

Understanding Hypnosis

What It Is, What It Isn't & What to Expect



A clear, practical introduction to clinical hypnotherapy - without the stage-show myths.

CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPY | MIND-BODY CONNECTION | PERSONAL GROWTH

Educational guide for prospective and current clients of Brooke Ashley MindWorks.

First, Let's Separate Stage Hypnosis from Clinical Hypnotherapy

Many people first encounter hypnosis through entertainment. Stage hypnosis is designed for an audience: volunteers participate in demonstrations and routines meant to be entertaining, surprising, or educational. Clinical hypnotherapy has a very different purpose. It is a private, goal-focused process in which hypnosis is used as part of a professional helping relationship to support personal development and behavioral change goals.

The hypnotic state itself is not a magical power that changes depending on the setting. What changes is the **purpose, context, consent, and way the techniques are used**. In a clinical hypnotherapy setting, the focus is not performance. The focus is you, the goal you have chosen, and a process tailored to the way you respond.

You remain an active participant. You can hear, think, communicate, accept or reject suggestions, and stop the process. Clinical hypnotherapy is collaborative - not mind control.

What Hypnosis Is

Hypnosis can be understood as a state of focused attention and increased receptivity to suggestion. In the approach used at Brooke Ashley MindWorks, the first session also includes education about how the conscious and subconscious processes can influence habits, reactions, expectations, and learned patterns.

The conscious mind is the part of your thinking you are actively aware of - analyzing, planning, reasoning, and making decisions. The subconscious is a useful way of describing learned associations, habits, emotional responses, expectations, and automatic patterns that can operate with less deliberate thought.

Hypnotherapy uses focused attention, relaxation, imagery, and suggestion to work with the goal you consciously want while engaging the automatic patterns connected to it.

Important: Hypnosis is not sleep, unconsciousness, a truth serum, or a guarantee of recovered memories. Experiences or images that arise in hypnosis can be inaccurate or symbolic and should not automatically be treated as factual.

Why the First Session Is Different

Your first session is not simply 'close your eyes and get hypnotized.' It lays the foundation for the work that follows. We spend time talking, explaining hypnosis, learning how you respond to suggestion, and creating an experience that fits you rather than forcing you into a one-size-fits-all script.

The sequence below reflects the clinical-hypnosis training framework I use. The exact wording and techniques can vary depending on the person and the goal.

01

Conversation & Goal Clarification

We begin with a conversation about what brought you to hypnotherapy, what you would like to be different, relevant background, what you have already tried, and any questions or concerns you have. This helps establish a clear goal and gives us a chance to determine whether the request fits within the scope of hypnotherapy.

02

Pre-Induction

Before hypnosis begins, we go over what hypnosis is, what it is not, what you may notice during the experience, and what your role will be. This is also where we address misconceptions - especially fears about losing control, being asleep, or being unable to respond.

03

Theory of Mind

I explain the model I use for understanding conscious and subconscious processes and how learned information, habits, associations, and automatic responses can become established. The goal is to give you a simple framework for understanding why knowing what you want to change does not always make an automatic pattern disappear.

04

Suggestibility Testing

People process communication and respond to suggestion differently. Simple suggestibility exercises help me observe how you respond to language and direction so I can adapt the induction and the wording used during hypnosis. These are not pass/fail tests and they are not a measure of intelligence, willpower, or how 'good' you are at hypnosis.

Your First Hypnosis Experience

05

Induction

The induction is the transition into hypnosis. Depending on how you respond, I may use an approach involving focused attention, imagery, physical responses such as arm raising, or another appropriate induction. The purpose is to narrow and focus attention while allowing you to follow the experience comfortably.

06

Deepening

Once hypnosis has begun, additional techniques may be used to deepen your focus. The training framework I use includes techniques such as reactional deepening and heavy-light exercises. The exact technique is less important than how you respond to it.

07

Progressive Relaxation

A guided progressive relaxation helps you settle more fully into the experience. Attention is directed through the body in a structured way, allowing physical tension to soften while attention becomes increasingly focused. You do not have to become perfectly relaxed for hypnosis to occur.

08

Suggestions Centered on Your Goal

Once you are comfortably focused, suggestions are selected around the goal discussed at the beginning of the session. Because people respond differently to communication, suggestions can be phrased more directly or more inferentially depending on what fits you.

09

Returning to Normal Alertness

At the end of the hypnotic portion, you are guided back to ordinary alertness. We then check in about what you noticed, answer questions, and discuss what may make sense next. A first session may also include a suggestion or brief exercise related to returning to hypnosis more easily in a future session.

