

## CHAPTER 1

# TREAT YOURSELF TO A TRANCE

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**Help clients:**

1. Collaborate with treatment by providing information about trance (informed consent).
2. Discover the ability to enter, deepen, and maintain trance.
3. Use imagery and inner guides to work through issues.
4. Report relief from unwanted habits, pain, or insomnia.
5. Report improved concentration in daily tasks or involvement in sexual activity.
6. Identify ways to help children with pain, wetting, soiling, anxiety, or going to sleep.

**THERAPIST'S  
GUIDE TO  
TREAT  
YOURSELF TO A  
TRANCE**

- **Informed consent.** *Information About Trances* meets the ethical obligation to provide information about self-hypnosis.
- **General literature.** *Entering Trance, Maintaining and Deepening Trance, The Language of Trance, Trance Imagery, Trance Guidance and Advisors.*
- **Literature that addresses specific problems.** *Entrancing Unwanted Habits, Trance-Forming Pain, To Dream . . . and Then to Sleep, Erotic Trances.*
- **Literature for parents.** *Trances for Hyperactivity; Entrancing Kids: Wetting, Soiling, and Pain; Bedtime Trances for Tots.*
- **Preparation for and closure after intensely processing traumatic experiences.** *Maintaining and Deepening Trance* (see especially Safe Place Exercise p. 10).
- **Workshops and presentations.** A group induction can be done using many of the techniques from *Entering Trance, Maintaining and Deepening Trance*, and *Trance Dialogue*. Having participants share their experiences of relaxation cues, eye-closure cues, mantras, safe places, or inner advisors can reinforce ideas in the handouts. Because group inductions are so relaxing, participants will often have many spontaneous questions for presenters about the safety and uses of trances. Copies of handouts can be offered for self-practice.

**Using the  
Handouts**

- **First, introduce relaxation and trance techniques in the office** and use literature to reinforce their use at home. This is especially true when teaching parents protocols to use with their children.
- **State regulations can affect the use of handouts.** Many state licensing bureaus have requirements that clinicians complete a specified number of training hours before using hypnosis or guided imagery with clients. However, most states do not regulate the use of literature on self-hypnosis or meditation. Become familiar with any state regulations that could affect your use of handouts on trance.
- **Handouts offer clinicians a quick review** of hypnotic techniques in general and protocols to address specific problems. Experienced practitioners will notice that the words *conscious, unconscious, and trance* have been replaced in hypnotic scripts with more descriptive terms: *intentional mind, automatic mind, calm, still, focused*, and so on.
- **Handouts focus on the process** of going into trance. That process is broken down into three steps (predicting, observing, and directing) rather than giving a plethora of hypnotic suggestions. The goal is to teach clients to adapt this process to unique situations that they face.
- **Trances for hyperactivity** can be supplemented by walking meditation found in *Mindfulness: Step by Step*.

**Cautions and  
Comments**

## Sources Not Referenced in the Handouts

***Advanced Techniques of Hypnosis and Therapy***, edited by Jay Haley (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967) describes Ericksonian utilization techniques found in *Trances for Hyperactivity*.

***Handbook of Hypnotic Suggestions and Metaphors***, edited by D. Corydon Hammond (W. W. Norton, 1990) inspired scripts used in several handouts: "Truisms for Developing Anesthesias," by Milton H. Erickson, p. 54; "Gradual Diminution of Pain," by Milton H. Erickson, p. 56; "Procedure With Difficulty Swallowing Pills," by Irving I. Selter, p. 266; "Eating as an Art," by Sheryl C. Wilson and Theodore X. Barber, p. 381; "Suggestions About Craving," by D. Corydon Hammond, p. 385; "Concentration Suggestions," by William T. Reardon, p. 440; "Hypnosis With Children," by Daniel P. Kohen, pp. 480–481, 490–491.

## Handout 1.1—Information about Trances

Trance is a state of focused attention that suppresses unnecessary thoughts, activity, or sensations, allowing a fuller involvement with an outer or inner experience. Everyone has experienced trance at some time in his or her life:

- The beauty of a sunset can be *entrancing*.
- An archer cannot make his mark unless she is *transfixed* on the bull's-eye.
- Dancing to the beat with perfect rhythm *transforms* a person into poetry in motion.
- A sexual climax occurs when a person is in an *erotic trance*.
- A blank stare can momentarily *transport* someone into another realm.

During trance, the chatter, chatter, chatter of the mind is brought to a stop. It is as though when all your brain *busy-ness* slows down there is something else that observes and knows. This *observant self* can transcend your worst fears, recall memories too painful for a waking state, or, in some cultures, walk on hot coals without being burned. Although the inner peace of trance is everyone's natural birthright, it has mystified people for ages.

Certain mental states commonly thought of as trances are not that at all. Missing your turn on the freeway or forgetting what you came in a room to get are signs of preoccupation. In trance your mind is unoccupied, quiet, and open. The African bushman finding his way through unfamiliar territory is in a trance state in which he is totally aware of his environment. Westerners are more likely to navigate the inner realm via three routes:

### Types of Trances

1. **Meditation** is the act of consciously putting yourself in trance. The word *meditate* is Latin for being moved to the center. During a trance, brain activity moves from the outer cortex to the hypothalamus in the center of the brain. In all forms of meditation, thoughts are stilled by (1) focusing attention on an object, mental image, or breathing; (2) adopting a passive attitude of observing random thoughts; or (3) constantly repeating a word or phrase. Meditation has no other goal than to quiet the mind.
2. **Hypnosis** comes from the Greek word *hypnos*, which means to sleep. However, in hypnosis a person is fully alert without interference from distracting thoughts. Hypnosis has been defined as a heightened state of internal concentration in which nonordinary responses can be evoked or suggested. These handouts use a three-step process of: predicting (P) approaching signs of trance, observing (O) what *is* happening, and subtly directing (D) a person toward a desired outcome:

Don't start to stare at your spot (D) until you are comfortably settled . . . . And while you examine the tiniest details about it (D), it may be difficult to just notice when your breathing will start to slow down (P) . . . . And discover how good that deep breath just felt (O) . . . . You may be surprised that you can watch your thoughts without placing any special importance on them (D) . . . . And even remember a forgotten phrase (D) that replaces thoughts with poetic repetition—peace be still . . . and you can discover stillness at the most surprising times (P) . . . .

3. **Self-hypnosis** uses exactly the same process of inducing trance, but instead of listening to a hypnotist, you talk to yourself. The advantage of self-hypnosis is that you are the keenest observer of yourself. The trick is to continue to talk to yourself. If you just sit and stare at a spot and wait for trance to come, nothing is likely to happen. But by predicting (P), observing (O), and directing (D) yourself into trance, you shut off random mind chatter, and this is trance-inducing in itself:

I know that as I stare at my spot, many changes will happen (P) . . . like how my jaw just dropped (O) even though my mouth is still closed . . . and the muscles in my face are starting to become smooth and ironed out (O) . . . . And now my field of vision seems to be narrowing down, getting blurry around the edges (O) . . . . And

I can let my eyelids drop, too, (D) and wonder how still my mind will become (P) while I notice how long it takes before I need another breath (D) . . . And I can put my attention on my intention . . . (D) to be still . . . now and even if my boss yells at me sometime in the future . . .

### Why Trance Is Important for You

During a trance you switch from being a thinker to being an observer. At its best, thinking is energizing and fun. But it is also the source of *all* tension. A parade of *what ifs*, *if onlys*, *have tos*, *shoulds*, *awfuls*, and *nevers* can march through your mind, literally trapping you inside yourself. Even constructive mental activity, when overdone, can make it hard to unwind. After a mentally exhausting day, you can toss and turn at night. The brain waves that occur during trance are slower and more synchronized than those that happen during alert or dream states. Thus, trance offers a kind of rest that cannot be obtained from sleep.

As mental chatter decreases, it is possible to gain access to the *automatic mind* that controls breathing, heart rate, perception of pain, habit patterns, and so on. In this way, a person's conscious intentions can realign repetitive, unconscious routines. Two brief periods of meditation a day can significantly lower high blood pressure.<sup>1</sup> Because meditation and trance are so beneficial, the following facts are important to remember:

- Hypnosis and meditation are natural states similar to the time just before awakening and falling asleep, or becoming completely absorbed in a movie or a book.
- People will come out of a trance when they are ready. There has never been a case in which a person did not return to a waking state.
- In many instances one or two sessions of hypnosis may enable a person to break a habit, but usually it requires a number of sessions before change is made.
- The best subjects for hypnosis are motivated, imaginative, and intelligent. People need some ability to reason and use their mind to go into a trance.
- As mental chatter reduces, *people become more aware* and less vulnerable to others imposing their will or complying with unacceptable suggestions.
- Hypnosis is not a truth serum or lie detector. You cannot be compelled to say things in a trance state.
- If people fall asleep during hypnosis, it is because they needed sleep; they will awake refreshed. People do not respond to or remember suggestions when they are asleep.
- People need not be in a deep state of hypnosis for behavior change to occur.
- People do not instantly go into a trance, but with practice, trances come more easily.
- Trance should not be practiced when people are engaged in activities that require their eyes to be open (like driving a car). Eye closure can signal that the automatic mind is being activated, so the intentional mind can take a break from its usual waking-state duties.

1. *The Relaxation Response* (p. 144), by H. Benson, 1975, New York: Avon Books.

## Handout 1.2—Entering Trance

One of the most natural methods to enter the quiet stillness of trance is by staring. There are many times when you have stared into space and been in a light trance without realizing it. When you add intention and awareness to staring, trance deepens and you can learn to calm yourself at will. Three methods are suggested below for achieving automatic eye closure that often occurs with staring. This is your signal that you have opened the door to trance. After preparing for trance, practice all of them and discover which one works best for you.

- **Plan a distraction-free block of time.** Interruptions can be mentally arousing.
- **Find a comfortable position** with your head aligned over a straight spine. Lying down or reclining may be too restful and promote sleep rather than concentration. Do not cross your legs in a way that would cut off circulation.
- **Choose a focal point** for staring at or above eye level. You can hold up your hand and study a spot where two lines cross. A glow-in-the-dark star or candle flame is good to use when the lights are out.

