

# **Hypnosis as a Therapeutic Tool for Abuse Survivors**

By

Curtis Brown



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## **Hypnosis as a Therapeutic**

### **Tool for Abuse Survivors**

For individuals who have experienced abuse, the path to healing often requires exploring multiple therapeutic approaches to find what resonates and provides relief. Among these options, hypnosis—often misunderstood due to its portrayal in entertainment—has emerged as a legitimate and effective tool in trauma recovery. When practiced by qualified professionals within a trauma-informed framework, hypnosis can help survivors access inner resources, process traumatic memories safely, and rebuild a sense of control that abuse had taken away.

### **Dispelling Myths About Hypnosis**

Before exploring how hypnosis can benefit abuse survivors, it's essential to address common misconceptions that might prevent people from considering this therapeutic approach. The stage hypnosis seen in entertainment has created a distorted image of what clinical hypnosis actually involves.

Hypnosis is not mind control. During hypnotic states, individuals remain fully aware and in control. They cannot be made to do anything against their will or values. A person in hypnosis can hear everything being said, can refuse suggestions, and can emerge from the hypnotic state at any time they choose. For abuse survivors whose autonomy was violated, this distinction is crucial—hypnosis is actually about enhancing personal control, not surrendering it.

Hypnosis is also not sleep, despite the common imagery of people appearing to be unconscious. Instead, it's a state of focused attention and heightened suggestibility, similar to becoming absorbed in a

book, movie, or daydream. In fact, most people experience light hypnotic states naturally throughout their day without realizing it.

Furthermore, hypnosis doesn't create perfect recall of memories. While it can facilitate access to memories and emotions, the notion that hypnosis can retrieve perfectly accurate repressed memories has been thoroughly debunked by research. Memories accessed under hypnosis are subject to the same reconstructive processes as all human memory and can be influenced by suggestion. Ethical practitioners understand these limitations and work with memories as emotional truths rather than courtroom evidence.

### **How Hypnosis Works for Trauma Recovery**

Hypnosis induces what therapists call a "trance state"—a natural condition of focused awareness where the critical, analytical mind becomes quieter and the subconscious mind becomes more accessible. In this state, people often experience a sense of deep relaxation and openness to positive suggestions while maintaining full awareness and control.

For trauma survivors, this state can be therapeutically valuable for several reasons. First, the relaxed focus of hypnosis can provide temporary relief from the hypervigilance and anxiety that often plague those with trauma histories. This physiological calming can help regulate the nervous system, which trauma tends to keep stuck in fight-or-flight mode.

Second, the hypnotic state allows for work with the subconscious mind, where traumatic material is often stored. Trauma tends to bypass the logical, narrative-making parts of the brain and lodge in more primitive areas associated with emotion, sensation, and implicit memory. Hypnosis provides a bridge to these deeper levels of consciousness, allowing survivors to process traumatic material that might be difficult to access through talk therapy alone.

Third, hypnosis enhances the effectiveness of therapeutic suggestions and visualizations. In the hypnotic state, the mind becomes more receptive to positive suggestions about safety, healing, and new ways of understanding past experiences. This receptivity can help survivors internalize new perspectives and resources more deeply than might occur in ordinary conversation.

Importantly, hypnosis for trauma should always be conducted by a licensed mental health professional with specialized training in both clinical hypnosis and trauma treatment. The approach must be gentle, paced appropriately, and always oriented toward the survivor's stability and empowerment.

### **Specific Benefits of Hypnosis for Abuse Survivors**

Hypnosis offers several particular benefits that can support the healing journey for those who have experienced abuse.

One of the most significant is the ability to modulate emotional intensity. Trauma memories often come with overwhelming emotional charge—fear, shame, rage, or helplessness so intense that survivors avoid thinking about the abuse at all. Hypnosis provides techniques for creating distance from these intense emotions, allowing survivors to process traumatic material without becoming retraumatized.

Therapists might use hypnotic suggestions to help clients imagine viewing memories on a screen, adjusting the emotional volume like a dial, or containing difficult material in an imaginary safe until they're ready to address it.

