



# Using Self Hypnosis

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Getting the Most out of the Process  
Getting the Most out of Your SELF

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**by Doug O'Brien 2011**

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# Using Self Hypnosis

## Getting the Most out of the Process Getting the Most out of Your SELF

### Introduction

It has been said that ALL hypnosis is Self Hypnosis. I think there is some truth to that.

After all, when a hypnotist recites all those inductions, without the attention and co-operation of the client he wouldn't get very far. In fact it is arguable, on one level, that the client is really doing all the work.



*Suspendisse potenti.*

So what do we need a hypnotist for? We can just do hypnosis on our selves, right?

Well, yes and no. It is almost always easier and more effective to have someone else be our hypnotic guide so we relax more fully and delve deeper into the process. However, there are exceptions to that rule (like if you don't like or trust your Hypnotist, etc), and many benefits to doing self-hypnosis on a regular basis. And you certainly can't beat the convenience of being able to do it for yourself.

In this article I'll be talking a little about some fascinating and useful background information about the nature of consciousness and I'll explain how to do what is one of my favorite methods of doing self-hypnosis.

### Our Daily Trances

Tell you what – I'm going to ruminate a bit on the nature of consciousness and about the trances people that live in on a daily basis, and if you want to follow along with me that'd be nice. I think you'll find some useful thoughts in here. But – if you want to jump ahead to some of the practical methods of using this phenomenon of hypnosis for your own personal enhancement, I won't mind. You don't necessarily need to fully appreciate all this background information to profit from using self-hypnosis. After all, a person can use a computer without understanding binary code. (There are only 10 kinds of people in the world, those who understand binary and those who don't.) So you don't really need to know everything about which I'll be talking in order to better use that neurological computer between your ears. You will be able to function a bit better in your life by using self hypnosis.

But before you go, I do think it's useful to appreciate that you (and I and all functioning humans) live in one trance or another pretty much all the time. That is, most of how we function takes place without our conscious mind having to be involved. Walking, for most people, is an example of something we do everyday without having to really contemplate HOW we do it. Even getting dressed in the morning is mostly done without thinking. Granted we are thinking about which top to wear with what slacks and stuff like that, but the decision about which leg goes into those trousers first happens automatically.

Driving a car is a good example of trance behavior for most people. Especially on a highway or a route you've done a million times. Sometimes you find yourself miles past your exit before you realize you've been on autopilot. Your conscious mind is thinking about what you'll do when you get there, or about that conversation you had yesterday, or any number of things other than driving, while your other-than-conscious mind is driving just fine.

I could go on and on because there are thousand of examples of this in our daily lives. Even using language requires trance phenomena. Now, most of the time, living in these trance states is just fine. The trances work for us. We drive safely, dress efficiently, walk and talk and live our lives. We function perfectly well within accepted parameters of tolerance.

However, sometimes people come to my office because of trances they have a special name for. They call them problems. If they've been to other therapists or been talking with other helpful people they might have especially special names for them. They call them their phobia, or their depression, or their neurosis. They probably have well thought out stories for how and why they have this problem. Mom and Dad often figure heavily in these stories.

But one of the things Milton Erickson taught us is that these "problems" are not a result of a broken or defective system. They are a result of a system that is working perfectly well, but just producing a result we don't want. It's like a machine in a candy factory that keeps turning out chocolate kisses when we want it to produce lollipops. There is nothing wrong with the machine; it's doing what it's programmed to do. We just need to either appreciate the wonderful gift of chocolate kisses or reprogram the machine to produce other treats.

Therefore it is an accurate statement to say that with many folks who come see me for a private session that I am not so much hypnotizing them as DE-hypnotizing them. Helping them to snap out of their habitual daily trance and begin to implement more functional trances.

So basically what I'm saying is that the question is NOT whether you can be hypnotized or not, the question is how you can begin to DIRECT your trances more appropriately.

