

Pediatric Pain Relief

**Help Your Child Feel Better
with Mindful Hypnosis**



Kelley T. Woods

Dear Reader,

This book is not meant to diagnose or treat any disease; it is intended to provide information and education that will promote feeling better and healing faster.

Designed to give insight and tools for helping you help your child take the suffering out of pain, this book is not a substitute for conventional medical care and you are encouraged to seek such care, especially in the case of acute or unresolved pain.

Approaches offered in this guide are meant to be integrative to any treatment being provided by your medical professional. Even as relief is experienced as a result of the exercises in this book, please do not reduce or cease any pain medications without supervision of your doctor.

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Dedication

A shorter version of this book was included in *Hope is Realistic: A Physician's Guide to Helping Patients Take the Suffering out of Pain*, which I co-authored with Michael Ellner in 2013.

Michael died in February of 2018. A mentor to many in the hypnosis field, he was also a close friend and inspiration to me. He truly lived with a happy heart, a calm mind and a playful spirit. Michael lives on in many hearts and in the wonderful work that we hypnotists do. I know that he is delighted to join me in sharing our approaches for helping children.

Introduction

Good news: the ideal hypnosis subjects are children, whose natural ability to suspend disbelief and engage their creative imagination allows them to easily respond to hypnotic approaches. If kids can believe in the Tooth Fairy or Santa Claus, they are quite suggestible. You can take advantage of these highly imaginative states of mind to help relieve their suffering.

When you activate your child's beliefs, you are automatically deactivating your child's disbelief. This is all that is necessary for effective conversational hypnosis. The "hypnosis" is within your child's excited and playful imaginings.

Even older children seem to automatically suspend disbelief when they hear the words:

"Once upon a time..."

"Make believe..."

"Pretend..."

Welcome to the wonderful world of conversational, Mindful Hypnosis! Conventional hypnotic techniques are not only unnecessary, they may even be contra-indicated for assisting children. Many children prefer not closing their eyes, especially in strange or uncomfortable environments and are able to easily imagine (hallucinate) in open-eye states.

Children live primarily in the present; in either positive or negative states and can quickly transition from one to another. When you show them how to make that jump they become skilled at mastering the transition at will!

My goal in writing this book is to empower you, as a parent or caregiver of a child who is experiencing pain, to be able to empower your child. I encourage you to adopt the hypnotist's credo, which is to "Go there first" and play with the many fun approaches offered within these pages. Your own belief in the efficacy of these tools plays a big part in your child's experience. And, you will learn how to also deal with your own unhelpful states of emotional and physical pain as you engage here!

The electronic version of this book has been gifted to the public domain, so you should have been able to access it at no cost. If you are interested in obtaining a bulk order of print copies at wholesale cost, please contact me: kelley@woodshypnosis.com.

Chapter One

Your Hypnotic Powers as a Parent/Caregiver

As a parent, grandparent, caregiver or other person of importance in your child's life, you hold great influence and power. Much of this influence is transmitted non-verbally and it's important to be aware of the ways you really communicate. Children observe constantly; even while they may appear to be engrossed in their own world a part of them is tuned in...especially to you and your moods, actions and interactions.

This is why, in my hypnotherapy practice, I always consider a child's problem in a systemic manner, learning about the dynamics of the family as a whole and how they might play into the child's challenge.

Consider how you and other family members may be unknowingly influencing your child's experience in the following ways:

Whose Problem is it, Really?

The first thing you need to discern is whether anything needs to be done to or for your child in the first place. Sometimes, we believe our kids need to change when we are the ones who need the change. I have found that when a parent changes, others in the family change, too. So, if your own fears, anxiety or exhaustion is getting the best of you, please reach out and get some help!

Getting Your Kid's Buy-In

Because you care about your child and don't want them to suffer needlessly, you are interested in using some of the techniques shared in this book. I agree with you that this is a good idea. But, unless your child is on board and agrees to

participate, it may be like spitting into the wind. The best way to get them to play is to make it as fun as possible. It will also help to leverage any motivation they may have toward feeling better – carrots work!

Primary Gain

Regardless of what Hollywood purports hypnosis to be, we can't really make anyone do anything they don't want to. If your child is getting some ultimate benefit out of being in pain, it's going to be harder for them to find relief. You know what I'm referring to: extra attention, little treats, getting out of school or other responsibilities.

Now, most people and even kids themselves would prefer to be comfortable. But, if a need for love or attention is competing with comfort, that need will sometimes win. We can collapse this conflict by ensuring that the child knows they will still receive what they need, even when they feel better. And when we equip them with the tools to make themselves feel better, they are less reliant on others to make them happy.

As a pediatric hypnosis practitioner, my cause is to empower children of all ages. As a parent or caregiver to a child who is hurting, this is a great frame for you to embrace, too.

Enabling/Over Doing

It's tempting to do everything for our children, even when they are perfectly healthy, but kids build self-confidence and effectiveness through their accomplishments, so step back and let them do as much as possible for themselves.

This includes engaging in the activities in this guide, by the way! Instead of reminding your child to use one of them when they are in pain, you might ask, "What can you do about that?" This question is solution-focused and empowers

a kid to not only think of the answer but imagine how they might apply it.