Hypnosis also facilitates the development of inner resources. Through hypnotic age progression and resource building, survivors can cultivate internal states of safety, calm, strength, and wisdom. A therapist might guide a client to imagine their wisest, most compassionate future self offering comfort and perspective to their younger, traumatized self. These hypnotic experiences can create

genuine shifts in how survivors view themselves and their capacity for healing.

For survivors struggling with somatic symptoms—chronic pain, tension, or physical sensations related to trauma—hypnosis can provide relief. The mind-body connection becomes particularly accessible during hypnosis, allowing for suggestions that reduce pain, release muscle tension, or change the sensory experience of trauma-related physical symptoms. Many survivors carry trauma in their bodies long after the abuse has ended, and hypnosis offers a pathway to address this embodied trauma.

Hypnosis can also help with specific trauma symptoms like nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and dissociation. Through hypnotic suggestion, survivors can learn to change nightmare content, redirect intrusive thoughts, or become more grounded and present when they notice themselves dissociating. These skills extend beyond hypnotic sessions, giving survivors practical tools for managing symptoms in daily life.

Another powerful application is what's called "ego strengthening"—using hypnotic suggestion to reinforce positive aspects of self, build confidence, and internalize messages of worthiness and capability. Abuse often damages self-esteem and self-concept. The heightened suggestibility of hypnosis can help survivors absorb and believe positive truths about themselves that might feel false or inaccessible in normal consciousness.

## **Hypnotic Techniques Used in Trauma Therapy**

Several specific hypnotic techniques have proven particularly valuable for abuse survivors when applied by trained professionals.

Hypnotic relaxation and safe place development creates a foundation for trauma work. The therapist guides the client into a relaxed hypnotic state and then facilitates the creation of an imaginary safe

place—a location where the client feels completely secure, peaceful, and protected. This safe place becomes an internal resource that clients can return to during hypnosis sessions or when feeling overwhelmed in daily life. The multisensory vividness of hypnotic imagery makes this safe place feel more real and accessible than if simply imagined in ordinary consciousness.

Age regression is a technique where, under hypnosis, clients revisit younger versions of themselves. This isn't about recovering repressed memories but about providing comfort, support, and new perspective to the part of oneself that experienced trauma. A therapist might help a client imagine their adult self approaching their child self with compassion, explaining that the abuse wasn't their fault, and providing the protection and care that was absent during the actual abuse. These corrective emotional experiences can be profoundly healing.

Parts therapy recognizes that trauma often creates fragmentation in the psyche. Survivors may feel divided between different parts of themselves—a fearful part, an angry part, a part that's still stuck in the trauma. Hypnosis facilitates communication between these parts, helping them work together rather than against each other. This integration can reduce internal conflict and help survivors feel more whole.

Post-hypnotic suggestions are instructions given during hypnosis that continue to influence experience after the hypnotic session ends. A therapist might suggest, for example, that whenever the client places their hand on their heart, they'll feel a sense of calm and safety. Or that intrusive thoughts will begin to fade more quickly, like clouds passing through the sky. These suggestions leverage the heightened receptivity of hypnosis to create lasting positive changes.

Reframing techniques use hypnosis to help survivors develop new perspectives on their experiences. While never minimizing what

happened or suggesting abuse was acceptable, reframing can help survivors recognize their resilience, understand that the abuse says nothing about their worth, and see themselves as survivors rather than victims. The receptive state of hypnosis can help these new perspectives feel more real and believable.

## **What to Expect in Hypnotherapy Sessions**

Understanding what actually happens during hypnotherapy can help survivors feel more comfortable considering this approach. A typical session begins with a conversation between therapist and client to identify goals, address concerns, and establish what will happen during hypnosis. This collaborative planning ensures the client feels safe and maintains control throughout.

The hypnotic induction follows—this is simply the process of guiding someone into a hypnotic state. There are many induction methods, but most involve progressive relaxation, focused attention on the therapist's voice or on mental imagery, and suggestions for deepening relaxation. This process typically takes five to fifteen minutes and feels pleasant and calming, similar to that drowsy state before falling asleep but with maintained awareness.

Once in hypnosis, the therapeutic work begins. This might involve exploring memories, building resources, practicing new responses to triggers, or receiving suggestions for healing and growth. Throughout this process, the client remains aware and can communicate with the therapist, answer questions, and redirect if anything feels uncomfortable.