## Taking over the Driver's Seat of your Life

Me, I like to use recordings for self-hypnosis. I like to lie back in my bed, put my head back on the pillow and push the play button on my Victrola. (I actually mostly use an ipod at the moment.) I find it much easier to let go and go into a trance when I don't have to do both jobs of guider and guidee. Fortunately I have a pretty extensive library of recorded trance inductions to choose from.

But, at other times, other methods of doing self-hypnosis are more practical.

On this web site you most likely were able to listen to the recording of how to do the "Relaxation Response" technique I learned while working at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital's Department of Complementary Medicine in the late 90s. You also probably have looked at the video that demonstrates the "Breath Walk" Sufi meditation I use as an open-eyed, walking trance. I love that.

In the next section of this article I'll explain how to use a method of self hypnosis lovingly referred to as "The Betty Erickson Special." Story goes that, since Milton Erickson's office in Phoenix, Arizona was attached to his home, when people asked about doing self hypnosis he'd say – "Ah, yes...Self Hypnosis... Betty likes that."

And he calls over to the house on their intercom and asks his wife Elizabeth to come over and teach her method of putting herself into trance.

## One Purpose of Self Hypnosis

Milton Erickson once said, "Patients become patients because they are out of rapport with their own unconscious minds." That is to say that people become in need of therapy when they are out of rapport with their own unconscious minds.

I have seen that all too often people have an attitude of conflict with their unconscious. As if there is a good part of me and a bad part of me, a light side and a dark side, the me and my shadow. It is like – “if only I could get rid of this bad part of me, everything would be OK.” So they try to overpower, control or simply ignore the unconscious.

However, this is inadvisable. It is much better to integrate all parts of us into a functional whole. Milton’s mantra was always “trust your unconscious.” One of my teachers said, “It’s nice to know that there are no bad parts of yourself. Each and every part of your self wants you to be a happy, healthy, fully functional human being.”

Carl Jung went further. He said, “if you bring forth that which is inside you it will set you free. If you don’t bring forth that which is inside you, it may destroy you.”

Therefore, one purpose for doing self-hypnosis is simply to foster this rapport between your conscious and your unconscious. Not to control your unconscious, but to dance with it. So you just do the induction, let it take you where it takes you and return. When you do this on a regular basis it creates a strong connection between your parts. It’s like saying to your unconscious mind – I trust you, I like you, let’s hang out.

There was a period of time when I would do the Betty Erickson special every day at least twice a day. I made a ritual out of it in a manner similar to how some people meditate. I had two rules – “No trance, no breakfast,” and “no trance, no dinner.”

## Accomplishing Specific Goals with Self-Hypnosis

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If you do, in fact, wish to use self-hypnosis for a more specific outcome – as many people do – there are two basic ways to go about it.

1. The traditional way is to act as both the hypnotist and the subject. In other words, put yourself through the induction and then give yourself suggestions – affirmations if you will – of what it is you want to accomplish. Something like “...and tomorrow you will do really well on the history exam, you will feel confident, all the answers there at your finger tips, you know this stuff, you’ll be fine.”
2. My personal favorite way of using self-hypnosis for a particular outcome is to do a Pre-trance set up. What I like to do is something like this: Before starting the self hypnosis induction I’ll say to my unconscious mind, “While I’m in trance please go through all my references and resources and bring to the surface everything I need to accomplish   x  .”

And then I truly do turn it over to my unconscious mind... I just do whatever induction I’ve chosen to do and enjoy the process. Very often, I do the Betty Erickson Special.

### “The Betty Erickson Special” method of Self Hypnosis

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This self-hypnosis induction is based on the understanding that the conscious mind can keep track of only a limited number of foci of attention at any one time. Therefore we deliberately over load the conscious awareness so it zones out. This way the unconscious mind takes over the driver’s seat and you, consciously, can just go along with the ride.