If they have trouble remembering what to do, come up with some special signals or simple words to easily remind them.

Body Language

It's true: as soon as your child sees your raised eyebrows, your hand covering your mouth or tight, pinched lips, they know things are bad. Ease up on yourself and relax your facial expressions...it'll be better for your child and your state of being.

Tightness, tension, and other closed body language communicate fear. Become aware of what your body is relaying and adjust it to enhance your child's perceptions.

We know that when our child is hurting, we hurt, too. The emotional trauma of having a child suffer can be terrible. But, just like the airline advises us to put our own oxygen mask on before our kid's, it's best to learn to manage our own stress states, too.

One Reason Why Kids Might Suffer

Most children are struggling for a sense of control. So much of their daily life is dictated by adults - from when to wake up, what to wear, what to eat, how to spend their time and more. When a child is dealing with an injury or a medical challenge, they experience even less control. Helping your child recognize that they do have some agency over how they are responding to what's happening can make all the difference.

Your Own Stories

Have you unwittingly or otherwise relayed frightening or disconcerting stories from your own experiences with injury,

pain or illness? Has your child observed how you deal with stressful situations?

How can you use your own experiences to inspire courage, resilience, patience and trust in your child?

How You Relate to Others

“Little pitchers have big ears!” How and what do you communicate to others about your child and their situation? If they are within listening range, use positive language and detour any dramatic or negative interaction. Remain optimistic and display trust in medical professionals or other caregivers in front of your child and save any concerns or confrontations to times away from them.

If you are in the habit of gossiping negatively about others, beware that your child is listening unconsciously and may even ascribe some of what you are complaining or worrying about to themselves. Your words and opinions are powerful influencers.

How Habits are Formed and Maintained

Every pattern of thought, emotion and behavior is created and maintained in neural pathways, or nets - connections in the brain and nervous system. The more often these pathways are activated through actual experience or, even by just thinking about the experience or idea, the stronger these nets become. Repeated activation of these pathways strengthens them - this is how habits are formed. Over time, the brain can even forget there are other ways to respond to a trigger or stimuli!

Now, many of these habituated responses can be helpful, keeping us out of harm's way or prompting us to take life-saving action. But, in modern culture, many people have become stuck in frequent or constant activation of fear and

anxiety, even when they would be better served staying calm and comfortable.

I'm going to now offer you a easy, quick way to lighten the stress and move mind and body into more helpful states. This technique comes originally from the field of NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming) and it takes advantage of neuroplasticity, the amazing ability of the brain and nervous system to rewire itself.

Mindful Hypnosis

At this point, you may be wondering what “Mindful Hypnosis” is. This is a phrase that Michael Ellner, Alan Barsky and I coined to describe the processes we use to help clients who have chronic issues.

Traditional hypnosis often elicits a trance state that allows a person's conscious awareness to drift away, no longer involved in the therapy. This can be very effective for a number of reasons but is also limiting when it comes to the educational value of hypnotherapy.

We found that our clients want to learn how to use the power of their minds on their own, not being dependent on coming in to see us. With an interactive, yet focused, state of hypnosis, they retain conscious awareness and memory of what they experience. They can then draw on these experiences to further their own healing and personal growth.

This means that we excite out clients' imaginations to expect positive changes before we do any formal hypnosis. Creating expectation and belief at important ingredients in any hypnotic recipe. Getting kids involved at this level makes using these helpful techniques intriguing and even fun, so that they learn new skills even as they are helping themselves feel better.

Here's one of our favorite tools to teach clients who are suffering with chronic issues or even just occasional troublesome states. Give it a try yourself:

The Emotional Detox Technique

Use this "Make a Fist" technique and discover how easy it is to use this 3 to 5 minute exercise to release toxic emotions and feelings:

1. Close and open your eyes... Inhale and exhale deeply... Now create a safe space in your mind and allow yourself to feel whatever is disturbing or upsetting - get in touch with the feelings and as you do make a fist with your right hand, release the fist.

2. Inhale, and exhale deeply and close and open your eyes.

3. Now picture yourself in your mind as follows: You are having a great hair day; you are at your ideal weight; your skin is glowing with health; your eyes are sparkling with confidence, and there is a big smile on your face - because your heart is happy, your mind is peaceful and your spirit is playful. Excellent—now enjoy those feelings as you make a fist with your left hand and release it.

4. Now inhale and exhale deeply and gently close and open your eyes. Okay, now count to ten and at the count of ten; make a fist with both hands at the same time. Now just relax and mentally count to five before opening your fists... Feeling better? Now try to get in touch with the unwanted emotions and feelings.... Amazing huh?

It's best to practice this technique before you are overly-stressed, even to stay ahead of the tension. Many of my clients find that by using this approach several times during the day, within as short a time period as a week, they are

beginning to self-regulate. This means that they spend much more time in the helpful, positive states of being.

While we call this an “emotional detox”, the technique also works wonderfully for physical sensations. I’ve taught it to clients who suffer chronic pain, who battle cravings, who want to feel calm or want to tap into energetic feelings. They learn to make it their own special go-to method for changing how they are feeling at will.

