

Excerpted from:

Simpkins, C.A. & Simpkins, A.M. (2005). *Effective self hypnosis with audio CD*. San Diego: Radiant Dolphin Press.

Six

Steps to Self Hypnosis

Rapport with Your Unconscious Mind in Trance

Consciousness can never be certain of what is going to be experienced, but it can learn to interact constructively with whatever altered mode of functioning the unconscious makes available. (Erickson & Rossi, Vol. I 1980, 132)

Now we embark on a journey into self hypnosis, to develop abilities by learning for oneself:

Where the learner experiences fascination with some aspect of the world, envisioned in the mode of possibility...Independent learning is the embodiment and implementation of imaginative fascination...he experiences himself as beckoned, challenged, invited, fascinated by the possibility. (Jourard 1968, 112)

Through the exercises in this chapter, you can enhance and develop your talents for self hypnosis, helping to create possibilities for trance. Everyone has individual talents: some are good dancers, others can draw accurately, while others are good at calculations. Similarly, we also have unconscious talents we may know nothing about. We take these abilities for granted, as we just express them. Some people are naturally able to relax, some can easily develop visual hallucinations such as seeing colors when they close their eyes, while others can forget or remember readily. Unconscious tendencies are not always recognized as potential talents and may even be considered problems or shortcomings. Forgetfulness might seem to be a difficulty, but sometimes forgetting clears the way to remember what is important. Properly applied and worked with hypnotically, unconscious tendencies can be useful talents that lead to change and growth.

Approach these exercises with an open mind. You may find some exercises seem easier than others. Consider your efforts to be like an exploratory scientific experiment. You begin with the gathering of data to be analyzed at a later time. Observe and notice thoughts, experiences, and reactions. These will become individual building blocks for trance. Do not pass judgment or draw conclusions while still collecting data. Allow time for them to be viewed as meaningful parts of a whole.

Do one exercise at a time, followed by reading of commentary. If you prefer, read ahead, then return to the exercises. Do not overload, as there is no advantage in hurrying through. Cultivate sensitivity to your personal rhythms and timing.

Read the entire exercise several times, then set the book aside.

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Make yourself comfortable and try what you remember from the exercise. Do not be concerned with what you forget. Encourage your unconscious to have positive experiences with the exercises.

Preliminary Exercises

Theoretical understanding of the unconscious is only one aspect of the learnings necessary for mastery of self hypnosis. Experiencing is even more primary, for the unconscious is sensed experientially.

Giving yourself a few minutes to settle before every exercise is helpful, especially before your first exercise. People do not usually notice how tense they are during the day unless someone gives them feedback. Instead, they adapt and continue on. These first exercises attempt to bring you in touch with your level of tension and teach you to let go as you feel able.

Preparation for Trance

Sit or lie down and relax for a few moments. As you relax, let your thoughts drift and your attention roam wherever it likes. Try not to get lost in any one thought-path; simply notice associations and let them go. Do this until you notice some settling or calming.

Exercise in Everyday Out of Awareness

Unconscious

To explore the unconscious as it manifests itself in everyday life, turn your attention to your hands. You probably were

not thinking about your hands, but now that we mention them, you become aware of whatever sensations you are having. Perhaps your hands feel cold, or tingly or maybe light. You cannot accurately guess what you will experience without simply paying attention and waiting for the response. The experience occurs in its own way and in its own time. Sometimes it is interesting to place one hand on each knee and pay attention to the weight of each hand. You might find that one hand feels immediately lighter or heavier than the other, or that at first they seem the same, but as you pay attention one becomes heavier than the other. You may be surprised by your unconscious response. While you are waiting for one hand to become lighter you might discover unexpectedly that one hand becomes cooler, or maybe you have a new experience of your hand feeling very far away, or growing larger. You will respond in your own unique way. Your conscious mind does not know how this will be. As you learn to allow and be attentive to your spontaneous responses, you will become acquainted with your natural unconscious, which you can then learn to develop.

