

The Reflected Imagery Induction

This is a powerful and effective way to seamlessly flow from interviewing clients on their own motivations and goals to teaching them to develop their own suggestions to experiencing a hypnotic state *they describe*. The essential skill sets are shaping clients' hypnotic self-suggestions so that they are effective, and interviewing clients so that they can create vivid and detailed imagery that produces the physiological and emotional changes they desire.

1. Elicit and develop the client's hypnotic self-suggestions.
2. Help client decide on preferred trance state.
3. Interview client on their imagery for producing this trance state: especially focus on what they see, hear, feel, smell and taste.
4. Notice any evidence for the trance state developing during imagery interview.
5. Encourage the client to deepen their trance experience as you *read back their descriptions of their own imagery*, interspersed with *their own self-suggestions*, weaving in your own encouragement and amplification.
6. Re-orient the client to the outside world with suggestions for being more alert, comfortable and refreshed after trance.

Step One: Effective Self-Suggestion

The best self-suggestions, like personal goals, are specific (measurable or at least noticeable), meaningful (important to the person), realistic (perceived to be possible), and time-limited (so they can be evaluated). There is some controversy about whether they need to be "positive" – in other words, is it better to say "increase comfort" because it allows a focus on the desired outcome rather than "decrease pain" because it focuses on the problem state rather than on the solution? This depends on the client. My personal style is to focus attention to become more and more absorbed with the solution state, but I have also found "reduce pain" or "gradually transform the pain experience into a different experience" to be effective suggestions. In interviewing the client on what they want to ask their unconscious to do, to focus on, or to learn to do, remain attentive to what seems a realistic starting point for the client, and use shaping and successive approximation in beginning with hypnotic suggestions that are likely to achieve some noticeable to change to increase confidence in the client's self-hypnotic skill. When clients want to start with suggestions for enormous

change that is unlikely to immediately succeed, you can both encourage them to use shaping, train them to notice minute shifts, build confidence, and remind them that most large changes happen slowly and build over time, as an antidote to skepticism that might be their interpretation of lack of immediate dramatic change. You can also enjoy not knowing what the outcome may be: why not think big? Best case, it could work, and worst case, it's a start.

Hypnotic suggestions that are open-ended and vague are okay, too, as they allow more freedom of interpretation and creative response by both the conscious and unconscious mind. Use your best judgment in helping clients craft suggestions that blend the power of specificity with the open-endedness of more general suggestions.

Step One Script: "What one or two, or at most, three, things would you like to ask your unconscious mind to do, or focus on, or learn, today?"

Step Two: Choosing a trance state

The majority of people will choose relaxation, confidence or competence, but you may need to help develop a more creative, idiosyncratic response. For example, very busy type-A achievers may be most "relaxed" when imagining being in the middle of wrapping up several simultaneous projects successfully. Your skill to develop is your capacity to help your clients pick the state that will be most effective for them.

Step Two Script: "What states of consciousness do you want to cultivate that would most help you deeply and effectively absorb your suggestions, at a level of both conscious commitment and intention and also unconscious, automatic, effortless learning and response? Would being very relaxed, or very focused, or very confident, be a state that would fit with taking in the suggestions you've developed?"

Step Three: Hypnotic interviewing

The idea here is to write down as much of the client's own words as you can, pulling for vivid and detailed descriptions. Watch for when they get on a roll: leave the script behind and become a good note-taker. Also watch for signs they are entering the trance state because of their imaginative involvement in their

own trance story. You may want to gently point this out, and encourage it to continue. Notice and reflect for them how good they already are at developing trance states.

In interviewing for sense states, you want to pull for some information from all senses, but let the person give more detail for their dominant senses. The more detail, and the more vivid the imagery, the more pronounced the physiologic and emotional response. If any information comes up that seems uncomfortable or is inconsistent with the stated goals for the experience, remind the client they can change any aspect of the imagery in any way they want. "You're the director of the film and you have an unlimited special effects budget."

The rhythm of letting them finish their comments and develop an emotional response to their own imagery before pulling for the next piece of information is in itself a hypnotic induction establishing a relaxed pace, a comfort with gradual unfolding, and confidence in the power of the process. Pulling for more detail and more vividness of imagery can be a very subtle part of the give and take of natural conversation.

Step Three Script: "Okay, let's develop an image for that. Think of a time when you've felt most intensely that way, and you can amplify that with whatever your imagination wants to produce that would create the most complete state of [relaxation, confidence, commitment] you can feel right now. Just let that begin to form in your mind and develop naturally, and let whatever your imaginative associations are come up into consciousness."