Of course, this process is also useful for children! I’ve included a kid-friendly version in the chapter on using anchors for comfort but you can certainly teach this one to your child, especially when you have learned how helpful it is yourself.

Chapter Two

Getting Their Attention

In order to help a child who is suffering, it is paramount to be able to establish a connection based on trust and mutual interest. Here are some ways to strengthen rapport and create atmosphere for a receptive state:

Go to your child's eye level.

Smile and speak slowly, simply and softly (a good panic-interrupt is to whisper!).

Touch them lightly but firmly on their upper arms, grounding them.

Reassure your child that they are going to be okay, no matter what...but be sure to:

Tell the truth without going into too many details

Avoid sarcasm or mockery ("big boys don't cry")

Gain permission from them to help: "I'm going to help you feel better, now...okay?"

Use Active Listening and Observe Cues

Give your child your full attention and repeat back what you hear them say. Kids intuitively know when you are present and when you are not. If your mind is distracted by what you are going to eat for dinner or how you are going to pay your bills, you are going to be less effective in your observation and listening - this means that you also dilute the power of healing that making a safe space for a child creates.

In addition to looking for physiological signs of pain (changes in heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen level), watch body

language for clues: body posture, facial expression, protecting a body part, etc. Trust your gut reaction; as the parent, you know your child best and you know when something is wrong.

Keep in mind that for a variety of reasons, children don't always verbally express their pain and it may manifest in other ways such as temper tantrums, sleep issues, depression, appetite decline, etc.

Some of the reasons that a child may not talk about being in pain include:

- Not wanting to miss out on a special event.
- Previous experience of having their pain complaint being denied. If adults have downplayed or discounted a kid's experience, they learn not to mention them again.
- Kids also learn to stop sharing when adults have uncomfortable or stressful reactions. They may feel guilty about causing stress and worry by talking about negative feelings.
- Just like adults, they may also avoid revealing they are in pain out of fear of the unknown, often making up all kinds of terrible diseases and treatments in their own imaginations.
- Or, a kid may have previously experienced a scary or painful medical procedure and doesn't want to return to that possibility.
- Rarely, some children who have a history of prolonged medical treatment, have effectively

turned off their awareness of pain and may not be able to get in touch with pain signals. Unfortunately, they may also be less aware of pleasant feelings of comfort, temperature, etc., which can limit their life experience in many ways.

You can alleviate these limiting blocks to communication by letting your child know that it's important to tell you what's going on with them. You might even set up a signaling system where they can alert you if things start to get uncomfortable.

I worked with one young man who simply had a sign on his bedroom door and flipped it accordingly: One side was green, signifying he was doing fine. The other side was red and let his family know he was struggling. No words were needed and his family and friends instantly knew what mode to shift into to help him best.

Step into Your Child's World

Consider your child's favorite hobby, interest, pet or TV character. Utilize these in finding creative solutions, ideally with your child's input. It's as easy as asking them to think of a super hero and how they might overcome a challenge – or recruit them to help.

Empower Your Child

Educate your child about the purpose of pain; that it is a signal asking for attention. They may be confusing the physical sensations with their emotional reactions, so it may be appropriate to explain that those scary feelings are also giving messages.

Ask the child what they think will help. Show them that they have the ability to turn down discomfort signals, to turn up a giggle, etc. Specific techniques are included later in this book.

Focus on Solutions

When kids are dealing with difficulties, the attention often ends up primarily on the problem or the obstacles. You can shift the way everyone feels about what's going on by looking at the variety of solutions that may be available.

This does not mean ignoring or denying that your child is suffering. It's important to acknowledge that you know this is hard, and even scary for your child. Once you do that, the pressure to can feel lighter and you can move on to looking for those answers.

I have found that using the phrase, "This is something we are going through together," can be very helpful. It implies that not only is your child not alone, but that you are all moving through this experience and it won't always be this way.

Finding Meaning

Research shows that people who find some positive or helpful meaning in difficult experiences move through those challenges more easily, but they end up being more resilient overall. Help your child discover something they have learned or gained from this misadventure.

Finding Hope

As a hypnosis practitioner who specialized in helping people who live with chronic issues, I have embraced the saying, "Hope is realistic." Many of my clients improve and even recover from physical, mental and emotional suffering. But some do not and for these people, hope can mean something other than a cure or full recovery.

Look for opportunities to foster hope in a realistic way for yourself and your child. This may exist in hoping for a day of comfort or being able to spend a special day at the beach or maybe hoping to walk the family dog. Small hopes bring a sense of light into even the darkest situations.

Create Expectation

While acknowledging feelings of fear, depression or frustration is important, these states can become entrenched and are limiting when it comes to gaining peace and comfort. Instead, you can move a child out of them by helping them imagine how they can feel better soon and teaching them one of our easy pain-relieving techniques.

Belief and expectation play a great role in our ability to rise above challenging circumstances. Because the body is always responding to whatever we are thinking of, things can shift automatically. A placebo response is based on these abilities of the mind to imagine improvement!