Exercise in Peripheral Associations

Relax once again. This time try to recall how you felt after you completed the previous exercise. Picture yourself sitting or lying comfortably and remember how your hands felt. Wait until you feel ready to try the exercise. As you focus on this, you will probably find your body beginning to relax a little. While thinking about the previous experience,

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peripheral thoughts probably flicker in the back of your mind. Shift attention to a peripheral thought or experience. For example, as dinner-hour approaches, notice if a vague thought or image is present about food. Perhaps you realize you are thinking about a pleasant moment. These less obvious thoughts are present peripherally, but you usually do not bring them into consciousness. In this exercise, try to mentally reach for those flickering thoughts as they appear briefly in the stream of awareness.

To work with this, let your thoughts drift for a moment. If you notice a flicker into awareness that you cannot quite recognize, invite yourself to have a feeling, an image, or a thought, a clue. As you become more at ease with your unconscious, you will be surprised to discover that your unconscious will supply you with a relevant thought or image even if the direct connection is not obvious.

For example, a client came for hypnotherapy to help her cope with a stressful, uncomfortable adaptation to her marriage, job and family. During therapeutic trance, we suggested that she have a meaningful image, something that could help her understand and outgrow her problems. First, she saw lights, mostly white streaks. Then she felt an intense nauseous feeling. After she awoke from trance, she described this with dismay. She thought that she had not been able to produce an image, as requested. She worried that she was incapable of imagery. She did not realize that her unconscious actually was very responsive, expressing meaning in a way personally meaningful to her, using vague rather than obvious

symbolic analogy. Later she discovered her feeling of nausea had a hidden significance.

Discovering Your Perceptual Mode

People tend to perceive in one perceptual mode more than another. For example, someone might characteristically say, “That feels right,” or “I want to get in touch with that.” This person tends to orient kinesthetically, that is, by feelings and sensations. Another person might say, “I see your point. That looks good.” This is a visual orientation. A third type will use metaphors like, “Did you hear about this?” or “I hear that.” They usually can clearly recall the sound of someone's voice. They tend to orient auditorily, using imaginative hearing. These are the three main perceptual systems of orientation. Taste and smell can be used to orient, although somewhat less. Combinations and individual variations are also possible.

Some people do not orient perceptually, but tend to orient conceptually. Experiences are filtered through concepts without noticing perceptions directly. These kinds of people will say, “I think this is a beautiful day.” Their thoughts about their perceptions are most central.

We use all of these modes at various times, but typically process more with one mode than another. The exercise that follows will familiarize you with your own spontaneous mode of choice used for perceiving and processing.

Perceptual Mode Exercise

Sit quietly and relax, as in the other exercises. Now recall the

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moment when you first opened this book. Think about it for a moment, remembering as much about it as you can. Notice how you recall: Do you see a picture of the pages or your hands opening the cover? Do you remember how you were feeling, maybe tired, sore, wide awake, happy, or curious about the content. Perhaps you remembered the sound of the pages as you turned them or the song that was playing on the radio or the noise from the street outside. Or you may recall what you were thinking, such as the plans for the day or your ideas about hypnosis. If you saw a picture, you probably tend to orient visually. If you felt sensation, you may be more kinesthetic. If you heard sounds, you tend to orient through the auditory mode. If you experienced a series of thoughts, you are probably more conceptual. You may have combinations of these as well. Try this experiment a few times during the day using different memories and different tasks to double-check your results. Look for consistent patterns.

Once you determine your favorite mode, use this in the early exercises when there is a choice given. Later, you are encouraged to develop other modes. Each mode offers a richness in experience and alternative inroads into the unconscious. You may be surprised to discover that you have been limiting yourself to only one. Other modes of experience can also become comfortable and natural. We use our usual mode as our map, for orienting in new territory. After you become familiar with your unconscious, you will not need to be restricted to this one mode.