This induction starts with your eye open. Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor. Find something you can focus your eyes on that is above eye level. As an

example, you might see that painting on the wall across from you and just keep your eyes on the upper right hand corner of the frame. You don't have to focus intensely, just rest your eyes on one spot and keep your eyes on that one spot. Notice you can soften your focus and take in virtually the whole room with your peripheral vision.

Then at a nice easy pace, you complete the following sentence right out loud:

"I am now aware that I see   X  ," and you fill in the blank with something you can see there in the room.

Then you do it again. "I am now aware that I see   X  ," and you fill in the blank with *something else* that you can see there in the room.

You do this 4 times total and you endeavor to keep all four visual items in your awareness at the same time. So these awareness's are cumulative.

Then you go to your auditory system.

"I am now aware that I *hear*   X  ," and you fill in the blank with something you can hear there in the room.

And you do that three more times, "I am now aware that I *hear*   X  ," and fill in the blank with something else you can hear in the room. (Note: Sometimes there are not that many choices of things to be heard in the room you're in. Maybe the room is particularly quiet, or maybe the air conditioner is particularly loud and all you can hear is one thing. In either case it is acceptable to repeat yourself. Like you might say, "I'm now

aware that I hear my voice.” “I’m now aware that I hear the ticking of the clock.” “I’m now aware that I hear my voice.”

Then you go to your kinesthesia system. “I’m now aware that I *feel* my   X  .”

As an example, you might say, “I am now aware that I feel my feet on the floor.”

The things you may be aware of are things you can feel tactilely, not emotionally. So we are NOT talking about “I am now aware that I feel happy.” No. We’re paying attention to the things we can be aware of tactilely.

So it might be like this: “I am now aware that I feel my feet on the floor.”

“I am now aware that I feel my back against the back of the chair.”

“I am now aware that I feel the cool air coming from the vents.”

“I am now aware that I feel my breathing.”

Then you go back to the visual modality and do three visual sentence completions.

Then you go back to the auditory modality and do three sentence completions of things you hear.

Then you go back to the kinesthetic modality and do three sentence completions of things you feel.

Then you do two more sentence completions in each modality.

Then you do one more sentence completion in each modality.

At some point in this process your eyes will want to close. Let them close.

If they don't just return to the top of the process and do four more sentence completions in each modality, three more sentence completions in each modality, two more sentence completions in each modality, one more sentence completion in each modality. Repeat as necessary and when your eyes do close, imagine yourself at your favorite body of water. In your mind's eye, take your self to a body of water and find a place there where you can chill out for a bit.

Stay there as long as you like. This is self hypnosis, after all. Take some time and be aware of the visual, auditory and kinesthetic components of your virtual surroundings.

When you're ready reorient back to your waking environment. Open you eyes and feel good.

### "The Betty Erickson Special" method of Self Hypnosis Summarized

1. Find a nice place to sit and rest your focus on a spot above eye level
2. (Optionally) Say to your unconscious mind, "While I'm in trance please go through all my references and resources and bring to the surface everything I need to accomplish this goal (name that goal specifically to yourself)."
3. Then speaking aloud (or not-it's also optional as whether it's out loud) complete the following sentences with different observations.

"I am now aware that I see   X  ." (4 times)

"I am now aware that I hear   X  ." (4 times)

"I am now aware that I feel   X  ." (4 times)

"I am now aware that I see   X  ." (3 times)

"I am now aware that I hear   X  ." (3 times)

“I am now aware that I feel \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (3 times)

“I am now aware that I see \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (2 times)

“I am now aware that I hear \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (2 times)

“I am now aware that I feel \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (2 times)

“I am now aware that I see \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (1 time)

“I am now aware that I hear \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (1 time)

“I am now aware that I feel \_\_\_X\_\_\_.” (1 time)

Repeat if necessary til your eyes close.

When your eyes do close, take yourself – in your vivid imagination – to a body of water.

Reorient to waking reality when you're ready.

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