Magic Words

There are some universal “magical words” that capture the imagination; use the positive ones often: “Please”, “Thank you”, “Imagine”, “Pretend”. Avoid phrasing things in the negative as this tends to draw the subconscious toward that which you are hoping to avoid: “Don’t think about the pain,” or, “Don’t cry!”

Speaking of the power of words: due to the automatic negative response conjured by that four-letter word, P-A-I-N, just reframe with this word: discomfort. Start referring to your child’s pain as discomfort to change their thoughts, which will change their feelings.

Michael Ellner and I created the “Comfort Scale” just for this purpose: changing how a person feels about their physical sensation changes how they feel it. There is an example of it in the following chapter.

Make it Fun!

Learning is easier when it’s fun, making your kid more receptive and building on your quality time together.

Chapter Three

What is Pain?

The actual experience of pain is subjective and depends on many things, including but not limited to:

Previous experience and knowledge (belief)

Perceived resources

Sense of control (or lack of it)

Some people are just more sensitive to pain. Research shows that women, for example, typically suffer more than men. People who are more “in their body” may experience higher levels of pain than those who dissociate from their physical self.

It can help to understand that when pain is present, it's not the actual injury or disease site that a person is being pained by - it's the signal generated by the nervous system to the brain that is causing the real impact.

Pain serves a great purpose of relaying to the brain that there is a problem. Once that message is received, we can decide how to respond to that problem. If it's minor, we might decide to get back up off the ground and continue playing. If our brain becomes aware that it's more traumatic, hopefully we will seek medical treatment. In cases of severe trauma, people may not even feel any physical pain right away, as stress hormones counter that in order to help them move through an emergency state. Acute pain alerts us that something is wrong so that we can attend to it.

In the case of chronic pain, which is defined as pain that persists beyond three months after an injury or when the body has physically healed, the pain signal has become irrelevant, but the nervous system is “stuck”, still relaying it

to the brain. This is the current medical model of chronic pain.

Think of it this way: once a pain message has been acknowledged and answered in an appropriate manner, is it still necessary to listen to it?

The answer to that question is: it depends. If some pain keeps a person from further injuring themselves, then it's serving a good purpose. But if the presence of unnecessary, obsolete pain is limiting recovery, then it's safe to turn down or turn off that signal.

Gate Control Theory

A model of pain that is helpful to understand is the Melzack and Wall's 'Gate Control Theory'. According to this theory there is an actual "pain gate" in the spinal cord which can open and close, influencing the transmission of nerve pain signals to and from the brain.

Bundles of nerve fibers transmit nerve impulses from the skin, muscles and organs to the brain.

Nerves transmit signals at different speeds; sensory signals of pressure, touch or vibration are transmitted more quickly in large fibers; acute pain signals are transmitted slower; chronic pain signals are transmitted slowest of all, in small fibers.

The brain interprets these messages and sends a responding nerve signal causing a response of some kind.

When the pain gate is open nerve pain signals travel to (and from) the brain; when the gate is closed nerve pain messages are blocked.

When the nerves transmitting pressure/touch or vibration are firing the pain gate is closed. When small fibers are transmitting the pain gate is open.

Mindful Hypnosis techniques can help regulate the opening and closing of the pain gates!

The Suffering of Pain

It's not so much what happens to us in life, it's how we feel about it that determines our suffering, or our joy. In the case of pain, the way we feel about it sets our suffering level. If a child is fearful, their pain experience is likely to be much higher than if they were feeling confident that they are going to be okay.

Many factors influence levels of suffering, such as the fear of upcoming medical treatment, a fear of dying, feeling insecure or alone, simply having a change in routine, loss of control over body functions, hearing stories of how others have suffered, etc.

So, it's important that you understand the purpose and nature of pain and consider factors that contribute to your child's suffering, before you help them adjust their own pain experience.

According to Leora Kuttner, PhD, pediatric clinical psychologist at the British Columbia Children's and Women's Hospital in Vancouver, "The goal of all hypnosis is to make it self-hypnosis." For children to benefit from self-hypnosis, she stresses, parents must be supportive and not project any doubts onto the child.

When teaching hypnosis to patients, clinicians must address the anxiety that accompanies the pain. "You cannot do adequate pain management without dealing with the accompanying fears," Kuttner says. "The goal is to enhance

their personal control over the pain, so the first step is to show them how the pain could be reduced.”

By helping children manage their pain, not only do they feel better, but they also become empowered, Kuttner says. “Their level of confidence rises; their school attendance will go up, and their willingness to try new things increases.”

So, changing the way that we feel about things changes the way we experience them. This does not mean that we deny that someone is suffering but we can foster resilience when we help our children find some positive meaning in every challenge.

Measuring Pain in Children

Why is it helpful to measure your child’s pain level? Children may be limited in vocabulary and using a graphic form of measurement will help you calibrate their pain experience. Engaging in this activity will also assist in taking the unknown fear factor out of pain and begin to give a sense of control. And, as your child measures the “before” and “after” levels of sensation they realize that they have gained a sense of mastery over pain.