### Preparing for Trance

**Method 1—Opening and Closing Eyes.** When you are awake, the part of your brain that directs purposeful action is in charge. During a trance the automatic part of your mind that controls your breathing and blood flow comes forward. One of the easiest ways to become aware of your *automatic mind* is to notice the difference between closing your eyes intentionally and allowing them to do what they “want” to do. After achieving a good fixed stare, close your eyes on purpose. They may stay closed or they may open. If they open, simply close them again to find out what they do the next time.

The following *self-talk* gives you steps to predict (P), observe (O), and direct (D) this process. Read it over and practice it from memory. Trust your mind to remember what it needs to do. After doing it once, read it again and find out if there is any difference in the way you follow the steps this time.

1. **Focal point.** *I wonder what changes can happen (P) as I concentrate on my spot. I notice I'm becoming more still (O), as though a ship dropped its anchor.*
2. **Eye fixation.** *I can tell my stare is fixed (O) . . . my eyes are locked on that spot (O).*
3. **Trance cues.** *In fact, my whole self seems to be calmer and quieter (O).*
4. **Automatic response.** *Now I can start to close my eyes on purpose (D) and find out what they want to do . . . . If they want to stay closed, they can stay closed; if they want to open, they can open . . . . It's not important what they do, only that I pay attention to the truth that my body is telling me (O).*
5. **Eye closure cues.** *This time my eyes seemed to stay closed longer . . . . For a moment it felt like they were glued shut and then they opened (O) . . . . Now I notice that when they closed, my lids fluttered (O) . . . . This time it doesn't seem worth the effort to even open them (O).*
6. **Confirming trance.** *I wonder if by the count of three my eyes can become so lazy that it won't be worth the effort to open them (P) . . . . 1 . . . , closed and comfortable; . . . 2 . . . , glued shut; . . . 3 . . . , so heavy, so peaceful . . . the more I try to open them, the more they want to stay closed . . . and now I stop trying and feel myself becoming limper, looser- all over, and at peace (O).*

**Method 2—Staring<sup>1</sup>.** Once you've experienced automatic eye closure, it can happen rapidly. Often, it is not necessary to open and close your eyes. Simply take more time in steps 3

1. *The Self-Hypnosis Kit: Discover the Power of Hypnotherapy to Improve Your Life*, by C. Powell and G. Forde, 1995, New York: Viking Studio, also uses an eye closure induction and clearly explains the process of going into trance.

and 5 above to observe relaxation and eye closure cues. You may notice one or two or several of the following:

Relaxation Cues		Eye Closure Cues
Fixed stare	Jaw drops with mouth closed	Eyes blink slowly
Shoulders drop	Breathing slows down	Light seems dimmer or streaks
Tummy muscles sag	Breaths become fuller and deeper	Eyes tear due to burning sensation
Face muscles "iron out"	Body feels heavy or detached	Field of vision narrows or blurs at the edges
Sinuses clear	Light, floating sensation	Lids close and flutter
Urge to smile	Body rocks inwardly	

Recognizing these natural, calming reactions is important. People who are overly sensitized to their bodies often worry about any change that is different from their usual state of tension. Relaxation can even feel like a loss of control. During trance you may detach from your surroundings, but you become increasingly aware, present, and connected to your *Self*. You can come out of trance any time you wish. The preceding signs of relaxation and eye closure are completely natural and good for you. Use the phrase, *Now I'm aware . . .* as you do your self-talk to predict (P) and observe (O). Generally, it is not necessary to give yourself any direction in this trance induction method. It would be perfectly fine if your eyes remained in a good fixed stare.

#### Self-Talk . . .

Now my eyes seem to be locked on their spot (O), and I wonder what signs of calm stillness I will start to notice (P) . . . I'm aware of my jaw dropping, although my mouth is closed (O) . . . and I took a nice, deep breath (O) . . . My tummy muscles are letting go and my face feels ironed out (O) . . . Now I'm getting that clearing sensation in my nose (O) and I wonder when my eyes will want to close (P) . . . I'm blinking slowly (O) and my lids are starting to feel so heavy (O) . . . Things are looking blurry (O) . . . and now they close (O). They've opened again, but only to narrow slits and now they close (O) . . . There is a fluttering and then the fluttering goes away (O) . . . My eyes rest peacefully shut.

**Method 3—Floor-to-Ceiling Eyeroll.** The last method of eye closure produces rapid relaxation and may be the fastest way to enter trance. It does not require a focal point and uses more directed self-talk than the previous approaches:

- Look forward at eye level and hold your head still (D).
- Gaze downward, moving only your eyes (not your head) until your lids are almost closed (D).
- Slowly roll your eyes up as if you were trying to see your own eyebrows, and then look all the way toward the top of your head (D).
- Take a deep breath and hold it, while noticing if your eyes can continue to look upward (O).
- When it is too tiring to look up anymore (O), allow your lids to flutter closed, and let your breath all the way out (D).
- Discover all the signs of relaxation (P) as you continue to exhale any tension right out of your body (D)—jaw dropping, shoulders drooping, tummy sagging, muscles ironing out, profound stillness (O).

## Handout 1.3—Maintaining and Deepening Trance

Even master hypnotists will not keep people “under” unless they continue to give suggestions that predict, observe, and direct the experience of trance. One of the most *trance*-forming things to observe is your breathing. Practice the following scripts for *directed self-talk* during a waking state and use the breathing exercise that is most relaxing for you once you’ve entered trance:

- **Complete breath.** *First, I breathe in through my nose and bring air all the way down until my tummy starts to push out . . . . After my chest fully expands . . . I hold my breath for three counts . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . . Now I release air slowly out my mouth as I let go all the way . . . noticing when I’m ready for my next breath.*
- **Cleansing breath.** *I breathe in through my nose for three counts . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . . I hold for three counts . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . . I breathe out of my mouth for six counts . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . , and wait . . . asking myself, “Am I ready for my next breath yet?”*
- **Breathing imagery.** *I imagine myself in a lovely sparkling pond . . . . I am submerged up to my lips . . . . I can hear birds and insects and teeming life and feel mud squishing through my toes . . . . A leaf falls in front of me . . . . As I breathe in, the leaf floats to me . . . . When I breathe out, it floats away . . . . I watch this leaf come back and forth until it seems that the leaf is a part of me and that I am a part of it.<sup>1</sup>*

Many forms of meditation use a *mantra* to induce and maintain trance. A mantra is a *sacred* formula in the form of a word, phrase, or chant repeated over and over to invoke inner quiet. Some people even pay hundreds of dollars for a “master” to give them a mantra. The following scripts for directed self-talk can help you discover your mantra, free of charge, from your own inner master:

**Finding Your Mantra.** As I notice myself becoming more peaceful, I can wonder what word or phrase best describes my experience . . . now . . . . It may be the purring of a cat . . . the word *quiet*, *clear*, or *noodle*, . . . a phrase—“Peace be still . . . ,” words from another language . . . *Que sera sera* . . . . I can wait in the quiet of my mind until I am surprised by whatever comes and be thankful for this gift from my inner Self.

**Using Your Mantra.** (After the previous exercise) . . . Now that I know my own calming words, I listen to the quiet of my mind . . . and any time a thought dares to enter, I can repeat my mantra until everyday mental chatter becomes a chant of peace.

Much of the language of trance suggests downward movement—going *deeper* and *deeper*, counting *down* from 5, or walking *down* steps. Some cultures explain this as the need to *ground* energy and establish a connection with the earth. When energy is not grounded, it (supposedly) degenerates into nervous tension and irritability. After a person is fully connected with the earth, energy can flow upward, making a person feel light and buoyant. Then energy can flow endlessly inward, creating feelings of utter detachment. Such ideas offer useful images to deepen trance and explain sensations of sinking, floating, or release. Pick one or two of the following to deepen your trance experience:

**Grounding.** Now that I’ve entered trance, I’m ready to start sinking *downward* as I count backwards from **5** and imagine a lovely, gentle pressure pushing on my shoulders . . . **4** . . . I go a few steps *deeper* and feel my shoulders dropping . . . **3** . . . *descending* further into myself . . . **2** . . . drifting *down* with that gentle pressure helping me . . . **1** . . . I go all the way *down* where it is peaceful and still . . .

1. Imagery from *The Reluctant Shaman* (p. 62), by K. Whitaker, 1991, New York: HarperCollins.

Mantra  
Making

Grounding,  
Floating,  
Detachment

**Going Into and Out of Trance.** (After the previous exercise): Just as it takes several bobs down and up to reach the bottom of a deep pool, I can float up and back *down* to reach great *depths* of peace . . . Now that I'm all the way *down*, I can begin floating right back up again . . . **2** . . . to a more alert . . . **3** . . . aware . . . **4** . . . outward state . . . And now my eyes open . . . **5** . . . and I am present but relaxed as I let myself sink right back *down*, my eyes close . . . **4** . . . I go *down* those steps . . . **3** . . . those lovely hands pushing me lower . . . *deeper* . . . **2** . . . further *down* until . . . **1** . . . I'm even *deeper* inside myself . . . , experiencing such a pleasant, heavy, *sinking* sensation . . .

**Grounding Imagery.** As I feel the weight of my head resting on the top of my spine, I notice how that weight is carried *down* one vertebra at a time . . . I can feel that weight pressing down on the floor (chair) I'm sitting on . . . Through the force of gravity, the earth is pulling my weight toward it . . . all the way through the substructure of my house (or high-rise) to the very center of the earth . . . So I imagine the column my weight makes as it bores into the earth . . . allowing excess energy from my outer brain to move through my body and descend to the very core of the earth.

**Scaling.** On a scale of **10–1**, I can allow a number to come to mind of how deep down I feel, **1** being all the way down . . . Now I can notice if that number can decrease by **1** or **2** points, just enough to go further *down*. . . And find out if I sink *deeper*. . . So I might notice the number **4**. . . And I can just wonder if it will deepen to a **3** . . . and watch or feel when it changes . . . Will it *sink* to a **2**? . . . Can I watch the change? And if it goes to a **2**, will that **2** turn into a swan and float off? . . . And on another scale of **10–1**, I can allow a number to come to mind of how *still* (focused, limp) I feel, and begin to notice if that number can decrease by 1 or 2 points . . .