Body Image Alterations

People take their body image for granted as a fixed reality. Unless we have a change in our usual body experience, our general sensation of body image often goes unnoticed. Chapter 4 described this in relation to the unconscious. Hypnosis can allow you to experience and work with changes in body image, to creatively apply these learnings to related problems.

Preparation for Body Image Alteration

Sit or lie down quietly. Let all of your muscles settle. Recall whether you had a stronger auditory (hearing), visual (seeing), kinesthetic (feeling), or conceptual (thinking) response in the previous exercise. You can use your preferred mode to achieve maximal relaxation for you. Your unconscious will regulate the level. Try not to prevent your natural response from occurring. Honest curiosity about what this experience will be like, helps. Wonder how you will feel. Wait for your response.

Trance: Self Hypnosis Exercise Series

You have done a number of preliminary exercises that developed some component skills for the hypnotic experience. Now you are ready to begin learning self hypnosis.

Find a quiet and comfortable place where you can do this without pressure or interruption for at least fifteen minutes. Knowing that you will be trying your first trance, you may feel

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excited or nervous. Glance inwardly now to note any attitudes you might have about doing self hypnosis. Or you might wish to pay attention to your feelings about trance, or perhaps listen to the inner dialogue of your thoughts: What are your reactions? Sometimes people have superstitions about the powers of hypnosis from television and movies, about how it can take control of the mind. Research indicates that no one has ever been harmed by hypnosis itself (Kroger 1977, 104). Hypnosis allows you to be in touch with inner needs and motivations. You will not do or experience anything that is inconsistent with your true nature, including your ethics and morals. It is reassuring to realize that personality remains constant. You do not change your nature, just to be hypnotized.

At first, you can help yourself awaken from trance by counting backwards from five to one. With each number, as you approach one, you will become more alert, all your sensations returning to normal. If you finish but continue to feel unusual sensations, wait for a few minutes. Then if you need to, close your eyes again and go back into trance for a minute or two. Suggest that your sensations will now return to normal and again count backwards from five to one. Transitions in and out of trance become smoother and easier with practice.

As you grow more familiar with hypnosis, you may not need to count your way out of trance. We may not explicitly tell you to count backwards after each exercise that follows, but use this technique if it helps make the transition to being awake easier. You may evolve your own way.

Getting Set

Imagine for a moment what you expect trance to feel like. People sometimes say that they expect to relax, to feel calm, to have their body become cool or warm, to become light or tingly. If you discovered in the earlier exercises that you tend to orient visually, try a visual image. Picture yourself in trance. Would you look relaxed? Are your eyes open or closed? Use your perceptual mode to imagine yourself in trance.

Notice your response. Does it surprise you or is it consistent with your expectations? If you truly feel surprised, you have probably had a genuine unconscious response.

Now, using your mode of choice, experiment with going into trance.

Listening to Trance

Recall a sound of nature, like the ocean waves, a bubbling brook, the quiet of a winter's snow fall, the wind rustling through the trees, or any other sound which you have enjoyed. Focus your attention on this but do not hurry the sound. Simply wait for it to fill out, to become even fuller or perhaps to alter in some way you do not expect. While you listen, your body can relax even more deeply. Your muscles settle, letting go of any unnecessary tension. Continue listening, allowing any other images, thoughts, or feelings to develop as well. Deepen the experience when you feel ready. Continue to relax deeply. Let your thoughts drift. When you feel ready, bring yourself out of trance until you feel fully

alert.

Seeing Trance

Recall an image or a place you have been and really enjoyed: Perhaps a vacation spot, a hideaway in the mountains, a secluded beach, a forest. Picture the beauty; look at the colors; walk around and reacquaint yourself with it. You would be relaxed if you went there, so your body can relax while you picture this place. You might see these images vividly or they could be vague wisps of pictures and colors flickering past. However they appear, you can enhance the experience with a very comfortable feeling of relaxation all over. Picture yourself relaxing even more as you wonder how deeply relaxed you can become. Let your thoughts drift. When you feel ready, bring yourself out of trance until you feel fully alert.