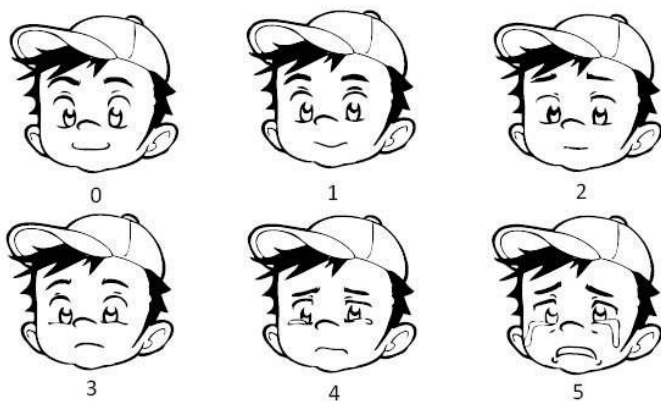
Awareness leads to relief and if you encourage your child to recognize the physical discomfort and separate it from their suffering, you can then lead them with one or more of the exercises in this book to reduce the discomfort - automatically reducing the suffering.

Although most children can express that they are feeling pain, children under 4 years of age are less able to tell just how much pain they are experiencing. Some methods used to measure pain for children older than 4 are:

Use some incremental toy, such as a set of building blocks or other stackable items and allow the child to show their pain level.

Kids who can count like to use their fingers and toes; they can indicate how they are feeling by the numbers of digits they extend or wiggle.

Offer a series of drawings of facial expressions; ask the child to choose one which would indicate minor discomfort, such as a mosquito bite, and then have them select one that reflects the current sensation. Having the child draw the faces and expressions will help identify and come to terms with how they are feeling.



Use language calibrations such as “a little bit”, “a bit more”, “more”, “a lot”.

Some kids might prefer a color code for their pain levels. Color psychology is fascinating, btw. Most adults relate higher levels of pain to the red/orange spectrum while cool shades of blue have a soothing effect. Kids, however, may

surprise you with how they relate sensations and feelings to colors. For examples, lots of kids like the color black, while adults might find it to be oppressive, heavy or even hopeless.

You can help your child establish a calibration scale by letting them choose which colors make them feel a different way. Use colored felt pens or strips of paper (paint samples work) and allow your child to play with the different colors until it makes some sense.

In Chapter Five, I share an easy approach to use Mindful Hypnosis with color to relieve stress and discomfort.

A Comfort Scale

Although conventional methods employ a “pain scale”, with ratings of 0-10 or 0-100, with the higher numbers representing more pain awareness, for kids old enough to understand the concept, we prefer to use a comfort scale!

You might sketch out a range of numbers or colors and let your child dictate which end feels best, calling it the “Most Comfortable”. There is no wrong or right, just what feels right to your kid!



Chapter Four

Releasing Unhelpful Tension and Stress

One of the easiest things you can do to increase your child's comfort is to help them let go excess tension. Obviously, we can't go around all day like a limp dishrag, but it is important to move the nervous system out of the stressed, fight-or-flight state and into one that is more conducive to healing and comfort.

In fact, we are designed to do this periodically throughout our busy days (and even at night). The Ultradian Rhythm is a cycle that repeats about every 60-90 minutes, helping us reboot our minds and bodies. That's why most people find it difficult to hold focus for more than about that amount of time before they need a little break.

When we ignore cues to take that break, our adrenal system kicks in, releasing stress hormones to cope with the burden. This keeps us in a stress state, further taxing our resources. The answer to this dilemma is to take regularly scheduled "recesses" to move the nervous system from stress response to relaxation response.

My clients who have chronic issues find that when they take these recesses, several times a day, that it's only a matter of a week or so before they begin to self-regulate and spend more time in those states of increased relaxation and comfort.

Even children who don't suffer from pain are experiencing higher levels of anxiety than ever before. Diaphragmatic breathing techniques change the physiology quickly and they are easy to learn.

You can use any of the following recipes to join your child in creating a greater sense of comfort and peace, or maybe you already practice some yourself. Think about how you might make it even more interesting for your child.

Breathing Techniques

“Take a Breather”

That was the suggestion given to me by a small client when asked what we should do for *my* problem of feeling bad! Little did he know what sage advice he was sharing; breathing mindfully is a cue to trigger what is clinically known as “The Relaxation Response” and automatically starts to shift body and mind into a more comfortable place.

Teach your child mindful breathing to release tension and discomfort:

“Place your hands on your belly. Imagine there is a balloon inside your belly. What color is that balloon?”

Now, pretend you are going to blow that balloon up, but you are going to bring the air in from your belly button. It might even tickle a little as you do!

Let’s try it...ready? Breathe in...

(time your breath with your child’s and breathe in deeply and slowly and hold the breath for a moment)

Notice how that balloon got big?!

Now, let’s make it shrink and get flat again...

(exhale slowly)

Wow! I feel better now, how about you?”

Repeat 2 more times and explain to your child that taking a “balloon breather” will help them feel better. Ask when they think they might like to play this game.* Regular practice will start to make pain-reducing breathing a conditioned reflex. We suggest everyone breathe mindfully to improve their mental and physical health!

