

## **Lesser Known Uses of Hypnosis - Terry Moore**

When you think of hypnosis, many will recall seeing hypnosis performed as entertainment at a night club, bar, or fraternity party. Maybe you saw hypnosis portrayed in a movie, TV show, or cartoon. Still others will know that people often seek hypnosis for weight management, or to stop smoking.

So, you might ask, is that pretty much the list of objectives for the use of hypnosis? Just entertainment and habit control? No this is quite an incomplete list. In clinical practice, hypnosis has the potential of being used to help with a wide range of problems and personal issues. Let's take a look.

### **Anxiety during performance-intensive activities**

Even the best students can have jitters over tests. Even a seasoned musician can feel uneasy about an audition for an important professional opportunity. What can you do? Just study harder and longer? Put new strings on your viola? Perhaps, but over the years, I've had the privilege of working with students from high school through graduate school helping them both study more effectively, and to deal with the testing situation with less worry and distraction.

How does that work, you might wonder? When it comes to test preparation, you do still have to read the material and review your lecture notes. But students can learn a technique known as alert hypnosis. Until his recent retirement from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, David Wark, PhD, taught the strategy to generations of collegians. When I needed to learn this myself, as I developed a treatment plan for a client, Dr. Wark kindly shared his ideas with me, in correspondence. Using alert hypnosis allows the student to simultaneously remain aware, highly focused, and deeply relaxed. Learning can be encouraged and made more efficient.

We practice in the office, and I encourage students to practice the skill frequently in the next several weeks, applying the technique to their studies. Like any other skill, this one gets better over time, with repetition and dedication to the process. I wish someone had taught me this back in high school. It would have made it easier to learn my Latin vocabulary!

The other component to study enhancement is the test situation itself. Even the best-prepared student will feel a measure of anxiety before an important test. Graduate students often report feeling uneasy with the prospect of the comprehensive exams given prior to finishing a degree program. Business people will face tests in their fields of specialization real estate, insurance, or accounting, for example. Hypnosis can be employed to create expectancy and preparedness for facing the exam situation with confidence and calm. It has been very satisfying for me to receive messages of success from students able to let me know that they are now practicing their chosen profession or getting the diploma that they have worked toward for so long.

Make no mistake, however. Hypnosis will not replace reading, class attendance, and the intentions of a good student. It will, however, assist the motivated student or professional in focusing his or her skills and talents in a productive manner. It will help to reduce the unproductive elements of anticipatory anxiety and exam-triggered panic. When well-prepared students are calm and in control, recall is likely to be better.

The sports psychologist knows the value of these strategies, too. While my training and background are in clinical social work, I have used some of these approaches to assist those interested in maintaining focus, confidence, and being in control.

All of these services vary in length of service and in the span of time that I might see someone. Depending on the severity of the anxiety and the longevity of the problem, services may be as little as one session while others may see me for extended service over the course of several weeks. Treatment is always planned and implemented to suit individual needs and responses.