Feeling Trance

You will probably find your attention wandering to the feeling in your body, and recall a very nice feeling of calm, both inner and outer. Ask all of your muscles to settle and relax. Can you silently recall a time in your life when you felt totally at ease, calm, and comfortable? Perhaps a clear memory will come to mind or only a vague recollection. Recall where you were, as in the previous mode exercises, but focus on the feeling you had in your body, of calmness or happiness. Fill out the details naturally with memories of

the sensations, or other relevant feelings. You may be curious and interested in just what it would be like to relax deeper than you ever have before. Wait for the response as you continue to imagine that calm, comfortable feeling. Let your thoughts drift. When you feel ready, bring yourself out of trance until you feel fully alert.

In the exercises that follow, we may ask you to imagine an image. You might respond with a feeling, thought, a sound, or perhaps nothing at all. Keep in mind that these are all legitimate responses--your inroads into a working relationship with your unconscious. These links between conscious and unconscious are the keys to successfully learning and applying self hypnosis.

If you have had difficulty thus far with the exercises, shift to Chapter 7 on resistance, then return here after you have experimented with defenses and resistance.

Trance Ratification

The trance experience is not always easy to recognize at first. You may have noticed that you were relaxed and calm but may feel that this is not anything unusual or different from ordinary waking. Confirmation that trance is happening helps to intensify the experience and leads to an increase in trance abilities. Erickson and Rossi refer to this as trance ratification. (Chapter 2) Ideomotor signaling is useful for this.

Exercise in Ideomotor Signaling

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Sit or lie down so that your hands rest either on your legs or by your side. Experiment with one of the previous exercises where you felt responsive. Invite yourself to become even more relaxed than before. Once you feel comfortable, focus on your hands. Consider how frequently people move their hands in conversation without thinking about it. Sometimes the gesture is even more meaningful than the words. Do you talk with your hands?

Now, ask your unconscious a “yes” or “no” question. Designate one hand as “yes” and the other hand as “no.” Choose a question for which you do not have the answer, such as: Would my unconscious like my legs to relax? Could I feel tingling in my fingertips? Can I have a pleasant memory? Could I see colors when I close my eyes? Now, wait and pay close attention to your hands. Do not try to move them, simply notice. Sometimes people feel the answer as tingling, lightness, or heaviness in one hand or the other. Sometimes a person will notice warmth or coolness. Still others will feel a finger raise in one hand or the other or maybe a feeling jumps from one hand to the other and back again. After a little while you will know what your response has been, and in which hand. If you felt something in your hand, you unconsciously answered the question.

This exercise may not be what you expected or exactly as you predicted. These mysteries make communicating with your unconscious interesting. Your conscious does not know what your unconscious already knows. In his seminars, Erickson often said,

“Your unconscious mind knows a lot more than you.”

Hand Levitation

Lightness and movement developing in a finger, hand, or arm are components of a classic hypnotic phenomenon called hand levitation. The finger, hand, or arm feels as if it is moving by itself. You do not need to do anything in particular except to allow it to occur naturally. People who tend to use the kinesthetic mode may find this easier to do, but anyone can learn to experience it with practice. Hand levitation is done by following each successful action in sequence, gathering momentum. All that you have already learned will help to channel and shape your response. These exercises can be repeated as often as you like, at different sessions.