*Asking your child when they might practice one of the exercises in this book employs a hypnotic technique called “future pacing” or a “mental rehearsal”. When we stimulate the mind toward imagining the future, a blueprint is created, making it much easier for things to happen!

The Floating Toy

I often teach kids how to breath diaphragmatically by having them recline on their back and placing a rubber duckie or some other toy on their belly. I will ask them to breathe in deeply so that the toy rises up, is suspended for a bit, and then sinks back down.

Kids like watching their favorite toy float up and down with their breath.

Breathing to a Pattern

If kids are in pain, they are usually in a stressed state. We can use the breath to move their physiology into a relaxation response, especially when we count the breath. Using numbers helps to distract the conscious awareness away from pain or whatever is sustaining the stressful state. When helping kids, simpler is better:

Triangle Breathing: Breathe in, counting each breath silently (as a parent you can count out loud for them but be sure to calibrate to their breath, not yours). A typical pattern might be:

Breathe in 1-2-3-4-5

Hold 1-2-3-4

Breathe out 5-4-3-2-1

7-11 Breathing: Breathe in to the count of 7, breathe out to 11.

Start with one of the above patterns (or one that you have found to be useful) and once you see that your child is proficient, you can enhance it with some visual imagery.

Some things that people have liked include:

Watching the numbers move by like clouds

Seeing the numbers written in the sand...a wave comes in and gently erases one and then reveals the next

Favorite things or animals move across a visual field, each wearing a number

A train with numbered cars moving past

Walking down a winding path or staircase

For best results, ask your kid how they want to “see” or otherwise sense those numbers! They will come up with some great ideas if you give them a little bit of space and time. They may even want to draw a picture of their number imagery.

Balloon Release

Use imagery of a balloon to release tension and stress by suggesting your child pretend there is a balloon floating nearby. Let them choose the color and size of it and then tell them that they can gently breathe pain and any other unwanted feelings into it.

As they do so, describe how it is growing in size, getting bigger and bigger, perhaps the color is becoming brighter, etc. When they is ready, they can decide what to do with that balloon: let it float up through the ceiling and out into the air, let it fizzle away with a funny sound or, maybe they'd like to pop it!

One young boy had a lot of pent-up anger in him, which was coming out in bursts of temper tantrums. He breathed those mean feelings into his balloon, let it go and then decided to shoot an imaginary arrow at it and when it popped, he described in great detail how the room was coated with slime. He was thrilled. So was I.

Changing Physiology

Social psychologist Amy Cuddy became famous with her TedTalk that demonstrates how, when we change our body position, we change the way we feel, both emotionally and physically. Some ways to enhance the way your child is experiencing discomfort include:

Smile

Smiling, even if they are not happy, helps. Simply moving the facial muscles into a fake smile elicits change. Research shows that when we smile, the brain automatically releases some of the chemicals related to feeling good. Faking it works. If your kid resists, just tell them, "Don't smile!"

Shifting Center of Gravity

To stand and put weight on our heels disrupts the energy flow throughout the body. When we are experiencing stress or pain, we tend to carry core balance up higher, so moving it down helps us feel more grounded, calmer and more comfortable. You can take this a step further by imagining pushing the center of gravity down. One way to teach this comes from my karate dojo:

Stand on a flat surface, with your child facing you as they stand, too. Gently press against their chest – they will probably lose their balance (don't push so hard that they fall backward). Then, show them how to lower their center of gravity by unlocking their knees and shifting their weight.

You can add a suggestion that as they do this, they imagine their roots growing down into the ground.

Once they have done this, repeat that chest pressing and see what happens! They will be quite impressed with their new sense of stability and be able to use this whenever they are feeling unbalanced.

Activate Healing Energy

A quick and effective exercise involves rubbing our own arms to not only activate the movement of stuck energy, but it also is self-comforting, reminding us of being embraced without having to involve anyone else. Kids who are feeling anxious find that doing this can quickly calm them.

Be a Noodle!

What kid doesn't like to pretend to be a worm, or a snake...or even a noodle?! Using progressive relaxation to release tension (which contributes to pain) is fun and easy.

Play the Noodle Game with your child by taking a big inhale of breath while making all of your muscles tight and stiff. Now, as you both exhale, begin to wiggle toes and fingers, releasing the tension. Continue this relaxing of muscles, letting it move up into hands and feet, arms and legs...using suggestions like this:

"Your hands are all floppy."

"Pretend your feet and legs have no bones."

"Loose, limp...like a rag doll."

Let the relaxation move into the torso, melting away even hidden tensions.

"Your tummy is soft and warm."

Imagine that shoulder and back muscles are fluid and loose. Let the feeling roll up into the neck, scalp and even the facial muscles.

"What does it feel like to have a rubber neck?!"

"Hey, your tongue is flopping out!"

Bring your child's attention to the way they are feeling looser and better and suggest that anytime they need to let go of pain, they can "be a noodle!"

TIP: Kids learn by observing, so let yourself be like a noodle and notice how good it feels as you go there first.