## Centering

Finally, the experience of trance is inward. As you detach from your surroundings, you become more connected to your *Self*. The following scripts for directed self-talk can move you infinitely inward to a place of peace and power:

**Centering Imagery.** My mind reaches into itself . . . Within itself it has no limits. I travel through the “black hole” of my mind . . . and experience being transported, as I become less aware of my body and more aware of joining something else . . . I travel ever *inward* through a quiet melting in.

**Safe Place.** As I travel *inward* toward the center of my center, I know I am moving toward a place of comfort . . . I don't need to know what this place looks like until I get there . . . It may be a place I've been before, or never been . . . an indoor place or outdoors . . . or totally imaginary . . . And when I arrive, I can explore it effortlessly with every sense that I have . . . noticing colors, shapes, sounds, fragrances, textures, temperatures . . . And, I can find a spot to rest and savor everything around me . . . absorbing what I need as I just *observe* and keep my thoughts from thinking me.

**Core.** So many things have a core . . . An apple has a core . . . The earth has a core . . . A galaxy has a center where spiraling arms meet . . . Even your brain has a core: the almond-shaped lobes of the thalamus . . . On imaging scans it becomes energized during *deep* meditative states and the rest of the mind slows *down*. . . So I might wonder what is at the center of my being . . . and be surprised by any symbol that comes to me . . . and stay pleasantly focused on it.

## Handout 1.4—The Language of Trance

You may wonder, *When I put myself in a trance, exactly who or what am I talking to?* Your intentional, logical mind is speaking to deeper brain structures that oversee automatic functions that control heart rate, muscle tone, transmission of nerve impulses (experience of pain), and *aha* moments. Traditionally, such trance talk has been thought of as self-suggestions. But it is actually a way of evoking responses that are present within. A person whose throat tightens at the sight of a pill needs to remind his or her muscles that they know how to let loose, using a special type of communication:

### SELF-TALK

Before I completely relax the throat muscle that allows me to swallow, I can slowly ask myself some questions: Did I ever have trouble from swallowing or from something being in my mouth? . . . When I was young, was I given the wrong information about children being able to . . . swallow pills that stuck in my mind? (See below.)\* . . . Was so much of my life managed that I decided to control the way I took medicine? . . . I don't have to have answers to these questions for my mind to stop gagging on erroneous thoughts and my body to . . . start to swallow what it needs . . .

My body works automatically. There have been many times when I've yawned because someone else yawned . . . My eyelids blink to redistribute tears, and *my throat swallows* to remove saliva . . . I don't have to tell myself to salivate when there is food in my mouth or to . . . swallow after chewing . . . My body knows what it's doing . . . In fact, even thinking the word "swallow" *can make me swallow*, now . . . I could try not to swallow . . . and find it impossible . . .

But there are many ways to forget the gag reflex . . . Sword swallows do this by brushing the rear of their tongues further and further back every day . . . and, eventually, that throat muscle remains . . . wide open. They have taught the back of their tongues to . . . lose sensation . . . and that muscle in their throats does not do anything anymore . . . The back of their mouths become comfortably lazy, limp, loose, or numb . . . I would never have to do such an extraordinary feat . . . because my body knows when my throat needs to close and when . . . it is fine to be comfortably open . . .

\*We give small children liquid medicine because we think they cannot . . . *swallow a pill* . . . and yet we don't allow these same children to play with small objects because we know they will . . . swallow them . . . It is astonishing how well . . . they can swallow . . .

And now the mystery begins to be solved because I've seen people . . . *swallow pills effortlessly* . . . Now I can imagine seeing a person . . . noticing the pill resting comfortably on the front of the tongue . . . a drink of water filling up the mouth . . . telling the throat muscle to open wide and the pill washing over the back of the tongue . . . And as the pill and the water flow down the food tube with a wavelike motion, I notice how satisfied the person looks . . . I see myself swallowing a pill with pleasure and satisfaction . . . knowing that the touch of the pill to my tongue can trigger an amazing sense of letting go . . .

Does the preceding self-talk sound slightly odd—full of interesting word usage, curious grammar, and unusual punctuation (. . .) signaling pauses? Your purposeful mind can use sophisticated language rules to defeat its control patterns and reach the automatic, spontaneous brain. It is not necessary to use long soliloquies like the one here. One or two phrases embedded in trance talk will deepen your experience.

### Evocative Language Forms<sup>1</sup>

1. **Truisms** are statements of truth that disarm resistance. They may refer to people and situations in general or use the word *can*: I *can* imagine seeing a person swallowing . . . *They* have taught their throats to lose sensations . . . *Everyone* has habits that are helpful and others that defeat them. There have been *times* when I have achieved a goal that I once thought of as impossible . . .

1. The use of evocative language is fully explored in the book *Making Hostile Words Harmless: A Guide to the Power of Positive Speaking*, by K. Cohen-Posey, 2008, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

2. **Predicting all possible responses** focuses attention and anticipates success: The back of their mouths become comfortably lazy, limp, loose, or numb . . . My eyes may start to blink slowly, narrow down to slits, begin to tear up, or remain fastened to my spot with a good fixed stare . . .
3. **Not doing, not knowing** reinforces the idea that responses will happen automatically because they are natural: I would never have to do such an extraordinary (sword swallowing) feat . . . It really isn't important what my eyes do . . . I don't need to know the exact moment when . . . this craving will pass . . .
4. **Questions** focus attention, stimulate associations, or assume that something is happening. The word *wonder* offers a way of asking a hidden question: Did I ever have trouble from swallowing? . . . Can I feel the first sensations of how tired my body is, even if part of my mind thinks it wants to think? . . . I wonder, if I lose 20% of my pain, what I will start to notice? . . .
5. **Timely words** indicate that something will happen later or sooner: Even thinking the word *swallow* may cause me to swallow; *now* . . . I wonder *when* my eyes will want to close . . . I can *begin* to notice if I am *becoming* more still, *yet* . . . *After a while* the feeling can fade . . .
6. **Shocking words** focus the mind on the next prediction to promote it: It is *astounding* how well they can swallow . . . Be *surprised* by any symbol that comes . . . Could I *dare* to focus on my breath instead of the next thought that tries to come . . .
7. A **blocking word** inhibits the prediction that follows it. It encourages resistance and yielding simultaneously, which helps a person let go: I could *try* not to swallow . . . The more I *try* to lift my hand, the more peacefully it lies on my leg . . . I can *try* to keep my eyes opened . . .
8. **Positive, repetitive words** create images of what you want to happen: *That throat muscle remains wide open*, was used in the soliloquy instead of mentioning the gag reflex or *the throat closing*. The word *swallow* was used 16 times with different images or contexts.
9. **Opposing opposites** create confusion that inhibits the logical mind: My mind can *stop* gagging on thoughts, and my body can *start* to swallow . . . There will be many times when I will *remember* to *forget* the urge to eat . . . Sometimes what I think I *know* about the way I look, I really *don't know* . . . The opinions formed about myself may be *true* or *false* . . . They can *appear* and *dissolve* . . .
10. **Utilizing unwanted behaviors and thoughts** removes the reason to resist them. Distressing ideas and actions can be accepted, encouraged, or slightly modified to promote their opposite: If I catch a pill on the back of my tongue enough times, the tissue can become used to being touched and my throat muscle can learn to . . . stay loose . . . As I jiggle my leg, I wonder if it will move faster, slower, or swing to the rhythm of "Amazing Grace" . . .

It is not necessary to memorize these evocative language forms. You only need to thoroughly understand each one to discover that they will come to you at opportune times during your trance talk. You can learn to speak to yourself in a slow, rhythmic way: full of embedded suggestions and underlying assumptions that build up expectations. A pregnant pause ( . . . ) preceding a hidden hint makes it that much more powerful—I *don't have to have answers to these questions for my body to . . . start to swallow what it needs*. This sentence also implies that the desired change *is* going to happen. Just knowing that you can use words on purpose to evoke automatic, spontaneous responses will inspire a different way of talking when you become calm and still.

## Handout 1.5—Trance Imagery

Sometimes, in order to get past your usual ways of thinking, it helps to use preverbal language—pictures, symbols, images, and sounds. Physical ailments, diseases, aches, and pains are particularly important to address in this way because raw sensory data is the language of the body. However, common everyday worries, beliefs, fears, and even relationships can be represented through images:

- Daily worries may look like a pile of ants crawling all over each other.
- A woman thinking of her dying father might see herself in a rowboat about to be overwhelmed by an approaching storm.
- A hay fever attack could appear as a dripping faucet.
- A husband may see himself as a jewelry case, enclosing and protecting a valuable diamond—his wife.

It is good to observe (O), predict (P), and direct (D) signs of relaxation before working with images: *As I stare at my focal point (D), I notice my body becomes more still (O) . . . . If I bothered to . . . pay attention . . . I might notice that my breathing has slowed down (O), and even my thoughts can find a pause (P) and, at some point, it will be too much effort for my eyes to stay open . . . (P).* However, attending to a symbolic representation of a problem is, in itself, a focal point that quiets the mind and induces trance. The following steps can be used to play with imagery in a way that transforms problems on a whole different level:

### Imagery Transformation

1. **Focus your attention on the symptom or problem** that has been bothering you. You may want to project the problem on a movie screen so you can stay detached from it and maintain a level of relaxation.
2. **Ask yourself for an image or symbol that would represent the problem.** Accept whatever comes, no matter how strange or trite it seems.
3. **Fine-tune the image.** Make sure you can see it clearly. Examine it from different angles. Explore its texture, size, and shape. You can even let the image get worse. If you can increase difficult symptoms (like pain), you can also decrease them.
4. **Notice what is wrong with the image.** How is it dysfunctional, or what problem is it creating?
5. **Represent a healed image.** Allow another form to appear. Ask yourself what the problem image will look like when it is no longer an issue.
6. **Compare the two images.** Which is stronger, larger, or more vivid? Adjust the size and detail of the two images so you can discover what would enable the problem image to change into its healed form.
7. **Watch the transformation take place.** Use whatever resources or tools you need to transform the problem image, no matter how fanciful or illogical. Will the change be slow and gradual, or rapid?
8. **Repeat the transformation from the problem image to the corrected image** a few times. Notice how the change happens. Is it sudden or regular? Become adept at healing the problem image in your mind.
9. **Focus on the corrected image.** Tell yourself that this change is happening now and that it is ongoing whether you are awake, asleep, or going about your daily business. When you are ready, take time to count slowly to 5 to come back to the outer world.

