandings of psychoanalytic theory. Robert Lindner (1958) reminds us that it was psychoanalysis that finally gave hypnosis an air of respectability.

Dynamic psychotherapists tend to use hypnosis more frequently than do behavior therapists. However, there is a growing impetus in integrating various therapeutic modalities and hypnosis appears to be a technique that will be increasingly utilized by all therapists.

## HISTORY

Hypnosis is as old as civilization itself. Primitive man was mesmerized not only by the burning eyes and incantations of the medicine man but by the rhythmic beating of the drums and the laying on of hands, as well. The priests used it in the temples.

Interest in hypnosis has waxed and waned over the years since Mesmer, Charcot, Breuer, and Freud first experimented with its potential as a therapeutic instrument. After Freud's disillusionment with the technique it was ignored until the advent of World War II, when it proved useful in treating traumatic war neuroses. Since then it has become an accepted practice in medicine, dentistry, and psychology.

## TECHNIQUE

There are an infinite number of induction techniques available. In Hypnotherapy I employ the following one after the patient is trained in trance induction, deepening techniques, and verbalizing comfortably in the trance state.

Make yourself comfortable. When you are ready, close your eyes. Your body is feeling increasingly heavy /light [as suits the patient]. You are finding yourself becoming acutely aware of two important things about yourself.

First, look for and find — deep within yourself — a solid inner core of strength that is uniquely your own. It consists of your considerable ability, all your capacities and understandings — your experiences — everything that makes you the unique person that you are.

You can call upon this resource whenever you wish to help you function at a very high level. It is your hidden source of power and strength.

Again — look for it and find it.

Second, you also have within you an inner clock that you can slow down or speed up as you wish. I would like to suggest that you slow it down to the point where all tension and inner pressures disappear. Take all the time you need — so much time that a minute feels like an hour and an hour stretches out for as long as you desire. This can be accomplished in the waking state so

that a tremendous amount of productive work can occur, with no feeling of stress in what is actually a limited time span.

You have the ability to do this. Note how your breathing, your pulse, your blood pressure have all slowed down to within normal limits. So pleasant — so comfortable — so serene and safe.

And now, imagine yourself unlocking a heavy, iron door; as it creaks open, you will become aware of feelings, thoughts, images slowly coming to mind. You are curious about these sensations and making connections that encourage understanding.

As you talk to me about these experiences, you will find yourself relaxing more completely, feeling the solid/light outline of your body on the mattress /chair, as though you are talking to me in your sleep while you are dreaming. It will all seem so real — no need to awaken — very much in control ... You know you can open your eyes if you wish but you will not want to do so.

So push that heavy door open and let that part of you that is beyond your awareness come through at its own rate of speed. You can ignore your body completely because your unconscious will allow images and thoughts to come through at a rate you will handle well.



[The therapist guides, suggests, questions, asks that a dream be completed, etc. When it is time to awaken the patient he reviews in his mind whether there are suggestions that should be removed, and what post-hypnotic suggestions he may additionally wish to give.]

You can remember or not as you see fit. [Sometimes it is important to suggest amnesia.] At the count of five you will be fully awake — feeling rested, alert, confident — as though you have been resting for a long time.

Each time you try this you will go deeper — responding only to a professional to whom you have given your verbal consent. Awakening slowly — one — two — three — four — five. Wide awake!

## APPLICATIONS

The altered condition of awareness is conducive to accepting suggestions relative to tension relief, altering pain states, revealing unconscious resistances, encouraging fantasy exposure to phobic material, teaching diaphragmatic breathing to emphysema patients (Wilkins, 1970), treating psychosomatic conditions, addictions, obesity, cigarette smoking; the list is extensive.

It is the magical expectation of the patient that creates the desired state. However, only a skilled therapist can guide and direct the experience in order

to attain a therapeutic goal. When used appropriately, Hypnotherapy becomes a delicate, sophisticated psychotherapeutic instrument. It should be practiced only by a trained professional.