Yoga Poses for Relief

Many hypnosis practitioners like myself consider yoga a sibling of hypnosis! Some simple yoga poses can help provide relief from unexplained digestive issues (make sure any physiological sources have been ruled out), along with calming your child's mind. When we engage in yoga, we activate the parasympathetic response in the autonomic nervous system, slowing heart rate and calming the gastrointestinal tract, thereby easing stomach pain.

You and your child can settle into a child pose or try alternating seated twists. You can make it fun by pretending to be an animal...or a pretzel! Add some favorite music to set the tone, turn off cell phones and other distractions (you may have to put the family pets in another room) and give yourself permission to take a yoga recess.

You can find basic tutorial videos online – even ones for seated yoga, but if your child isn't physically able to participate in these types of movements, you can help them imagine doing so. There are measured benefits from simply pretending to do these things!

Touch Therapy

We know that touch is healing, as long as it is done with permission and doesn't cause discomfort. Not only does gentle massage release tension, which contributes to pain, it can help promote deeper breathing and better sleep. A gradual approach with massage can be especially suitable for

kids on the autism spectrum who may be otherwise dislike cuddling.

Swedish massage strokes, short and gentle, are usually safe, especially when started on hands or feet. Brief sessions, twice daily, can result in some amazing relief and because mutually accepted touch is bonding, both parties' benefit. I recommend that you also allow your child to return the massage. This activity can even ease a family's feelings of isolation and helplessness that may come from dealing with catastrophic illness or injury.

Massage can help relieve soreness from being immobile for extended periods of time. Having a child change positions while you rub various parts of the body and gently address range of motion can be helpful. Head, neck and shoulder massage can relieve tension and headaches. There are a few medical conditions for which massage is contra-indicated, advanced aplastic anemia, healing incisions, or skin problems from cancer treatment, for example, so check with your physician if you have any worries.

TRE - Trauma/Tension Release Therapy

Another somatic approach that kids can enjoy is TRE. This modality activates the autonomic nervous system in a form of "trembling" to release pent-up energy or downloaded trauma.

Basically, after stressing the leg muscles a bit with a few exercises, one lies on their back with knees raised and the soles of the feet placed against each other. In a short while, the legs will start to tremble as the nervous system kicks in. These involuntary tremors can move to other parts of the body. It looks weird but is painless and results in relieving stress and tension.

The best part about doing TRE is that you don't have to think about anything! You can lie on the living room floor and watch television, or listen to music. Typically, a 10-15 minute session is enough to result in feeling better.

You can imagine that it can be fun for a whole family to do together, too!

You can find more information online about TRE. Consult your medical professional to make sure it's appropriate for your child.

Chapter Five

Anchors for Comfort

Earlier, I mentioned the way habits are formed in the brain and in the nervous system. They are created throughout the body, in fact; this is what “muscle memory” is all about.

If you think about the way that those neural nets are activated, or triggered, it’s by association. When a kid thinks of or sees a hypodermic needle, for example, panic sets in. The pathways related to past or expected experience of pain are automatically activated.

Of course, we all have positive anchors, too. Just think of a song that reminds you of a wonderful memory. Or an aroma, maybe, that makes you smile. Many people relax as soon as they get home and flop into their favorite easy chair. These songs, smells and places are all anchors for those neural pathways. Most of them are created just through experience, easily and automatically.

We can create and strengthen positive anchors (resource states) intentionally. In fact, anchoring is one of the easiest tools for you to help your kid gain control over how they are responding to life. This chapter will show you how to use anchors to empower your kid.

Dissociation via Anchors

In psychiatric terms, “dissociation” often describes a problematic state wherein a person is out of touch with reality. When applied to hypnosis, however, this state can be helpful. If it isn’t necessary for your child to pay attention to whatever is happening, why not help them go somewhere else mentally?

It's easier if you practice this together prior to any potentially painful or stressful procedures, preferably at least a day or so ahead of time. It's important to frame this exercise in a way that will be fun and empowering - not merely as a way to avoid pain.

When relaxing with your child, ask them to describe their favorite place or memory to you. It can even be one that they are creating right then. I don't suggest that it is a "Happy Place" because not every person in pain can imagine such a place. Frames of "safe", "peaceful" or even "interesting" may be more acceptable.

As they are doing so, ask them to tell you what they notice, using sensory modalities:

Visual - Is it daytime or nighttime? Indoors or outdoors? Any scenery, colors, shapes? Are they by themselves or are there others around?

Auditory - What do they hear? Nature sounds, sounds from their own body? Perhaps there is music...

Olfactory - What about the smells...the fragrance? What does comfort smell like, anyway?!

Taste - They are free to reach out and taste anything they like!

Kinesthetic - The textures that they notice may be interesting.

When their experience contains as many of these modalities as possible, they will be immersed, forgetting that they are actually relaxing with you in your home!

You can then anchor this state with a physical gesture. I like having a child rub a couple of fingers together in an “okay” type position or perhaps wrapping thumb and finger around the wrist of the opposite hand and squeezing gently. One of my colleagues, Roger Moore, teaches clients to wiggle their toes as an anchor for the better feelings!