Exercise in Hand Levitation

Sit or lie down in such a way that your hands and arms are comfortable and free to move. If you are sitting, let a hand rest palm down on each kneecap. If you are lying down, place your hands down by your side or folded across your body. Do not restrain one hand with the other. Loosen your muscles, and focus attention on your hands. Notice any experiencing you begin to have in your hands. One common feeling is a tingling in the fingertips. You might compare your two hands: Does one hand feel more tingly, or perhaps lighter, heavier, warmer, or cooler? Stay with the experience and ask your unconscious what it would be like for the tingling, warming, or whatever you feel, to begin to lead to a feeling of lightness. You may feel as if something is tugging

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on your finger, thumb, or hand, like a helium balloon tied to your finger or wrist. You may begin to feel a very nice lightness that gets lighter and lighter with every breath. Perhaps the tingling increases, bringing about movement. Do not inhibit the movement. Follow this experience sensitively, and let your fingers begin to raise. Stay with it and invite the lightness to increase and your hand to raise even higher. If you like, suggest that your hand lifts all the way up to touch your face. When it does, your relaxation in trance deepens more than before.

Give yourself time to allow these sensations to develop. You do not know which hand will respond and just what it will be like, but you can, as in previous exercises, become increasingly curious as to how your unconscious will respond. Many creative variations are possible.

A client underwent hypnosis to learn to control his temper. He was an intelligent lawyer whose temper was interfering with his professional and personal life. Before the trance, we discussed hand levitation as one hypnotic phenomenon he could learn from. He said he was curious about it but thought it would be very difficult to actually do. He developed a comfortable trance and even smiled as he entered trance. Hand levitation was suggested in a similar manner to how it is described above. His hands barely moved, if at all, but his face became flushed and a few beads of sweat appeared on his brow. Upon awakening he recounted what he referred to as a "marvelous experience." He said that the levitation was so powerful that he was doing jumping jacks! The experience was vivid for him.

He felt as if he had exerted tremendous energy. He was extremely pleased to realize that he could have such an intense experience in his imagination. This was pivotal in the moderation of his temper. This taught him that he could think an angry thought but not have to express it in action. He learned that control was possible for him.

Hypnotic phenomena do not always correlate with what they seem to be. An experience can become a metaphor, a symbol, or lead to something new, an inspiration for growth and learning.

Visual Imagery and Hallucination

Visual images in trance are natural phenomena of hypnosis. Most people can learn to see visual imagery, even though it might be easier for some than for others. Vividness in mental imagery is a natural talent, but can be developed further with correct practice.

A classic method for entering trance is by using something to look at. The hypnotic subject is encouraged to look at an object that can fascinate, like a crystal, a lit candle, or a turning spiral. Use whatever interests you. We have often used abstract paintings such as the ones in this book. Milton Erickson used a beautiful quartz crystal on his desk for patients to look at. Be imaginative.

Exercise in Hallucination

To begin, look at the object carefully. Study it, noticing all its components, the colors, the shapes. Next look at the outline, then the interior. Watch very carefully, focusing all your attention on the object. As you concentrate fully on it, your thoughts can drift. Think about the object, look at the object, study it. As you watch, you can let your body relax,

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your breathing rate settle. Let your eyes move around the object after you have studied all the different components. Can you see any alterations in the object as you watch? For example, you may see blurring, a change in the colors, or an alteration in shape. Perhaps you notice aspects you did not see before. How does the object appear to alter? Try suggesting a change that you would be curious to experience and wait for your response. Then relax your vision and let yourself return to normal seeing.

Interesting objects are often looked at as an hypnotic technique. However, since hypnosis is an inner experience, seek the image within.

Exercise in Inner Imagery

In this exercise, begin by relaxing your body as before. You might like to try this exercise following the previous one. As you are looking at your chosen object, imagine your eyelids becoming heavy. Suggest that your eyelids grow heavier and heavier. Wait for your eyes to feel ready to close. Then allow your eyelids to close. If they don't want to after a long wait, close your eyes anyway. Relax your eyelids and allow your entire body to relax very deeply.

It is possible to visualize color in formless, abstract, or symbolic form. At first the color may appear as just one shade. Gradually it could alter in its shade, depth, or even change colors. Sometimes people see a kaleidoscope of color. Other times it is simply white or black afterimages,

lights, or streaks. Experiment with offering a suggestion for a color you would like to experience. Wait for your response. Watch it evolve.