The session concludes with reorientation, where the therapist guides the client back to normal waking consciousness. Most people emerge from hypnosis feeling relaxed, refreshed, and often reporting that time seemed to pass very quickly. The therapist will typically spend time debriefing the experience, answering questions, and discussing how insights from hypnosis might apply to the client's daily life.



## **Important Considerations and Precautions**

While hypnosis can be valuable for many abuse survivors, it's not appropriate for everyone or every situation. Certain conditions require particular caution or may contraindicate hypnosis entirely.

Individuals with severe dissociative disorders, active psychosis, or certain personality disorders may not be good candidates for hypnosis, at least not without extensive preparation and specialized expertise from the therapist. For these individuals, the risk of destabilization or increased dissociation may outweigh potential benefits.

Hypnosis for trauma should always occur within the context of a broader therapeutic relationship. It's not a standalone treatment but rather a tool that enhances other therapeutic work. Trust and safety in the therapeutic relationship are prerequisites for effective hypnotic trauma work.

The pacing of hypnotic trauma work is critical. Rushing to process traumatic material before a client is stable and resourced can be harmful. Ethical practitioners spend considerable time building resources, establishing safety, and developing the therapeutic relationship before using hypnosis to work directly with traumatic memories.

Survivors should also be aware that some hypnotic work can bring up difficult emotions and memories. While skilled therapists work to keep clients within their "window of tolerance"—not so overwhelmed that they're retraumatized, but challenged enough for healing to occur—some temporary increase in distress can be part of the process. This is why ongoing support, safety planning, and communication between sessions are essential.

## **Finding a Qualified Hypnotherapist**

For abuse survivors interested in exploring hypnosis, finding a qualified practitioner is essential. Look for a licensed mental health professional (psychologist, licensed clinical social worker, licensed professional counselor, or psychiatrist) who has completed specialized training in clinical hypnosis from a recognized organization. Additional training in trauma treatment, such as EMDR or sensorimotor psychotherapy, indicates the therapist understands trauma-specific issues.

During an initial consultation, don't hesitate to ask about the therapist's training, their approach to working with trauma, and how they use hypnosis specifically with abuse survivors. A competent, ethical practitioner will welcome these questions and should be able to explain their approach clearly. Trust your instincts—if something feels off or if the therapist seems dismissive of your concerns, it's okay to look for someone else.

## **The Integration of Hypnosis with Other Approaches**

Hypnosis works best when integrated with other evidence-based trauma treatments. Many therapists combine hypnosis with approaches like cognitive-behavioral therapy, EMDR, somatic experiencing, or Internal Family Systems therapy. This integrative approach allows for flexibility in meeting each survivor's unique needs.

Some survivors find that hypnosis opens doors that other approaches couldn't quite reach, while others use it primarily for symptom management alongside deeper work in other modalities. There's no single right way to incorporate hypnosis into healing—what matters is finding an approach that feels right and proves helpful for you.

## **Moving Toward Healing**

Hypnosis represents one of many possible pathways toward healing from abuse. For some survivors, it becomes a central therapeutic tool that facilitates profound transformation. For others, it serves as a helpful adjunct that enhances other therapeutic work. Still others may try it and find it's not the right fit, and that's perfectly okay.

What makes hypnosis particularly valuable for many abuse survivors is its emphasis on accessing inner resources and strength. Rather than seeing survivors as broken and needing to be fixed, hypnotic approaches often work from the assumption that healing capacity already exists within. Hypnosis simply helps survivors access what's already there—their own wisdom, resilience, and capacity for recovery.

The journey of healing from abuse is deeply personal and often requires courage, patience, and self-compassion. Hypnosis, when practiced ethically by qualified professionals, can be a powerful ally in this journey, offering tools to process the past, manage the present, and create a future that's no longer defined by trauma. For survivors willing to explore this approach with proper guidance and support, hypnosis can open unexpected pathways toward reclaiming peace, power, and wholeness.

## **Self-Guided Script for Reclaiming**

### **Focus and Relieving Anxiety**

*This script is designed to be read slowly to yourself, either silently or aloud. Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed for 10-15 minutes. You can sit or lie down—whatever feels most comfortable. Remember, you are always in control and can stop at any time. You might want to read through the script once before using it, or record yourself reading it to play back.*

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Begin by settling into a comfortable position. Adjust your body until you feel as comfortable as possible. You might shift your shoulders, uncross your legs, or place your hands gently in your lap or by your sides. Take a moment to feel the surface beneath you—the chair supporting your weight, or the floor beneath your feet.