The person overwhelmed with worries (above) became a soaring eagle, looking at the pile of ants from a great height. Daily problems seemed puny and insignificant. The woman who felt totally alone without her father allowed her fear of the storm to build (step 3 above).

She suddenly realized that she had her own oar and that she could row herself to safety. Images do not need to be medically accurate to have healing effects. It is more important that they are personally meaningful. A dripping faucet image was corrected with various sizes of washers until the allergy attack it represented subsided.

Using imagery for physical symptoms can produce immediate effects or may have to be practiced regularly. Along with traditional medications, it has proven to increase survival rates for people fighting cancer but should be practiced for 15 minutes, three times a day. Dr. Martin L. Rossman (2000) recommends 10-minute sessions, twice daily, for other serious medical problems.<sup>1</sup>

### Imagery for Relationship Problems

Couples can argue over trivial details, zigzagging from one loosely related topic to the next. Often, it is hard to understand the unifying themes underlying their conflicts and how to intervene without dealing with minutia. The following imagery exercise provides an opening:<sup>2</sup>

1. After taking a few moments to become focused and still, visualize how your partner might appear to you in a dream, fairytale, or cartoon. What object, character, or symbol could represent him or her?
2. Visualize a form that you would take in relation to your partner's. Pick an object, character, or symbol that is connected to the one you chose for your partner.
3. Allow the two forms to interact in some fantasy way. Does each character or element seem stuck in the role it is playing? What would the danger be if one of the forms began to change or if the interaction became different?

Differences that originally attracted people to each other can become sources of conflict: rigid/chaotic, emotional/reserved, distancing/pursuing, helpless/competent, dominant/yielding, and so on. Do the images you and your partner created say anything about patterns that are contributing to your ongoing arguments? What image would you like for you and your partner? Would you pick completely different figures or would you change the interaction in your current scenario? The husband who saw himself as a case protecting a valuable jewel (his wife) gradually realized that they could both be diamonds on a crystal-studded crown, able to observe and interact with the world around them.

1. Using imagery to dialogue with and transform problems is discussed in greater depth in *Guided Imagery for Self Healing*, by M. L. Rossman, 2000, Tiburon, CA: New World Library.

2. The idea for couple imagery is fully explained in *The Process of Change*, by P. Papp, 1983, New York: Guilford Press.

## Handout 1.6—Trance Advisors and Guidance

Imagery is an excellent way to deepen and maintain trance. It provides an internal focus of concentration in which people can *observe* shapes, colors, sounds, textures, and perhaps even notice tastes and smells. Normal waking thoughts are replaced by vivid dreamlike scenes that warrant exploring.

Sometimes images are actively chosen—as *I walk along my favorite beach, I can notice the time of day . . . the color of the ocean . . . the calmness or roughness of the water . . . the sounds of the seagull . . . the feeling of the sand squishing through my toes . . .* Or images can be received—*I can see a frightened child approaching a curtain in an empty theater. As she (he) peeks behind the heavy drapes, all anxiety is banished by the scene and characters that bring understanding . . . and I, too, discover what is on the stage, fascinated by the drama . . . showing when to believe and when all is make-believe.*

Creating or evoking inner advisors adds another dimension to imagery. They give form and voice to wisdom that you may not know that you have. Your automatic mind not only controls your heart rate and respiration, it is the storehouse of all your memories, instincts, intuitions, and inspirations. Its language is pictorial, spatial, and symbolic. It is effortless for your automatic mind to conjure images of wise and loving beings who can be approached in dialogue. Asking them questions creates opportunities for a focused inner search to deepen trance. Begin by making contact<sup>1</sup>:

1. **Enter trance** using whatever method is best for you—staring at a focal point, closing your eyes and finding out if they want to open, observing how your body can become more still and how your breathing and your thoughts can slow down until it is too much effort for your eyes to stay open.
2. **Imagine your safe place.** Allow the image to come to you—a place where you would be completely comfortable and secure all by yourself. It can be real or imaginary, indoors or outdoors, a beach, woods, garden, field, mountain, or your very own bedroom. Notice the time of day, the temperature, colors, sounds, any fragrances, and look for a place where you would like to stand or sit to wait.
3. **Imagine your guide** by wondering, *How would a loving, wise guide appear?* It may take form as an animal, a human, someone you know or have known, an author or character from a book, or an effect of light. Or your advisor may have no form and be a disembodied voice. You may discover that you have your own personal cabinet made up of historical figures and scientists. Notice where your guide(s) appears in your safe place. Is it waiting for you to approach, or do you take the first step?
4. **Make contact** by asking a question like *Do you have a name? Are you here to help me? Do you believe in me and care about me?* Until now, your advisor has only been able to talk to you periodically through intuition. It is a symbol of what is within you that knows. It has spoken to you before with quiet calmness when you have been troubled, but you may have dismissed its words. Trance imagery creates opportunities for more formal meetings and enduring relationships.

Describe a problem that is causing you difficulty (even physical ailments) and ask, *What do I need to know, understand, or do?* Take time, using the four steps above to have an encounter with your advisor(s). Before leaving your guide, make physical contact (if any is desired) and plans for future meetings. Some sample questions follow. Remember that asking one question slowly is more important than receiving an answer. Questions can be repeated like a mantra to block

Guidance  
From Within

Using Inner  
Guidance

1. Many methods for using imagery and inner advisors can be found in *Guided Imagery for Self Healing*, by M. L. Rossman, 2000, Tiburon, CA: New World Library.

distracting thoughts and keep your attention focused on issues. Answers can come at surprising moments during your waking life.

- **Anxiety and worry.** What is making me feel upset? What do I need to understand to let go of this worry? What can I remember when signs of panic start?
- **Self-confidence.** What false belief keeps me from feeling good about myself? Do I gain something from holding on to that false belief? What is the truth about my goodness, desirability, and belonging? What would I like to believe? Who is placing so much importance on appearance?
- **Relationship conflicts.** Why am I upset with my partner (child) right now? Why is my partner (child) upset with me? What do I need to understand to move past this? Are my expectations of this person unrealistic?
- **Criticism.** Who is my real judge? Can I consider others' opinions without making them my judge? What is the underlying reason why this person is difficult? What do I need to remember about myself to be less hurt?
- **Abuse.** Why do I blame myself for what happened? What would it mean if I stopped blaming myself? Why do others say I could *not* stop my abuse? Am I less of a person because of what happened? What do I need to do or understand to release this consuming anger (or sadness)?

### Recognizing Your Inner Advisor

How can you discern if inner advisors are figments of your imagination *or* reservoirs of knowledge? People who have used this approach on a regular basis describe the guidance they receive as astonishing, uncanny, or practical. You may be reluctant to ask some of the above questions because you are concerned your advisor will have answers you do not want to hear—to forgive, not to forgive, or to confront someone. Surprisingly, guidance always leads to peace and relief. There are four ways to recognize authentic inner wisdom:

1. **Answers will be more personal or creative than common clichés.** You may be told to simply acknowledge consuming anger, to express it in a game of darts, or to wink at an offender each time you realize he or she no longer has power over you.
2. **Answers focus on understanding.** Even if you committed some terrible act, inner guides will help you realize you are a good person who did something wrong and *why* you went astray. Any berating or disapproval comes from an *inner critic*. The quiet authority of your advisor can dispel past misinformation.
3. **Answers promote perception rather than quick-fix solutions** and illuminate what makes a problem a problem. They come in a slow, focused way that leads *toward* the direction you need to go. Ask for clarification of ideas that are confusing.
4. **Answers can be nonverbal.** You may gain what you need by feeling an overwhelming sense of compassion or simply being hugged by your inner advisor.

## Handout 1.7—Entrancing Unwanted Habits

Over a lifetime, people acquire habits—some good, some bad. They brush their teeth, stop at red lights, and say *please* before asking someone to pass the peas. But there are those other habits that have unpleasant consequences: eating sugary, high-fat foods; indulging cravings to eat between meals; keeping snacks handy; smoking; and so on. Some habits are labeled *addictions*, which gives them even more power. All habits are governed by the automatic mind, where they gain a life of their own. When a person's intentional mind is able to give direction to this storehouse of behavior and thought patterns, habits can change with a minimum of effort.

**Heavy-Hand Trance.** The following induction is especially designed to help conscious intentions take root in your other mind. Read over the steps and then trust yourself to execute what you need to remember. Read the script again and repeat it often, adding your own flourishes. Practice the Heavy-Hand Trace once a week while you are losing weight:

1. Stretch one of your hands out above eye level, focusing on a finger of choice. Tell yourself: *The more I concentrate on that finger, the heavier my hand will become . . . so heavy that it will begin to slowly move down toward my leg . . .* Take time to feel the heaviness, to allow it to build, before your hand and arm start to descend.
2. Notice where your arm and hand feel the heaviness as they move slowly downward and begin to wonder which fingers will touch your leg first and how your hand and arm will eventually rest . . . knowing that your eyes don't need to close until your hand and arm are all the way down.
3. And when you discover your arm and hand lying comfortably on your leg and your eyelids fluttering, drooping, resting shut; your head can float up . . . perfectly balanced on your spine.
4. Say to yourself, *Now I can begin to wonder how my hand could become so heavy that I would not want to lift it if I tried . . . On the count of 3, I could make that effort, only to . . . 1 . . . savor the sensations of heaviness, laziness, limpness to . . . 2 . . . notice how it touches or sinks into my leg and . . . 3 . . . the more I try to lift my hand, the more peacefully it lies on my leg and as I stop trying, I sink deeper into calm stillness.*
5. Now with your arm lying there, inert, picture in your mind's eye what you just did . . . your arm outstretched, finger pointed . . . arm descending slowly onto your leg . . . taking your time . . . until it rests profoundly still on your leg . . .
6. Say to yourself, *Now I begin to notice other parts of my body that are heavy . . . especially my jaw . . . so that my mouth can be closed but my jaw hangs slack, motionless . . . and maybe even my tummy feels heavy, full, or distended . . .*
7. Finally, picture yourself sitting wherever you might be eating (or about to reach for a cigarette) . . . Your body will know when it has had enough nourishment . . . Your arm comes to rest on your leg or table top . . . impossible to move . . . Your jaw drops with your mouth closed and you see yourself feeling this pleasant heaviness . . . all desires banished . . . and you get up and move on to the next task . . . or something else of interest . . .