You are not expected to perform hypnosis correctly. Your job is simply to listen, respond naturally, and communicate if you need anything.

What Does Hypnosis Feel Like?

There is no single sensation that proves hypnosis is 'working.' Some people feel very relaxed or physically heavy. Others feel light, focused, absorbed, or simply quieter internally. You may notice your breathing change, become less interested in outside distractions, experience imagery more vividly, or feel as though time passes differently. You may also feel surprisingly normal.

You can still hear my voice. You can still think. You can speak if you need to. You may notice outside sounds without needing to focus on them. None of those things automatically mean you are 'not hypnotized.'

Preparing for Your Zoom Session

Brooke Ashley MindWorks sessions are conducted privately through Zoom. Your environment matters because you want to be able to give the session your attention without worrying about being interrupted.

Choose a private, interruption-free space.

Use a room where you can close the door and reasonably expect privacy for the full appointment. Let household members know you should not be disturbed.

Set yourself up to be physically comfortable.

Use a supportive chair, recliner, couch, or other safe place where you can remain comfortable. Position yourself so your device can stay stable and you do not need to hold it.

Check Zoom and your internet before we begin.

Use a reliable connection and make sure Zoom, your camera, microphone, and speakers are working. Plug in or fully charge your device.

Use headphones only if they are comfortable.

Headphones can reduce distractions, but they are not required. Choose whatever lets you hear clearly without creating discomfort.

Reduce preventable interruptions.

Silence nonessential notifications, put pets somewhere they will be comfortable if they are likely to interrupt, and have water nearby. Use the restroom before the session.

Do not join while driving or multitasking.

You need a safe setting where you can close your eyes and focus. Do not participate while driving, operating equipment, caring for someone who requires your active attention, or doing anything else that demands alertness.

Give yourself a few minutes afterward.

If possible, avoid scheduling something demanding for the exact minute the session ends. A short transition gives you time to reorient, reflect, and ask final questions.

Before We Meet: A Few Things to Think About

You do not need a perfectly organized story. A few simple questions can help you arrive with a clearer starting point:

- What would I most like to change, improve, or understand?
 - When do I notice this habit, reaction, fear, or pattern most often?
 - What tends to happen immediately before it?
 - What have I already tried, and what happened?
 - If this began changing in the direction I want, what would I notice in everyday life?
 - What questions or concerns do I want answered before hypnosis begins?
-

Appropriate Scope & Safety

Hypnotherapy at Brooke Ashley MindWorks is intended for personal development and behavioral-change goals within the scope of hypnotherapy. It is not psychotherapy, medical treatment, psychiatric treatment, crisis intervention, diagnosis, or emergency care.

Certain medical or mental-health circumstances can make hypnosis or deep relaxation inappropriate or require consultation with an appropriately licensed healthcare professional first. If you are unsure whether hypnotherapy is appropriate for you, have been advised against hypnosis or deep relaxation, or have significant medical or mental-health concerns, discuss participation with a qualified licensed professional before beginning.

If you are experiencing an emergency, suicidal thoughts, thoughts of harming yourself or someone else, severe loss of contact with reality, or another situation requiring immediate medical or psychiatric care, hypnotherapy is not an emergency service. Contact 911, go to the nearest emergency department, or use an appropriate crisis/emergency service.

Common Questions

Will I lose control?

No. Hypnosis does not remove your ability to make choices. You remain an active participant and can communicate throughout the experience.

What if my mind keeps thinking?

That is okay. You do not need an empty mind. Thoughts can come and go while your attention continues to follow the process.

What if I don't feel deeply relaxed?

Relaxation can support the experience, but there is no required level of heaviness, stillness, or dramatic trance sensation that you must achieve.

Will I remember the session?

People generally remain aware of the experience and remember what occurred. Hypnosis does not automatically produce amnesia.

How many sessions will I need?

There is no universal number. It depends on the goal, the individual, how the person responds, and what unfolds as the work progresses.

The Main Thing to Remember

Clinical hypnotherapy is not a stage performance and it is not something you have to 'be good at.' It is a collaborative process. The first session is designed to help you understand the process, experience hypnosis in a way tailored to you, and begin working with the goal that brought you there.

You are allowed to ask questions. You are allowed to say when something does not feel right. You are allowed to be curious. And you do not have to know exactly what to expect before you begin.

BROOKE ASHLEY MINDWORKS

Clinical Hypnotherapy | Mind-Body Connection | Personal Growth

This guide is for general educational purposes only. It does not provide medical or mental-health diagnosis or treatment and is not a substitute for care from an appropriately licensed professional.