Know that for the next few minutes, you have permission to step away from everything else. The tasks can wait. The worries can wait. Right now, this time is yours.

Take a slow, gentle breath in through your nose... and release it softly through your mouth. There's no need to force anything or breathe in any particular way. Simply allow your breath to find its own natural rhythm. Notice the air moving in... and moving out.

As you continue breathing naturally, begin to notice your body. Without judgment, simply observe. Perhaps you notice tension in your shoulders, or tightness in your jaw. Maybe your hands are clenched, or your stomach feels tight. Whatever you notice is perfectly okay. You don't need to change anything yet—just notice with kindness and curiosity.

Now, with your next breath, imagine breathing in calm, peaceful energy—like a gentle wave of relaxation flowing into your body. As you exhale, imagine releasing tension, worry, and stress. Breathing in calm... breathing out tension. Continue this for a few breaths at your own pace.

With each exhale, you might notice your body beginning to soften, just a little. Your shoulders might drop slightly. Your jaw might unclench. Your breath might deepen naturally. Allow this softening to happen in its own time, in its own way.

Now, bring your attention to your feet. Notice your feet wherever they are—touching the floor, resting on a surface, or perhaps crossed at the ankles. Imagine warm, golden light beginning to glow softly around your feet, bringing with it a sense of relaxation and ease. This warm light doesn't force anything to change—it simply invites your feet to release any tension they might be holding.

Feel that gentle warmth spreading through your feet and ankles. Any tightness begins to melt away, like ice cream softening in the sun. Your feet become heavy and relaxed, supported and at ease.

Now that warm, golden light begins to flow upward, like honey spreading slowly and gently. It moves up into your lower legs—your calves and shins—bringing that same quality of ease and relaxation. The muscles in your lower legs soften and let go. You might notice them feeling heavier, more relaxed, more at peace.

The light continues its gentle journey upward, flowing into your knees and thighs. All the muscles in your upper legs—the muscles that carry you through your day, that hold so much effort—begin to soften and release. With each breath, your legs become heavier, more relaxed, sinking comfortably into whatever supports them.

That warm, comforting light now flows up into your hips and lower back. This area often holds so much tension from sitting, standing, and moving through life. Imagine that tension dissolving like sugar in

warm water. Your lower back softens, your hips relax, and your entire lower body feels heavy, comfortable, and deeply at ease.

The light continues upward into your belly and chest. As it does, you might notice your breathing becoming even more natural and easy. Your belly softens. The muscles around your ribs release. Your chest opens gently, allowing breath to flow freely and effortlessly. With each breath, you're breathing in calm and breathing out anything you no longer need to hold onto.

Now the warm light spreads into your upper back and shoulders. These areas often carry the weight of stress and worry. Imagine setting down that heavy backpack you didn't even realize you were wearing. Feel your shoulders dropping away from your ears. The muscles in your upper back spread and soften like butter melting. All that tension simply flows away, down your arms and out through your fingertips.

The light flows down your arms now—upper arms, elbows, forearms—bringing that same quality of deep relaxation. Your arms become heavy and comfortable, resting wherever they are. The warmth reaches your hands, and your fingers naturally uncurl and soften. Any remaining tension simply releases and flows away.

Now bring your attention to your neck and throat. This bridge between head and body often holds stress and tightness. Imagine that warm, golden light surrounding your neck like a soft, comfortable scarf. All the muscles in your neck soften and lengthen. Your throat relaxes. Your head feels perfectly balanced and at ease.

The light now flows up into your face and head. Your jaw—which may have been clenched without you even knowing—softly releases. Your teeth naturally separate slightly, and all the muscles in your jaw let go. Your cheeks soften. The small muscles around your eyes release. Your forehead smooths, and any lines of worry or concern simply melt away.

Even your scalp relaxes, and you might notice a pleasant tingling sensation across the top of your head as any last bit of tension dissolves completely.