Anesthesia & Hyperaesthesia

Anesthesia is a well documented hypnotic phenomenon. It has been used in medicine by qualified practitioners for surgery as the sole anesthetic. For example, there is an educational film from the 1950's showing a woman undergoing her fourth Cesarean birth under hypnosis with no pain. Hypnosis was used predominantly in surgery before the discovery of chloroform, as pointed out in Chapter 1.

Classically anesthesia has been produced by direct suggestion, relying upon the subject's suggestibility. Hypnotic effectiveness does not only depend upon suggestibility. Other factors play an important part.

Motivation can enhance the ability to produce anesthesia. A client who was working on an intense personality change used hypnosis occasionally to relax. She did not think she was very good at hypnosis and even doubted its efficacy. She was an intelligent woman in her late twenties who suffered from intense anxiety. She felt stuck in an uncomfortable job and living situation. She tended to be judgmental, especially toward herself. During the course of treatment she had to get a tooth extracted. She decided to give hypnosis a try without the use of narcotics. She had no idea before the appointment how she would cope with only local anesthesia. She reported at her session following the dental work that she felt nervous at first, but that once in the chair she went into trance. She

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spontaneously imagined little creatures in her mouth with brooms, rolling big balls of pain away. While she viewed this amusing image, she became calm. She handled the procedure well and needed no narcotics or pain killers afterwards. She had not expected to use an image, especially such a seemingly silly one, but it worked. Even her dentist laughed when she told him. Pain is a sensation that hypnosis can affect in many complex ways. Prepare well before you attempt to apply these skills in practice. Do not substitute for good professional care. Make it better.

Exercise to Practice Anesthesia with Direct Suggestion

Find a comfortable level of trance, suggesting relaxation and comfort of the body. Decide where you would like to produce the anesthesia: a hand? head? foot? etc. Next you can give yourself a suggestion in a mode which you have used successfully before, or you might want to experiment with something new. You could recall a time when you were out in very cold temperatures, and after a period of time your nose and cheeks became so cold that they were numb. Recall the tingling followed by a nothing feeling. Suggest that the body part is tingling as it becomes colder and colder until you can no longer feel it.

Sometimes you can produce anesthesia by dissociating from that body part. Imagine that your hand, arm, or wherever you have chosen, is feeling far away from the rest of your body. You might feel as if the hand is growing in size at first, then seems to take on an unreal or distant quality. Some subjects

improve watching themselves from a distance. One client felt like he left his body sitting in the session and went to the beach. Some people feel tingly or temperature alterations before the hand or arm begins to feel distant or numb. You can test yourself once you feel that you have achieved an adequate anesthesia by touching the anesthetized body part.

Hyperaesthesia

Many know hypnosis can reduce sensations, but few realize that hypnosis can also enhance sensations. This can be very useful in some circumstances. A young man in his twenties, teeming with excess energy, came for hypnotherapy. He had lost his job and decided to start his own business working with machinery. He spoke quickly, moved around during the sessions, and described himself as “hyper.” In his new business, he complained that sometimes he would miss a small detail which caused him to have to return to the job site to redo the work. All profit was lost, and at times it even cost him money to complete the job. He was inattentive to the important details of his work, yet over attentive to unimportant details. He needed to improve.

He learned to go into trance and found himself enjoying the calm and relaxation he felt. During trance we suggested that he imagine a place where he felt very comfortable. He thought of the woods near where he grew up. He recalled every detail: the woods noises, the smell of the leaves and plants, the colors of the sun shining through the trees. He searched back in his memory to carefully recall many details, focusing all his energy on sensitizing himself to the experience. The week after this trance he reported he

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was surprised to discover something new. Seemingly automatically, he found himself listening intently, looking carefully, and noticing exact details in the machinery he was fixing. He reported he could hear minute sounds indicating where the malfunction occurred. His exacting attentiveness resulted in a week with no callbacks, no errors. We asked him to focus on his body, feel his shin, notice how long his arms were, his legs, to feel his breathing. This evolved his learnings further. He learned to become so sensitive that he could feel a whisper of a breeze or a minute touch to his arm. He gained greater skill with tools. Hyperaesthesia can be developed in trance, to apply in useful ways in your life.