"Now look around in this image and tell me what you see. [example, "I see a tree."] Good. What kind of bark does it have, smooth or gnarly? How is the light reflecting off it? What kind of leaves does it have? How big is it? And what else do you see?"

"What do you hear? [example, "I hear a birdsong.] That's great. How near? Is it a song you recognize? What else can you hear?"

"What do you feel? What is the temperature? What do your clothes feel like on your skin? Are they loose, or tight? Do you want to make any adjustments to be even more comfortable?"

“What smells do you notice?” [These do not even have to be consistent – dream logic is acceptable and very hypnotic itself. You can smell perfume in the woods, the rich aroma of topsoil in an easy chair, a rose at the beach, coffee on a mountain pass.] [You can mention the powerful emotional connections smells generate since the olfactory nerves are wrapped around the amygdala, the part of the brain that processes intense emotion.]

“What would you like to taste that would help deepen and intensify your experience?”

Step Four: Noticing trance phenomena

As your clients develop detailed and vivid descriptions of their desired trance state, you will notice their increasing absorption in the accompanying imaginative state: eyes focused on an imagined object, not tracking external stimuli, altered breathing, relaxed bodily posture, change in facial expression. This will help your own confidence in the technique developing the desired effect. You can decide for yourself whether, when and how to reflect this information back to your clients, and how much to just allow it develop on its own, as you enjoy watching their skill in self-hypnosis increase.

Step Four Script: Now I notice that you’ve already entered into a state of absorption just by describing your internal experience. You look relaxed and absorbed, and I want to invite you to continue that process as I read back to you your own suggestions and descriptions of your desired trance state. Just let that happen naturally, and as I talk, your mind can wander into your own state of reverie and associations, so that you may go in and out of awareness of what I’m saying, and that’s a good sign that your trance is really deepening and you’re involved in your own work of organizing your conscious intention and unconscious learning around your goals.

Step Five: Reflecting and Weaving

Use *their own language* in weaving their desired suggestions with their vivid and detailed imagery and *your* associations to expectation of continued improvement, effortless and automatic unconscious responses, clear focus on continued steady motivation and commitment, and curiosity about learning what new skills can be learned consciously and unconsciously that will make continued progress even

easier. Be creative and repetitive, using voice tone and rhythm, and remaining alert and attentive to minimal cues of client responsiveness. Comments like “That’s right,” “Very nice,” and “You can really enjoy that,” can be helpful in encouraging clients to deepen their experience in their own way. Allowing silences to let the experience develop, and simply repeating bits of description can anchor and reinforce the process.

Step Five Script: “*You can really see _____, and you can hear _____. And you can really smell the _____, and even taste the _____. And your body can imagine feeling _____. And your unconscious can receive your suggestions to _____. I don’t know exactly how your unconscious mind will learn and discover how to begin to _____, and your conscious intention can really help with that.*”

Induction Comments: “*And you can really enjoy your capacity to really settle into that experience, knowing that your unconscious mind is already beginning to process your hypnotic requests to relax, learn, and grow.*”

Deepening Comments: “*And the more you allow yourself to experience the vividness and detail of your imagery, the more you can really receive all the benefit of your suggestions to relax, learn and grow, as both your conscious intention and your effortless, automatic unconscious responses organize around that learning.*”

Utilization Comments: “*And you can remember how it feels to be in that trance and recall that experience any time you need it. And anytime you notice that you are tense, or nervous, or feel unsettled, that can be a signal to re-associate to this learning trance where you remember the resources, skills, motivation and learning in a very deep and new way that can really transform that signal into a reminder of your deep knowing of your capacity to relax, learn, grow, and feel comfortable, confident and competent. And you really do know how to feel that, don’t you?*”

Step Six: Reorienting to the Outside World

Step Six Termination Script: “*Remembering all that you need to remember from your experience, and leaving behind anything you need to leave behind, you can take all the time in the world on the inside to finish up anything that needs finishing now, knowing you can return to this learning trance at any time it would be helpful to you to do so, to continue learning more about relaxing,*

gaining confidence, experiencing competence, and in one minute of clock time on the outside, take all the time in the world on the inside to finish your experience just for now, and to re-orient yourself to the outside world. You can always remember that when you return from self-hypnosis, you can always feel more alert, more comfortable and refreshed, like waking from a good night's sleep. And I have a couple questions about what your experience was like."

Reorientation questions (thanks to Bob Dick): (1)" What did you like best about that?" (2)" Is there anything that would make it even better next time?"