Take a moment now to notice your entire body—from the top of your head down to the tips of your toes. Heavy, comfortable, relaxed, and at peace. You are safe in this moment. You are exactly where you need to be.

Now, as your body rests in this state of comfortable relaxation, turn your attention to your mind. Notice your thoughts—they may be racing, jumping from one concern to another, or they may already be quieter. Whatever you notice is okay.

Imagine that your mind is like the sky, and your thoughts are like clouds passing through. Some clouds are light and wispy, floating by easily. Others are darker, heavier, moving more slowly. But they are all just clouds, and they are all passing. You are not the clouds—you are the vast, clear sky that holds them all.

As you watch your thoughts like clouds, you might notice that some drift away on their own. Others linger for a while before moving on. You don't need to push the clouds away or hold onto them. Simply observe them passing, knowing that no cloud is permanent, no thought lasts forever.

And as you observe, you might begin to notice small gaps between the thoughts—moments of quiet, like patches of blue sky between the clouds. These moments might be brief, just a second or two. That's perfect. These are moments of clarity and peace, and they're always there, waiting for you to notice them.

With each breath, those gaps might grow slightly wider. More blue sky appears. Your mind begins to feel clearer, more spacious, more calm. The constant chatter starts to quiet, not because you're forcing it to stop, but because you've found a place of peace beneath the noise.

Now, imagine a soft, gentle light in the center of your chest—right around your heart area. This is your inner light, your center, your place of calm and wisdom. This light has always been there, even when anxiety and stress made it hard to notice. But it's always been there, steady and constant.

As you focus on this light, it begins to grow brighter and warmer. With each breath, it expands outward, filling your chest with warmth and peace. This light represents your ability to focus, your capacity for calm, your strength and resilience.

Say these words to yourself, either silently or aloud:

"I am safe in this moment."

"I release what I cannot control."

"My mind is clear and focused."

"I have the strength to face what comes."

"Peace is my natural state."

"I am exactly where I need to be."

Feel the truth of these words settling into your body and mind. You don't have to force yourself to believe them—simply allow them to be present, like seeds planted in fertile soil. With time and attention, they will grow.

Take a few moments now to simply rest in this peaceful state. Your body is relaxed, your mind is clearer, and you are centered in the present moment. There's nowhere you need to go, nothing you need to do. For these few moments, simply be.

[Pause here for 1-2 minutes of silence]

In a moment, you'll begin to return to your normal waking awareness, but you'll bring this sense of calm and focus with you. The peace you've cultivated doesn't have to stay here in this practice—it can flow with you into your day.



Begin to deepen your breathing slightly. Take a fuller breath in... and a longer breath out. Notice the surface beneath you again. Wiggle your fingers and toes gently. Roll your shoulders if that feels good.

Know that you can return to this state of calm and focus whenever you need to. The peace you've experienced is not separate from you—it's part of you, always accessible, always available.

When you're ready, slowly open your eyes if they were closed. Take a moment to orient yourself to your surroundings. Notice colors, shapes, and objects around you. Allow yourself to transition gently back into activity.

As you move forward with your day, you carry with you a renewed sense of focus and calm. Your mind is clearer, your body is more relaxed, and you have the resources you need to handle whatever comes next.

You are capable. You are calm. You are focused.

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*Note: Use this script as often as you need it—daily, multiple times per day, or whenever you notice anxiety rising or focus wavering. With regular practice, you'll find it easier to access this calm, focused state, and you may naturally begin to shorten or personalize the script to suit your needs.*

## **Curtis Brown – Author, Strategist, Creator**

Curtis Brown is a versatile writer and strategist who has worked with everyone from Fortune 500 giants to small, family-run businesses. With a background in marketing, research, and content creation, Curtis is passionate about helping individuals and entrepreneurs create lasting change from the inside out.

As co-founder of [Mandie's Safe Haven](#), Curtis partners with his wife, Mandie Brown, to provide resources and tools for emotional healing, personal transformation, and sustainable business growth.

Curtis writes across genres—including business, self-help, fantasy, and personal development—with a focus on mindset, mastery, and purpose-driven action. His mission is to simplify powerful ideas and deliver them in a practical, inspiring way for readers who are ready to elevate their lives.

**“Knowledge is not power... unless manifested.”**

~ Curtis Brown

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