The following exercises can be used with the Heavy-Hand Trance. Read one of your choosing and think about it after doing the first three steps of the Heavy-Hand Trance (physically or mentally). Practice the ones that address the habits that are hurting you most on a regular basis.

Trance  
Enhancers<sup>1</sup>

1. Using trance for weight control can be explored further in *The Self-Hypnosis Diet: Use the Power of Your Mind to Reach Your Perfect Weight*, by S. Guignevich and J. Guignevich, 2007, Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc.

This is a good exercise to do every morning, while driving, and at bedtime.

**Attention on Intentions.** Formulate your intention by adding five or fewer words to the statement—*What I want to achieve most is...* State it in positive terms: ... *to weigh 125 pounds, ... to walk with ease, ... to stick to my (food) plan, ... to be free of smoking,* and so on.

Once your hand and arm are resting on your leg, repeat your intention to yourself slowly, pausing between every word—I ... *want ... to...* Visualize the number on *your* scale at your desired weight. Imagine that each time you repeat your intention, it is a laser beam, breaking up unwanted habits that have accumulated in your automatic mind.

This is a good exercise to do shortly before eating or going out to dinner.

**The Art of Eating.** Picture yourself before a delicious meal. Before eating, you notice colors, textures, and aromas. You can observe both your food and your breath at the same time. After knowing your attention is on your breath, you see yourself lift your fork and take small bites of food... Each taste bud on your tongue is absorbing flavor as you chew many times, moving food around in your mouth slowly and finally swallowing it. There are no thoughts in your mind... You see yourself doing the dance of tasting, chewing, swallowing, and at the same time you are aware of your breathing... But now you notice something peculiar. Time seems to be slowing down... As you eat, there is so much time between each bite ... and you chew your food more and more slowly. Each second is a minute, until you see yourself reaching the point of feeling satisfied. Finish with step 7 of the Heavy-Hand Trance.

This is a good exercise to do every morning.

**Food Rules.** Everyone has acquired practices that they do not do—not running red lights, not leaving periods off of sentences, not telling store clerks their private business. People do not feel deprived because they follow the rules of the road, punctuation, or social behavior. Ask yourself, *What food rules do I want to follow today? ... knowing that I can stick to them without feeling deprived*—no desserts, no snacks, three servings of bread, and so on. Remember *stressed* spelled backwards is *desserts*. Hold this image in your mind: *d-e-s-s-e-r-t-s = s-t-r-e-s-s-e-d*.

Do this exercise intentionally, before situations where you might act out on a craving or while preparing meals.

**Cravings.** Imagine a food that stirs desire, and let the picture go as soon as you can sense a craving. If necessary, go to the kitchen, look at something tasty, and remove yourself to the place where you practice trance. Pay exquisite attention to all the areas in your body where you feel the craving. Is it in the roof or the back of your mouth? Do you feel tingling or salivation? Are there any sensations in your stomach or in your head? Keep noticing ... and watch how the craving eventually passes. Focus on observing rather than controlling cravings. Take a breath and let your hand become heavy. Think of each urge as an opportunity to practice letting go. Sip water if it is too hard to allow cravings to pass.

Do this exercise when you are famished to distinguish real hunger from cravings. When you do not have access to food, imagine your stomach filling and your body burning excess fat.

**Helium Delight.** Picture helium balloons being filled for every year you have lived. Notice how the gas goes into the first balloon ... filling it until the rubber stretches taut. Watch it float away, carrying an unwanted habit with it. What color is the second balloon? Watch it become stretched, filled, and float off with another unwanted habit. Really notice the next balloon ... how it reaches a point where it cannot take any more helium and how the opening must be tied off before the balloon pops. Keep examining the balloons being filled, but allow something strange to happen with the next balloon. Imagine that it is your stomach being filled with light gas from an unknown source. Notice the feeling of fullness. Your balloon stomach can float away to be replaced by another one, until a balloon for every year you have lived has been filled.

## Handout 1.8—Trances for Hyperactivity

While the quiet stillness of a trance is usually a deeply pleasurable experience, people who need to be moving all the time can find it excruciating. Some research suggests that people with hyperactivity have slower brain waves, and constant activity may be a means of speeding up frontal lobe activity. Rhythmic activities take focus and concentration. Natural methods for people who require movement to soothe themselves are coloring, rocking, shooting baskets, knitting, or the martial art of *tai chi*.

One of the hallmarks of hyperactive people is to drum their fingers or jiggle a leg. These very movements can become the vehicle for entering a trance. You can use a special self-talk that supplies three steps to predict (P), observe (O), and direct (D) this process. The following script is an example of what can happen when you take advantage of restless moments. Each person's experience will be unique:

1. **Focus on a current (habitual) movement.** As I drum my fingers (move my leg), I wonder if I'll tap faster, slower, keep a steady beat, or change the order of tapping (P).
2. **Focus on rhythm.** I can count (to myself) the rhythm I'm using—one, two, three, four; one, two three, four (D) . . . I can speed up the rate of my tapping and make it more rhythmic by moving to the tune of *Jingle Bells* (D) . . . and I can slow down by moving to the rhythm of *Amazing Grace* (D), . . . or I can alternate phrases from each tune to speed up or slow down, . . . just noticing what my fingers (leg) want to do (O).
3. **Spontaneous (automatic) changes.** Now I can notice if any tune comes to mind to give my fingers direction (O) . . . and find out how long will they follow that tune . . . that rhythm (P) . . . It's not important what happens . . . I can be surprised and pleased by any changes that do or do not happen . . . just watching . . . just sensing (O).
4. **Imagination exercise.** If I discover that my fingers (leg) want to stop moving, I can begin to imagine a box . . . noticing its color . . . its size . . . what it's made of (D) . . . And I can wonder what is inside . . . and how to open the box (D) . . . And as I move the box around in my mind, I know that inside I'll find a message or an object that has a meaning to help me focus and concentrate (P) . . . And I enjoy the process of finding out how to unlock the truth of the box, taking all the time I need . . .
5. **Concentration imagery.** I can take a couple of minutes to notice my breath (O) and allow an image to come to my mind to help me concentrate in the most amazing ways . . . I can picture a large sponge soaking up water (D), and without exactly understanding how, I know that my mind can absorb information (P) so I can get twice as much work done in half the time . . . I notice how nothing stops the sponge from absorbing water (O) and nothing can distract me from my purpose (P).

The goal of this trance activity is *not* to change the perpetual motion of hyperactivity into calm stillness, but to utilize restlessness to develop focus and awareness any time it occurs. If movement does stop, an imagination exercise supplies a continued avenue for concentration. Because people with attention deficits are good multitaskers, step 4 can be started while there is still finger drumming or leg swinging. With practice, you can train yourself to use old habits that energize your brain to add new powers of calm focus.

Trance has been defined as a state of focused attention, which suppresses *unnecessary* thoughts, activity, or sensations, allowing a fuller involvement with inner or outer experience. This inclusive definition invites methods to activate sluggish brainwaves while preparing people to focus and concentrate. Because these activities are so energizing, they can be followed by traditional trances or concentration imagery (see meditation activity number 5, above).

- **Cross-crawl brain balancing.** While marching in place, touch your right knee with your left hand or elbow and then your left knee with your right hand or elbow.

Meditation on  
Movement

Moving  
Meditations

For variety, touch each heel behind your body alternately. Perform 25 times, slowly, with awareness. Slow cross-lateral movement stimulates the manufacture of dopamine in the frontal lobe, limbic area, and basal ganglion of the brain. This neurotransmitter is enhanced by medications prescribed for people diagnosed with hyperactivity.<sup>1</sup>

- **Alternate cross lateral and bilateral marching.** When you get good at the cross-crawl, switch to a one-sided march. Raise and lower the same side (hand/leg) together. Imagine a string from each hand pulling each leg. This fires one side of the brain at a time. Now do eight cross-crawls, eight one-sided marches, and finish with eight cross-crawls. This increases concentration and the ability to shift brain hemisphere activity.
- **Hand-clapping games** involve two people and make use of crossing the midline, which stimulates the brain. Claps commonly include patterns of clapping one's own hands, clapping both hands of a partner, and each player alternately clapping right hands and then left hands. Clapping patterns are trance-like because they move quickly to a tune or a rhyme and take great concentration. It is easy to Google the words for *Miss Mary Mack* or others and make up your own clap patterns for a *brain break*.
- **Walking on a balance beam** also requires a person to cross his or her midline, to move slowly, and to concentrate. Balance beams can be made by having a lumberyard cut a 4-by-4 to the desired length and nailing it to a piece of wood on each end for stability. Extra challenges can be added by propping one end on a chair and walking on an incline. For a brain break, have a person walk the beam 10 times.
- **Juggling.** Use smallish balls or beanbags that easily fit in the palm of your hand. Simply throw the ball from one hand to the other at waist level. Next, toss the ball in an arc with a maximum height at eye level. With continued practice, a second and third ball can be added for excellent cross-lateral stimulation.
- **Gotcha.** Two people face each other with their palms up and the index finger of the opposite hand pointed just over each other's palm. On the word *Go*, they each try to capture the other's index finger. For more of a challenge and cross-lateral stimulation, they step closer and do the same activity with hands crossed.<sup>2</sup>
- **Line dancing.** Practice or make up steps to the Electric Slide, the Macarena, or the Chicken Dance. A circle dance like the Hora uses the grapevine step that makes use of cross-lateral brain stimulation.

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1. This is a well known strategy in Educational Kinesiology and described in the book *Making the Brain Body Connection*, by Sharon Promislow (Enhanced Learning & Integration Inc., 1997).

