

HYPNOSIS HYPE

Let's dispel some common myths about hypnosis:

- Patients are never “out” or asleep—they are submerged in a state of deep relaxation.
- You cannot make a hypnotized person do something against their will—a subject has to be willing to be hypnotized and has to have consenting attitude and trust towards the hypnotist in order for the suggestion to work.
- Hypnotic suggestion does not last forever. It wanes after some days or weeks, unless it gets reinforced by more hypnosis sessions.
- A person cannot be “stuck” in a hypnotic state indefinitely—hypnosis wanes over the course of minutes or hours. If someone uses self-hypnosis to promote sleep, he or she is just going to fall asleep, and wake up refreshed at a usual time.
- A testimony obtained by hypnosis is not admissible in the court of law. This is because it is not hard-core evidence like DNA. In hypnosis, there is too much room for imagination and make-believe.



I Tried Hypnotherapy

And here's what happened

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER

The first time I was hypnotized today, I was driving to work on autopilot and couldn't remember the last few miles of road. Many of us fall under self-hypnosis daily—watching movies, reading books, and daydreaming all count. The second time, I was reclining in hypnotherapist Kalli Matsuhashi's office, working through some anxiety that developed in my relationship—with my cat.

Being a cat dad is hard. When my girlfriend and I adopted our cat, Burrito, in December, she surveyed her surroundings and chose who her allies would (and would not) be in her strange new home. She took on a classic Garfield persona with me, demanding food, refusing to be cuddled, and ostensibly plotting my demise. With my girlfriend, she was a total Arlene—Garfield's cute-as-a-button sidekick—bursting with affection.

Burrito is a great cat. She is full of personality, lounges in adorable sun-basking positions, and even folds her legs under her body in a way that reminds me of a little tugboat. So why was she behaving like this towards me? And why did I care? I knew it was silly to let a quirky cat get under my skin, but emotions trumped logic nevertheless. This seemed like the kind of thing hypnotherapy could address.

And it is. “A good indication that hypnosis will be helpful is when someone says, ‘I know I shouldn't respond that way, or think that way, or feel that way, but I do,’” said Matsuhashi. With any luck, my feline feud would end right there in her chair.

A hypnotic trance is simply a state of relaxation and focus, similar to meditation. However, hypnosis is deeper and more goal-oriented than most meditation techniques. “You’re calming the mind down and you’re focusing,” said Matsuhashi. But contrary to popular belief, you remain in total control. No one can make you do the Macarena, quack like a duck, or anything else that would embarrass, harm, or displease you.

In the trance state, the conscious mind is subdued and the subconscious mind—where habits, memories, and feelings reside—is ripe for molding with direct suggestion and other hypnotherapy techniques. The contents of the subconscious can override conscious logic and brew up irrational fears, health issues, or unwanted habits. But with the conscious layer peeled back, a skilled hypnotist can embed suggestions directly into the subconscious and elicit positive changes, often with great success.

Before the hypnosis, Matsuhashi interviewed me to pinpoint the source of my apprehension toward Burrito. She pointed to my previous pet experience—my family adopted rescue dogs that had a crippling fear of males. Being both dog lover and male, this was problematic. Matsuhashi hypothesized that I sequestered negative memories and feelings from that experience which surfaced after adopting Burrito, causing anxiety and irrational thinking. “It sounds like there’s a little bit of rejection. You had these rescued dogs. It’s not fair to you, because you didn’t abuse them,” she said. This made sense and after Matsuhashi explained a few of her hypnotic strategies, we got down to business.

She talked me down in a big comfy recliner and I quickly relaxed. To deepen my hypnotic state, she requested that I visualize a perfect leaf with a single drop of water on it and then drew my awareness to the constrictive fabric of my sleeves and the weight of my shoes. These images and feelings didn’t crop up automatically, rather, I had to intentionally imagine them. Next, she



Burrito perches on her favorite blanket for an afternoon nap.

requested that I visualize a safe place of my choosing, where I sat next to the younger “part” of myself who was affected by my family’s rescue dogs. At Matsuhashi’s suggestion, I spoke to this “part,” soothing the rejection he felt. She asked me to validate his feelings and make him aware of the effect he has on me and Burrito. After resolving things with the younger “part” of myself, Matsuhashi transitioned into direct suggestions. “You let go of the attachment. The cat’s a cat: adorable, finicky, annoying,” she said. “You make that choice to be accepting, compassionate, and relaxed, your heart filled with love.”

She brought me out of the trance counting backwards from five. “Five, four, three, two...” Then she paused. “One. You are now awake.” Pausing before the final count is a way evaluate a patient’s suggestibility and willingness to follow direction. If they aren’t suggestible, they will likely open their eyes prematurely. It helps the therapist sense how likely the session was to be impactful. Matsuhashi also mentioned a tingling feeling in my hands and feet, which I confirmed. She later explained that there is no physiological reason I should have felt tingling in my extrem-

ities—this was another professional trick to gauge the depth of my suggestibility even as I exited the trance. This was a sign that it worked.

When I arrived home that evening, it seemed at first as if the signs were wrong and nothing had changed. Burrito refused to greet me at the door, as per her usual behavior, and later that night sat with her back directly towards me, as she is also wont to do. But during the days that followed, I began to notice small changes. I cared less. I laughed at the way she smacks her lips in protest when I reach out to pet her. I sent her more positive energy. Burrito noticed, too. Picking up on my new demeanor, she put more and more effort into befriending me than she had ever exhibited before. Hypnotherapy was not a magic bullet for me. But I believe it did equip me with the right mindset to be a good cat dad to Burrito for years to come. 🐾

For more info on Kalli Matsuhashi’s practice, call 651.882.6234 or visit newfamilybeginnings.com