Exercise in Hyperaesthesia

Begin with a memory, perhaps a place or an experience you enjoyed or one that happened very recently. Now consider what it would be like to recall details of the experience which you had forgotten. Concentrate on sense memories such as taste, smell, touch, or sound. Was there a bird or cricket chirping? Did the waves pound at the ocean? Can you recall the sound of a friend's voice? Wait for a memory to appear. Request that it become even clearer.

Time Distortion

Another natural ability of the unconscious is time distortion. Everyone has felt the minutes slowly ticking, waited in line, sat through a dull class, or endured a boring dinner party. Conversely, there are times when the hours pass too quickly, and we wonder what happened to the day. These are both examples of the mind's

natural ability to alter the experience of time.

If the average person were asked to define time, he or she would probably think of time as it seems on a clock. However, suppose a class of students were asked how long the duration of a class session seemed. The answers would vary greatly. The interested, involved student would probably report a shorter seeming duration than the bored disinterested student. Time distortion occurs when the seeming duration of a time interval is different from the clock time of that interval. Time distortion can appear to be either shorter or longer, depending upon the experience. Both are natural and can be utilized for creative and therapeutic applications.

Milton Erickson and Linn Cooper (Cooper & Erickson 1982, 20-22) did extensive research on this phenomenon. They carefully set up experimental definitions of time distortion to refer to the discrepancy between clock time and experiential time over a given time interval. During one experiment a trance subject was instructed to go to a cotton field and pick four rows of cotton, counting the bolls as she picked them, one at a time. The subject was not to hurry. She was instructed to raise her hand when she finished. She raised her hand 217 seconds after starting and reported 719 cotton bolls. She stated that she seemed to have been working for one hour and twenty minutes.

The second experiment involved the same task, except the experimenter put a time limit on the task. The time allotted was three seconds. The subject reported that she had picked 862 bolls and that it seemed like an entire hour and twenty minutes. In both experiments, the subject had a time distortion experience.

The following exercises will illustrate both the experience of

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time going faster and that of time slowing down. Each has its application and use. For example, speeding up the experience of time can be very useful for pain control, slowing it down can make it possible to accomplish more efficiently.

Preliminary Exercise in Time Distortion

Go into trance, relax, and be comfortable. Think about time for a moment. Picture the hands of a clock. Watch them move for a five-minute period. Wonder whether you could tell the difference between thirty-two minutes and thirty-three minutes, or if you could distinguish an interval of five seconds from six. Think about a time when you were very bored and time seemed to move very slowly. You may have felt this while waiting for something to happen. Now recall a time when the hours passed so quickly that looking back, the event seemed over before it started. Holidays often leave people with this experience. Let your mind drift and associations flow freely. Relax very deeply. When you are ready, clear your mind of thought for a moment. Perhaps you would like to imagine a lake settling, where all the mud sinks to the bottom. The water becomes crystal clear, like your mind can be. When you are ready, wake up refreshed and alert.

Exercise in Slowing down Time

You can give yourself a basic experience in time distortion. Find a quiet place outdoors where you can walk comfortably and alone (or without speaking if you are with someone) for

what feels like fifteen minutes. Do not try to direct your attention anywhere in particular. When it seems fifteen minutes have passed, stop and check your watch. Immediately following, take a walk in a busy place where you are comfortable doing this, for what feels like fifteen minutes. Again, let your attention float, unfocused. Do not look at your watch until you think you have walked for at least fifteen minutes. Afterwards, note what you experienced, and return home. If you had a difference between experienced time and clock time, you have felt time distortion.