2. Another excellent resource for active trances is *Pick and Plan: 101 Brain Compatible Strategies for Lesson Design*, by Brenda Utter, 2007, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## Handout 1.9—Trance-Forming Pain

Pain has a purpose. When it is acute, it signals current or imminent harm to body tissue. Unpleasant sensations send nerve impulses up the spinal cord to the brain, where they are interpreted and then sent back down the spinal cord to direct muscles to react. Neurotransmitters that boost activity of nerve fiber are adrenaline and cortisol. Serotonin and noradrenaline dampen upward transmission of pain impulses.

Chronic pain reminds diseased or injured people of their limits. However, a neurological circuit can be imprinted in the central nervous system (CNS), and that continues to fire in the absence of real sensory input. Repeated thoughts and emotions also cause impulses to travel along well-worn pathways. The memory of pain is experienced as real and present.<sup>1</sup> How can these neurological facts help make the shift from disturbing to tolerable body sensations?

- Regular trances teach the CNS to be less sensitive to pain signals, to calm down, and to build new nerve pathways, making pain conduits less active.
- Neurons that do not transmit pain can interfere with signals from pain-transmitting neurons and inhibit or reduce the experience of pain. This is the *Gate Control Theory of Pain*.
- Muscles react to pain with tension and spasm that intensifies it. Trance can relax muscles.
- Trance states increase the output of neurotransmitters that oppose adrenaline and cortisol. Dopamine, the pleasure neurotransmitter, can increase by 65% during some trance states.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to *sensations* from tissue damage or interference with body functions, pain includes unpleasant *emotions* related to body sensations. A soldier who breaks his leg in battle may experience his pain differently than a person who is the victim of a drunk driver. Although you may not have any control over the cause of your pain, its distressing sensations, and the limitation it creates, only you can decide what role it will play in your life.

Review the questions below and notice which ones stick in your mind. Take time to enter trance by staring at a focal point, observing how your body can become more still, and how your breathing and your thoughts can slow down . . . until it is too much effort for your eyes to stay open. After becoming focused and still, ask yourself any of the questions that you remember and listen to the silence or wait for answers to come:

- *How does telling myself that my pain or limitations are awful help me?*
- *How much time do I want to spend being sad for what I can no longer do? How much time do I want to spend strategizing ways to do things I can still do?*
- *What can I learn from my pain—to be more compassionate, to take better care of myself, to work within my limits, to slow down, to appreciate what I can do?*
- *Do I need to be more or less angry at the person who caused my injury? Do I need to take action or move past my anger?*

The following story shows how the intentional part of your brain can use distraction to detach from pain while your mind works on automatic pilot:<sup>3</sup>

A famous psychiatrist named Victor Frankl was interred in a concentration camp. He fully believed he would survive his nightmare and give lectures on his ideas in Vienna following the war. But

Emotional  
Component  
of Pain

Distraction,  
Distortion,  
and  
Detachment

1. “Drug-Free Remedies for Chronic Pain,” by L. Khazzoom, 2009, *AARP*, January & February, pp. 30–33.

2. *Why We Believe What We Believe*, by A. Newberg, 2006, New York: Simon & Schuster.

3. See *Hypnotize Yourself Out of Pain Now*, by B. Eimer, 2008, Bethel, CT: Crown House Publishing, for more exercises to reduce pain.

Frankl's health was waning. On a work detail one day he could barely walk due to pain from his frozen, festering feet. He was about to falter, but that would mean certain death from the SS guard's bayonet. He wondered, *Don't I have a greater purpose than to die here?* Suddenly, his intentional mind conjured an image of being in a warm, beautiful lecture hall where he was giving a talk on his experiences at the camps. That night he found himself back in his bunk with no recall of how he went through the motions of doing the work detail.

Like Frankl, you can relegate your pain to your automatic mind while you purposely focus on tasks that detach you from your discomfort. Take time to become focused and still with your favorite trance induction. Read the scripts below (or have them read to you) to create your own recipes for healing. Repetition will build new nerve pathways.

1. **Remember to forget; forget to remember.** Many people forget to remember the feeling of their shoes on their feet, their glasses on their nose, or their shirt on their shoulders. You can intentionally notice some part of your body, but after a while the feeling can fade and all sensation can be placed under the control of your automatic mind while your intentional mind recalls something more interesting . . . like the times you've watched great movies and forgotten the hardness of your chair . . . . How can you forget the feeling of shoes on your feet or the hardness of the chair? Because of lifelong learning, you have the ability to . . . turn off sensations and discover something interesting . . . a memory . . . a fantasy that brings . . . comfort and more
2. **Pain change.** You can focus intently on your pain, describing it in all its dimensions—what is its shape, color, texture (smooth/rough, hard/soft). Are its boundaries firm or fuzzy? How far does it go below the surface of your skin? What qualities can you change—its depth, area, color, or size? Do the dimensions of your discomfort remind you of something—electricity, a nail, a knife, crab claws? . . . What would you need to do to change this imaginary source of discomfort? See the change happening. After removing the imaginary source, what would the injured area need—lotion; warm, wet towels; stretching? Apply whatever is needed.
3. **Physical change.** Visualize the physical cause of your discomfort. What is happening in your body that is sending signals of pain up your spinal cord to your brain? Now picture an actual medical treatment or the drugs you are taking working. Watch medicine flow along neurons to receptor sites for opiates—bringing a wonderful feeling of relief. See vertebrae being pulled apart to take pressure off of bulging disks. Imagine the cartilage between arthritic joints becoming thicker and the fluid between those joints gradually beginning to flow . . . .
4. **Count down.** Look up in the corner of your mind, and notice a number from 1 to 10 that represents your pain. Watch that the number begins to change. I don't know what it will be like . . . maybe it slowly fades and a smaller number begins to emerge from the background. The lines of an 8 can become a 7 . . . and so on . . . slowly on and on . . . . A 2 can remind you of a swan, and you begin to feel you are gliding gently: a beautiful swan on the coolness of a clear, glassy lake . . . .
5. **Flow and discard.** Breathe in; breathe out. As you breathe in, clench your fists tighter and tighter. As you breathe out, relax your hands. Imagine your pain in the form of a substance that could flow like syrup, hot lava, or goo. Take a third slow breath, clench your fists, imagine you are drawing the substance into your arms and legs, hold your breath, then let your breath all the way out, and relax your hands. See the substance flowing down your arms and legs, out fingertips and toes. On the next breath in and out, let oily droplets of pain leave your fingers and toes.

## Handout 1.10—To Dream . . . and Then to Sleep

There are many reasons why sleep evades people. Chronic conditions like sleep apnea, decrease in estrogen due to menopause, hyperthyroidism, and so on require the help of professionals. However, the common problems of worry, not being able to wind down from a day's work, and body tension will respond to many trance techniques. The first step is to recognize the transition from waking thoughts to the illogical ideas and images of predream states. It may seem like a giant leap from trance to sleep, but it is one small step from self-hypnosis to a hypnagogic state.

The technical term for the brief transition between wakefulness and sleep is *hypnagogia*. In this predream state, images can be fleeting and change rapidly. There is no story line connecting one picture to the next, but they can gradually change from formless patterns to objects to dreamlet scenes. Thoughts are disjointed and lack the purpose and emotional content found in dreams.

A psychologist named Andreas Mavromatis<sup>1</sup> suggested that during hypnagogia the brain cortex is inhibited and the midbrain and brain stem start to take over. The cortex is associated with clear, logical thought. The subcortex is attuned to imagery and symbols. During hypnagogia there is just enough cortical arousal to observe the strange antics of the old brain. Even if you have never heard of a hypnagogic state, you have probably had one or two of the following experiences while falling asleep, waking up, or starting to nod off during the day:

- **Mental:** Strange, nonsensical, irrelevant thoughts; made-up words; flashes of inspiration; meaningful answers to puzzling questions.
- **Visual:** Formless images, speckles, lines, flares, sparks, or cloudlike splashes of color; geometric designs, diamond shapes, or jewels; objects, faces, or animals; landscapes, seascapes, or gardens; scenes with people, writing, or print.
- **Auditory:** Hearing music, humming, a doorbell ringing, crashing, hissing, buzzing, banging, roaring, explosions, warnings, one's name being called, or quotations.
- **Olfactory:** Cigar smells, roses, and others.
- **Sensations:** Sudden muscle contractions; heat or coldness; energy flowing through the body; feelings of floating, weightlessness, heaviness, falling, rocking, spinning, or disorientation; body expansion or elongation; body paralysis, numbness, or tingling; sexual arousal; or a sense of a presence.
- **Repetitive activity:** Recurrence of activities that happened continuously before sleep or throughout the day— playing a computer game, the rocking of waves, or a baby crying.

Mavromatis also pointed out that the relay center between the three brains is the thalamus. Located just behind it is the pineal gland, which is photosensitive. In response to darkness, the pineal gland is signaled to convert stored serotonin (that balances moods) into melatonin. Its release into the brain and blood induces sleepiness throughout the night. Trances for sleep need only mimic the mechanics of hypnagogia. These predreams are the prologue to nighttime dramas that set the stage for deep sleep cycles.

**Spinal Twist.** Thoughts produce tension. Likewise, tension causes the mind to think and be wakeful. A day full of mental activity makes muscles tight without physical activity to discharge tension. One of the easiest ways to release stress is with a yoga position called a *Spinal Twist*. Lying in bed on your back (without your pillow), pull your knees to your chest, open your arms

The  
Mysterious  
Hypnagogic  
State

Predream  
Trances

1. Mavromatis' book, *Hypnagogia: The Unique State of Consciousness Between Wakefulness and Sleep*, 1987, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Books Ltd, is considered one of the most definitive works on hypnagogia.

to the sides, let your knees flop to one side, look in the opposite direction, and exhale. Observe your breathing, and notice what parts of your body are stretching. Imagine which internal organs are being toned and how this helps digestion. Now let your knees fall to the other side and turn your head away from your knees. Do not do this if you have severe lower back problems, if you're pregnant, or have just had surgery.

**Rag Doll.** Continue lying on your back with your arms bent at the elbows. Cradle your head in your hands and gently rock it from side to side. Let all the turning action come from your arms, not your neck. Use one of your middle fingers to press and rub the center hollow in the base of the skull in the back of your head. Gently put your head down. Lift one of your arms a few inches above your bed, count to three, and let it flop. Pay exquisite attention to the sensations in your arm after it falls and let it sink deeper and deeper into the bed. Count to three and imagine that your arm will become too heavy, lazy, or limp to lift. Use the same procedure to flop your other arm and both of your legs (one at a time). Feel the stillness, numbness, and even paralysis that are part of half-sleep.

