

Hypnotherapy With Restless, Easily Distracted Clients by **Dr. Laura De Giorgio, Ph.D.**

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Every once in a while I have clients who would like to practice self-hypnosis, but have difficulty relaxing and focusing on suggestions.

Most books on self-hypnosis advise that a person finds a comfortable place where he will not be disturbed, sit or lie down, relax and engage in visualizing the desired outcome. This method works great for some people. Others may encounter two challenges. The first one is relaxing: either they find it difficult to remain motionless and focused for extended periods of time or as soon as they are able to relax, they drift off to sleep.

What I discovered works great with a restless, easily distracted client is suggesting activities that help him to engage all, or most of his senses, on a desired outcome through tangible metaphors and trance-inducing activities. Instead of having a client sit down, relax and focus, the client enacts his desired outcome through a ritual action.

The form and extent of ritual action and tangible metaphors used will depend mainly on the client's background and preferences. It may range from a simple action of listing one's obstacles on a piece of paper and burning it, or planting a seed representing a growth and development of a new project or a new stage in life, to a full-fledged ritual with appropriate music that helps the client elicit emotions associated with the accomplishment of a goal, using scents (oils, perfumes, incense), candles, etc.

The client may also engage in trance dancing allowing his body to express the energy of his outcome and thus, in a way, embodying his outcome. On the other hand, trance may be induced through any other rhythmic physical activity such as walking, swimming, riding a bicycle etc. The possibilities are virtually limitless.

While during a traditional hypnotherapy session, a hypnotherapist would guide a client through a trance-induction, deepeners, providing suggestions supporting the achievement of the desired outcome and bringing the client back to a state of full awareness, in a ritual setting the shift into a trance state may occur by any of the following: a client may dress into a robe or clothes that will be a tangible metaphor for a trance state, putting on a special perfume, lighting a candle, ringing the bell, or anything else the client may find appropriate. These tangible metaphors become anchors or triggers, impressed upon the client's subconscious. A sniff of perfume, for example, now bringing immediately all the feelings we associated with it - how useful can it be taking a whiff and bringing out that state of confidence just before an important meeting?

Any act the client routinely performs in his daily life may be used purposefully for impressing an idea upon the client's subconscious and assisting him in creating a desired change. An act of washing or having a shower may be used to symbolically represent getting rid of unwanted conditions in his life. An act of eating, where the food to be consumed symbolically represents a desired outcome, may be viewed as a symbolic ingestion or embodiment of a particular quality the client would like to express.

The subconscious mind is very receptive to symbolic imagery. A client who has difficulty focusing may cut out an image of his desired outcome or pick out an object that symbolically represents his outcome. An object does not need to have any meaning to anyone else, except to the client.

These tangible metaphors or tools are simply learning aids that may be discarded once the client has trained his mind.

Most of us grow up conditioned to believe that what we can touch, see, smell is "real" and what we imagine is not real. This belief becomes impressed upon our subconscious minds, too. Thus, handling a real object may produce faster results, then just imagining an outcome, especially for those clients who did not have any previous mind-training. Not only that these ritual activities work extremely well, but they are also a lot of fun and they stimulate client's creative expression. My clients have tremendously enjoyed the process.

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