Imaginative Time Distortion

Next available session time find a comfortable place to sit and relax. Allow yourself to go comfortably into trance. Once you feel that you have found inner calm, recall your two walks. Think back on the surroundings of each, one at a time, and try to visualize yourself there again. Some people will actually feel as if they are re-enacting the walk. Assure yourself that you have all the time you need to take the walks, and do not rush. Follow this procedure for each of the two walks. When you have completed one, wake up, noting how long the walk seemed to take. Check the time on the clock and compare with your experienced time. Next imagine the second walk. Again check the time on the clock and compare.

Trance Time Distortion

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Check the clock before you go into trance. Let an image occur to you, any image or scene. While you watch, other images may appear, one after another. Let these images become as vivid as they can until you feel as if you are right there in the scene. Follow the scene until you feel ready to clear your mind of all images. You might suggest a blank, a black nothingness, or a bright light. Play with the possibilities as you wait for your response and enjoy deep relaxation. When you are ready, awaken relaxed and refreshed. Note how much time you felt passed, then compare to the actual time it took. Repeat this exercise a few times at different sessions, attempting to make the images more and more vivid.

Trance Time Distortion II

Go into trance and visualize yourself doing an activity which normally takes a fixed amount of clock time to complete. You can choose from one of the following three examples, or choose one of your own: 1) Swim laps, jog, ride a bike, etc. for fifteen to twenty minutes. 2) Cook breakfast including all preparations for fifteen to twenty minutes. (Let someone else do the dishes) 3) Watch the first quarter of a football game or any other favorite sport. Another possibility is to watch the first act of a play you enjoy.

You have practiced this kind of trance phenomenon several times. Make your choice as to what you will imagine doing. If you prefer another activity that takes about fifteen to twenty minutes, use it. When you have found a comfortable

level of trance, begin the imaginative activity. Allow yourself to become intensely interested in performing it. Take your time and work to the best of your ability. Do not hurry. Try to be thorough. Remember to note the time before you go into trance and when you awaken. When you have finished, clear your mind. Wake up refreshed and alert. You can repeat this exercise a few times at various sittings. Try to use what feels like fifteen to twenty minutes. If you notice a discrepancy between clock time and experienced time, you have felt time distortion.

Frequently people will experience time expansion with these exercises. However, both time expansion and time constriction are useful tools. One of our clients had an experience with time distortion that clarifies its surprising benefits. She wanted to lose weight. She was working for a large company while she was going to school in the evenings to become a health care worker. She told us she disliked her job and felt like the time dragged by each day. She felt she barely had any time for herself or her school work. Some coworkers who were also consulting us for hypnosis at the same time, reported they experienced her as hard to get along with at work.

Throughout treatment she went into a very deep trance and always had total amnesia for her trance experience. We taught her time distortion similar to the exercises in this chapter. Her unconscious spontaneously came up with a creative solution to her dilemma. At her next session she reported a surprising discovery. She found that work had changed. The day seemed to speed by. But

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strangely, after she got home in the evening she felt she had all the time she could need. Weekends went by slowly and leisurely, filled with extra time. As the weeks passed she found, much to her surprise, work grew to be more and more pleasant for her because it went so quickly. She was happier and more relaxed since she knew she would have plenty of time after work and on weekends to do what she wanted for her career and household. Her fellow workers experienced her as changed: much friendlier and easier to get along with. By the time she finished school and was ready to quit her job, she felt sorry to leave. She even cried at the good-bye party for her. Her co-workers said they would miss their enjoyable friend! She applied her hypnotic skills when given the invitation to do so; great benefit for her and others resulted, helping her cope and transcend.



In this chapter you have experimented with many different hypnotic possibilities. Hopefully, you have approached the exercises with openness to your individual abilities, developing and enlarging upon these skills. Creative adjustments will help transform difficulties and resistance into assets. You can return to these basic exercises over and over. This adds to and embellishes upon the learnings you have begun until eventually trance becomes a comfortable and readily available tool.