**Tongue and Eyes.** (1) Continue lying on your back with no pillow. With your eyes closed, roll your eyes upward as though you were looking at your forehead. Let your jaw drop with your mouth closed. (2) Imagine that you are stimulating your pineal gland (that lies behind your eyes) to release more melatonin. Choose a color for it, and picture melatonin oozing from that tiny, pinecone-shaped organ throughout all your veins, lulling you into a lovely, dreamy sleep. Just before your eyes drop, ask, *What . . . do . . . I . . . need . . . to . . . understand, . . . know, . . . or . . . do . . . to . . . sleep . . . through . . . the . . . night?* You may receive an answer . . . or not, but continue to ask the question slowly until you lose consciousness. Ask the question again upon awakening in the morning: *What do I need to understand, know, or do to fall peacefully asleep tonight?*

**Word Association.** Word associations mimic the random thought flow of hypnagogic states. Do the first part of the Tongue & Eye Trance and think of a word that describes your experience—perhaps, *quiet*. What is the next word that comes to you? . . . For example, *still*. Continue on, joining two words together: *quiet-still, still-calm, calm-lake, lake-water, water-wet* . . . Again, pick a word that best describes your experience and repeat it every time you exhale, until you notice hypnagogic signs or loss of consciousness.

**Favorite Things.** Begin with the first part of the Tongue & Eye Trance or move your eyes back and forth as far as you can go in each direction slowly. These slow eye movements (SEMs) have been observed during hypnagogic states, while rapid eye movements (REMs) occur during dreams. Make up a story about your favorite things—*I'm in my favorite place, at my favorite time of year, wearing my favorite clothes. My favorite person from history (a book or movie) shows up and we start to . . .* You might be joined by your favorite animal or hear your favorite tune. Continue until your mind wanders off and you notice hypnagogic signs or lose consciousness.

**Impossible Things.** Begin with the first part of the Tongue & Eye Trance or SEMs. Practice hypnagogic thinking by making up strange, impossible things as fast as you can, nonstop. Imagine a purple fried egg rolling off a plate, slithering up the wall, sprouting wings, and flying away. The words to *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds* (Lennon and McCartney, 1967) describe the hypnagogic state perfectly.

## Handout 1.11—Erotic Trances

Sexual enjoyment does not come from using the right technique, position, or the best places to touch. It is about suspending mental chatter, attending to bodily sensations, and following an inner direction about what movements or sounds to express. Just as focusing on a spot will naturally lead to eye closure and trance, focusing on the sight of your partner's body, the sounds of lovemaking, and the sensations of touch create the choreography of the dance of love. Simply repeating the phrase, *Now I am aware of*, . . . will block mind chatter and put you under the spell of an erotic trance:

*I'm aware of the lovely furry texture of my partner's skin and how warm his body feels . . . I like the way that touch felt and I'm noticing a tingling, sensation. I'm aware of my breathing becoming slower and deeper, and it almost feels like I'm moving in slow motion . . . Now my body seems to want to move and push harder against his . . . and I can feel him pushing back . . . I'm aware of the rise and fall of his chest as he breathes . . . and I want to move with that rhythm.*

### SELF-TALK

People who are sensuous are tuned into the sights, sounds, and textures of their environment. They do the above naturally and can stay focused on sensations without using self-talk. People who are thinkers need to notice sensations. Partners can help each other do this with a script that creates a progression from relaxation to arousal. It is best to start in comfortable (night) clothes, sitting cross-legged on the bed or floor, facing each other with your head balanced over your spine. The person reading the script should speak slowly and rhythmically, pausing each time he or she inhales and speaking on the exhale. Ellipses (. . .) also suggest pauses:

### Meditation Foreplay

1. **Focal point and trance cues** (partner speaking). *Focus your attention on a spot and notice the signs of relaxation that begin to occur. Although I can see how still you are becoming, you can notice so many more changes, until you are aware of at least two ways your body and mind have become quieter . . . more loose . . . more still . . .*
2. **Imagery focus.** *Now with your eyes opened or closed you can picture a staircase leading down . . . I don't know how long it is, but at the bottom you can notice a door . . . As you go downward, I'll help by lightly touching your shoulders and counting backwards from 5 . . . so nod your head slightly when you are ready . . .*
3. **Deepening trance.** *With each count . . . 5 . . . (touch shoulders) you may take one or several steps down toward the door . . . because . . . 4 . . . (touch) I don't know how many steps you need to go down to be in the place where you need to be . . . And . . . 3 . . . (touch) as you get closer to the door, its size, color, and design can become clearer . . . You know that I will be waiting on the other side . . . maybe my current age or younger . . . maybe this year or far back in history . . . 2 . . . (touch). For now, just concentrate on the door, what it is made of, how to open it . . . Remember that when you join me we may be . . . someplace comfortable and expected or someplace surprising . . . but keep noticing the door now as you descend to the bottom . . . 1 . . . (touch) and when you open the door, you can describe the scene . . . if we are alone or with others . . . anything you would like to share . . .*
4. **Imagery transition.** *Now you can open the door and find me waiting for you . . . And you can tell me what you're seeing in your mind. (Partner responds.) What is the lighting like? (Partner responds.) Are there any sounds or music or fragrances? (Partner responds.) Where do you see me in the scene? (Partner responds.) How old are we? . . . How am I dressed? . . . How are you dressed? (Partner responds.) Who approaches whom? (Partner responds.)*
5. **Initiating contact.** *What do I say or do that you've always wanted . . . maybe something I've said or done before or something you didn't even know that you wanted me to say or do . . . (Partner responds.) What are we doing now? (Partner responds.) What is it like when I do that? (Partner responds.) What happens next? (Partner responds.) Do you want to show me how I'm touching you or just tell me? . . .*

The partner leading the exercise can guide the fantasy through to its completion, or it can easily drift into actual lovemaking. Sexual fantasies are a well-known way to block distracting mental chatter. Using guided imagery has the advantage of involving partners together. It may not be necessary for each person to initiate a fantasy on the same night.

### Erotic Facts

You may wonder if the meditation foreplay exercise is only for sexual adventurers or if it can rouse a lazy libido in a partner with a puny sexual appetite. A few important facts supply surprising answers and remove roadblocks to a satisfying love life.<sup>1</sup>

- **Desire vs. arousal.** A woman may have to be stimulated (mentally and physically) for 10 or 15 minutes to experience even 2 or 3 minutes of sexual desire or arousal. The older a woman is, the more stimulation she may need. Eight out of 10 women need clitoral stimulation and cannot have an orgasm during intercourse. Men can be stimulated visually or by random thoughts and feel desire *before* arousal.
- **Other circumstances add to low desire.** Early sexual abuse (only for some), poor self-esteem, poor body image, preoccupation due to grief or loss, motherhood, stress, anger, resentment, fatigue, menopause, and too much initiation by your partner.
- **The question of closeness.** Women want to feel close to have sex. Men feel close *by* having sex with their partners. It helps them feel loved, tender, accepted, appreciated, virile, and confident. It is a fallacy that sex is simply a physical release for a man.
- **Love and sex.** There are many reasons to be together—to raise children, pool financial resources, enjoy companionship, share memories, combat loneliness, and face the unknown. The endorphin high of romance always wears off and is not required for lovemaking.

A simple solution for many people who have no sexual desire is to just do it. The want-to and arousal can come after stimulation starts! Sexual activity releases the feel-good hormone (endorphin) and the feel-close hormone (oxytocin). Sex can be used to fall asleep, reconcile, prevent prostate cancer and heart attacks, and increase levels of testosterone. Women who resent unhelpful husbands can have a pleasant surprise when they make specific requests *and* start being sexual before wishes are fulfilled. Because erotic activity may be one of the only forms of meditation that Westerners regularly practice, the following ideas can help remove obstacles to this sensuous observance.

- If you and your partner have different levels of desire, agree on a minimum number of sexual encounters (not less than once a week) and stick to it! Your partner needs to show that he will *not* go over your minimum so you do not have to worry about being nagged.
- If you have to say no, say when—“I have to finish this right now, how about in a half an hour.”
- If you think your libido is gone, it’s just changed to a more subtle form. It is normal for sexual thoughts to become more fleeting with age and when life is hectic. Look for exceptions—sexual turn-ons change over time. If hormone levels are low, do not hesitate to ask your doctor if you are a candidate for testosterone injections or vaginal estrogen creams.

1. *The Sex-Starved Marriage*, by M. W. Davis, 2003, New York: Simon & Schuster, offers many solutions for couples with intimacy problems.

## Handout 1.12—Entrancing Kids: Wetting, Soiling, and Pain

Once parents understand trance, they can use everyday challenges to help children. Traumas are great opportunities to focus attention by observing what is happening (O); predicting positive outcomes (P); and offering suggestion and direction (D). This initiates a calming process:

- **State the truth.** *That's an awful boo-boo. It must hurt terribly (O) . . . It will keep right on hurting . . . And you really want it to stop (P).*
- **Predict change.** *Maybe it will stop hurting in a little while or a couple of minutes (P).*
- **Reframe trauma as a trifle.** *Do you think there's enough blood coming out of that cut? It looks like the good, red strong kind, not the bluish weak kind (O). I wonder if it will leave the right pink color on the tissue when we dab it with the cut cleaner (P). Is it swelling just right? (O/P) It's too bad that cut won't take very many stitches . . . so you can be proud (D).*

Drawing pictures is a natural way to begin the first step of starting trances with imagery. The problem of bedwetting in children over 5 offers an excellent example of how to make the transition from drawing to trance imagery. \*Step 4 makes use of a type of Kegel exercise in which people stop and start the flow of urine. Children should be encouraged to drink lots of fluid during the day and rewarded for delaying urination in order to stretch their bladders. Use the following scripts with young people:

Preparing  
for Trance  
Through  
Drawing

1. **Drawing to enhance body understanding.** First, we need to draw the part that pumps blood all over the body—the *heart*. Then, we draw the washers (filters) that clean out the blood—the *kidneys*. Next, we draw the bag where the water (pee, urine) that was cleaned out of the blood gets stored—the *bladder*. Now, that bladder needs a gate to let out the urine into the tube that goes outside the body. Finally, we need to draw the part of the body that is the boss of the whole operation—the *brain* and the nerves that connect the brain to the bladder.
2. **Using the drawing to further understanding.** I wonder how you know when you have to pee. The bladder says to the brain, *I'm full*. And what do you think the brain says back? *I'm busy now, so remember to stretch and keep the gate closed*. Or it says, *That's fine, I'll send a message to the legs to get to the potty . . . and when you get there, I'll tell the gate it can open up and let the pee in the toilet where it belongs*.
3. **Suggestions for scripts that reduce bedwetting.** Do the brain and bladder keep talking to each other when you're sleeping? When the bladder remembers that the brain is always paying attention, what will it say? *I'm full*. Then, what will the brain say? —*I'll wake up the rest of you so you can get to that toilet, open up the water gate, let the pee out, and walk back to a nice, warm, comfortable bed*. Or, *You've got plenty of room left in that bladder after all the stretching it's been doing, so just keep the gate closed for the rest of the night*.
4. **Imagery or trance practice during the day.** Now, you can use your daydreaming, imagination, or pretending to see and hear how your brain and bladder talk to each other. Your brain might be telling your bladder, *Just hold that pee a little longer so you'll keep stretching out*. Can you see/feel the bladder stretching? Or your brain might say, *\*Close and open that gate while you're peeing so the gate will get strong enough to hold the pee all night*. Watch in your mind how the gate can close to stop pee and then open to finish peeing.
5. **Trance practice before bed.** As you sink down comfortably in your bed, you can hear your brain saying to your bladder, *Be sure to let me know when you're feeling full . . . I'll either wake up your legs so they can get you to the bathroom or I'll remind you to keep the gate closed and stretch just enough to get through the night . . .* Don't fall asleep until your brain and bladder have made all their plans.

## Two Additional Problems

There is no limit to the number of childhood problems that can be addressed through drawings for trance imagery. Children should make their own drawings even if these are physiologically inaccurate. The following examples can stimulate parents' imagination to help their children with the soiling, pain, or other unique problems:

### Soiling<sup>1</sup>

- **Draw pictures of the “food tube”** with the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, bowel, and “bowel gate” (anal sphincter). Draw the brain with nerves connecting it to the bowel.
- **Draw pictures of the problem.** (A) a bowel gate that gets tight when a person feels angry or tense; (B) a bowel stretched by too much poop (feces) that can't send messages to the brain when it is full; (C) poop becoming hard (impacted) when the gate doesn't open often enough; (D) some of the poop seeping around the impaction and out the gate when the bowel is too full.
- **Draw pictures of how the problem gets fixed.** (A) stool softeners making the poop mushy enough to get out the gate; (B) a bowel gate that can open and close easily, even when a person is tense; (C) a bowel that is big enough to hold poop but not so stretchy that it forgets to send messages to the brain. Cut an extra hole in a balloon. Push mud or peanut butter in it. Notice what amount can easily be squeezed out.
- **Suggest a dialogue between the brain and bowel.** The bowel says, *I'm full.* The brain responds, *I'll relax the bowel gate so the poop can come out.*
- **Imagery or trance practice.** See the full bowel sending alerts to the brain. Watch the brain sending messages that make the gate relax and open wide.

### Pain Control for Shots

- **Draw pictures** of nerves bringing messages to the brain from all parts of the body. Draw pictures of *nerve-numbers* or switches (endorphins) that cut off the ouches before they reach the part in the brain that makes people feel.
- **Suggest a dialogue between the nerves and the brain.** The nerves say, *There's a big needle headed straight for my arm.* The brain replies, *I'll send in some nerve numbers to your arm so you don't feel any ouches.*
- **Imagery or trance practice.** Draw a circle several times around the part of your child's arm where he or she will be given a shot. Say: *Look at your brows until your eyes close and imagine the nerve-numbers coming to switch off the ouches. . . . The circle gets number and number each time I draw.* Then pinch the numb part so children can feel how well their off switches work before they face the real situation. Remind children to look up and watch their nerve-numbers during an actual situation.

1. *Sammy the Elephant*, by J. C. Mills, 2005, and *Clocks and Clouds*, by M. Galvin, 2007, Washington, DC: Magination Press, are stories that aid imagery and help children overcome bedwetting and soiling.

## Handout 1.13—Bedtime Trances for Tots

Children who can imagine and daydream are old enough to experience trance. Because trance is such a natural phenomenon, even parents who have not had special training can safely help their children relax by using hypnotic techniques of focusing on imagery, intensifying observation, and identifying trance cues. It is only necessary to use language that confuses the child's intentional mind while being age appropriate:

1. **Suggest an image.** *You know how during daydreams you can pretend to be wherever you want and still be where you are . . . If you started to imagine something right now, only you would know what it was. Even if you were petting a kitten, going down an escalator, talking to a horse, floating, flying, or something else, no one would know what you see in your mind . . . And while you are daydreaming, pretending, or imagining, make sure it's fun because you are the boss of your imagination.*
2. **Become observant.** *Just notice what you see in your imagination—Who is with you? Are you alone, with friends, family, or animals? Notice where you are—whether you're inside or outside . . . Is the weather hot, or warm, in-between, or snowy? Hear the sounds in your fun place—people talking, music, snow falling, or even how something smells or tastes so good.*
3. **Identify trance cues.** *You can close your eyes or keep them open until they want to close while you just look at something carefully . . . And even though I don't know what you are discovering, I can see what a good job you're doing of concentrating . . . You've probably already noticed how smooth the muscles in your face can be, how your jaw wants to drop, how your breathing is slower, and that's because you're doing this exactly right.*
4. **Deepen trance.** *Since you and your brain are the boss of your body, you can make yourself even more comfortable . . . Your body already knows so well how to let go . . . It even does it a little more each time you breathe out . . . Just notice how your shoulders drop . . . I can see that . . . And I bet your imagination doesn't stop you from saying, 'Calm' or 'limp' or, some other quiet word with your inside thinking every time you breathe out . . . So you can just notice how good it feels to be still inside.*

If the preceding script seems too formal, it can be broken down into simple activities until you build confidence in yourself to help your child relax.

### Relaxation Activities

- **Massage and rocking** are methods of relaxation that even soothe babies.
- **Rag doll game.** Pick up a child's arm or leg and drop it. Children must let their limbs flop rather than putting them down themselves. If they have difficulty with this, shake their arm or leg a little or have them practice on you.
- **Tense and relax.** Have children tighten themselves into a little ball. Tell them to squeeze tighter and tighter. When they cannot squeeze anymore, tell them to let go all at once. Then play the rag doll game while they lie limply on the floor.
- **Staring game.** Tell children to stare at a shiny object as hard as they can. Ask them to stare so hard that their eyes want to close. Challenge them to keep staring and not lose concentration while you pass your hand in front of their eyes.
- **Blow bubbles** while children are lying in bed. Tell them to watch the biggest bubble and notice just where it pops. Children can count the number of bubbles or how long bubbles "live." They can imagine bubbles carrying away any upset feelings and pretend that every time a bubble pops, bad feelings disappear.
- **Pretending.** Have children pretend they are melting ice cubes. Ask what it feels like to melt and if they get warmer. They can also pretend to be napping kittens.
- **Breathing.** Hold a feather in front of children's noses and ask them to make it move with their normal breathing. They can make sounds and sighs as they breathe to see if that moves the feather more. Rest a stuffed animal on their tummies and ask them to make it move just by breathing.

- **Word association.** Tell children to say the first word that pops into their minds after you say a word. If you say *white*, they might say *black*. Use calming words like, *slow*, *still*, *peaceful*, or *silent*. Add your own associations to theirs. Take turns repeating and associating: *Calm-quiet, quiet-still, still-lake, lake-water, water-wet . . .* Ask children to pick the word that makes them feel the most relaxed and to think that word every time they breathe out for 1 minute.

### Going-to-Sleep Game

After regular routines of bathing and reading books, the following directions and script can help the most resistant children drift into dream sleep. Make it clear that after the bedtime routine, children can have their bedroom doors left open and nightlights on as long as they do not get out of bed or call parents for help. If they do leave their bedroom or pester parents, the door will be closed (or light turned off) for *only* a minute or two and then immediately opened. If children claim they do not care if their door is closed, open it anyway after a minute. They are probably trying to *act* brave, and the closed door will intensify anxiety.

1. **Side-to-side eye movements** simulate the rapid eye movements (REMs) that happen during dreams. Have children follow your hand, a small toy, or a plastic glitter wand while you move it from one side of their field of vision to the other for about 10 passes. If they are too young to track an object, alternately tap the outside of each eye. Say, *Follow my hand to help your eyes remember how they move when they dream.*
2. **Toe-to-forehead eye rolls** trigger automatic eye closure that aids deep relaxation. Have children hold their heads still while watching your hand or wand move over their tummies and past their eyebrows. Say, *Keep looking up at my hand until your eyes get so droopy that they remember to close all by themselves.*
3. Scripts for **Imagery focus and deepening.** *As soon as your eyes close you can find yourself at the top of a long staircase that leads to your special dream room. You begin to walk down those steps, and I don't even know how many there are . . . Take a step down each time you breathe out and get a closer look at your dream door . . .*
4. **Rag doll game for deep muscle relaxation.** Each time you mention walking *down* a step, pick up the child's leg and let it flop. Children should have experience with the rag doll game described earlier. Give several suggestions, like *One step at a time, down . . . down . . . so many steps before you reach the door of your dream room . . .*
5. **Imagery focus to intensify observing.** Continue with the above suggestions. Say, *And now that you can see the door to your dream room more clearly, notice what it's made of tonight, what color it is, where the handle is, how big it is . . . Will you have to shrink to fit in it or grow like Alice in Wonderland to reach the handle? Will you need a key? And when you're ready to go in the door, you can let your head nod so slightly . . .*
6. **Script to stimulate dream sleep.** *And you go through the door to your dream place . . . wondering where it will be and what you will do tonight . . . Know that you can be anywhere and do anything that you love to do and not even know when your daydream ends and your sleep dream starts.*