Suggest to your child that in the future, if ever they are worried or tense, that they can make this physical gesture and all the wonderful feelings they are experienced will come right back. You are helping your child create a positive resource state, securing and strengthening the neural pathways associated to their imagined experience. Every time this pathway is re-activated, it gets stronger, so by the time that medical appointment arrives, all your kid has to do is apply the anchor to jump into that more positive place.

It’s brain science!

Compounding Anchors

And, you’re not limited to just one positive state. You can add many more, simply by eliciting them and then anchoring them to different gestures.

I once helped a young boy who suffered from performance anxiety, despite his impressive piano skills. We anchored feelings of fun, happiness, confidence, his love for his cat and his family on the ends of the fingers of his right hand. When he played a little tune on his thigh with those fingers, he activated those positive resource states and could play with the confidence of Liberace!

As always, do as we hypnotists do...and go first. When you, as a parent, demonstrate how well techniques like this work on yourself, your child takes on the belief that it will work for them, too.

Collapsing Anchors

I introduced the adult version of this in the first part of this book that addresses the importance of adults managing their own responses. Older (8 and up) kids can certainly learn and use it.

Here's a version for younger kids:

It's important to start with a positive resource state. You want to set the stage for this technique ahead of time by looking for opportunities to find those positive anchors mentioned earlier. When you notice that your child is feeling okay or even feeling good, anchor that. You can have your child do it or you can do it indirectly by rubbing a shoulder or tapping a knee – as long as it feels natural and not weird to them!

Strengthen this positive anchor by repeating the physical gesture whenever you notice they are in that better state – the more you do it, the stronger the association becomes between feeling good and that gesture.

Later, when your child is not feeling so good, anchor that undesired current state in a similar but different gesture. For example, if you pressed gently on the right shoulder when they were feeling good, you would now press on the opposite shoulder.

After setting the anchor to the unhelpful state, ask you child to think of something that makes them feel better: a fun memory, a pet, their favorite food, a silly joke, etc. As they move into that state, anchor it with the original feel-good gesture. You only need hold that for a moment or so – it works quickly!

Next, fire off both anchors at the same time. Your child's brain can't experience both of them simultaneously and the

one most recently activated will collapse the previous, unwanted state. They will be left feeling better.

For a young child who may not grasp the specifics of what you are doing, you can set this up as a magical intervention, a special secret formula that you have learned. Belief and expectation play a large part of how we can help our children, so you want to utilize them.

You can make an anchor collapse be part of your child's daily ritual for feeling better!

Chapter Six

Visual Imagery

Today's kids are entrained to engage with imagery in a visual sense. Their early exposure to television, computers and cell phones makes them quite comfortable with electronic visual media. Kids already have quite active imaginations and spend a lot of time in their own creative worlds. We can use this natural ability to help them help themselves.

I hear lots of parents bemoan the drawbacks of video gaming but there are positive sides to everything. One of the benefits of video games is that they naturally hypnotize a child. The Harborview Burn Center in Seattle, headed by Dr. David Patterson, is pioneering the use of hypnotic virtual reality technology to help patients of all ages be more comfortable during debridement procedures. Their "SnowWorld" 3D video game experience engages the mind so that it effectively tunes out the pain signals while they play the game!

Doctors there say, "Pain requires constant attention...Conscious attention is like a spotlight. Usually it is focused on the pain and wound care. We are luring that spotlight into the virtual world."

You can read more about their incredible work at www.vrpain.com.

A common mistake that adults make when it comes to creating visual imagery for kids is assuming that children prefer peaceful, calm scenarios. Many kids respond better to ideas of engaging in their favorite sport, chasing cute bunnies in a field or swimming with dolphins! We can use a child's natural receptivity to activities that they love to improve

their comfort levels, so ask your child what makes them feel better.

Direct a Better Movie

Ask your child to imagine that they are watching television, a movie screen or a computer monitor. Suggest that they are seeing a favorite show or playing a favorite game and that there is a character who is pretending to be them.

Let the child notice that the character is having some discomfort and ask them to give details about what they are watching, then, ask them how they'd like to help that character feel better. Tell them to make that happen and then notice how it feels different. Give them a reminder of how they can do that again, anytime they need to.

Notice that I called this piece "Direct a Better Movie". That's because simply watching a movie is passive and the goal is to get your kid involved in exploring and finding solutions. When they become the director of their own script, they automatically take on a role of leadership.

Super Hero Version

Discover a strong and powerful icon your child admires and have them imagine this super hero is coming to his rescue. Ask your child to describe the action as the super hero vanquishes his enemy. Help them come up with a special way to summon the super hero whenever they are needed: a word, a signal, a thought.

One of my young clients was suffering a lot of pain from a tonsillectomy. She discovered a wonderful super hero, Mr. Jello (based on her belief that Jello soothed and reduced her pain), who came to the rescue. This young person easily learned how to invite Mr. Jello to return by rubbing her fingers together and simply thinking, "Mr. Jello, I need you!"

Our creative imagination, which is housed in our subconscious thought processes, thrives on nonsensical, fantastic ideas...so have fun with this!

Guided Imagery for Tummy Aches

Hypnotherapy for gut-related issues has been proven effective since the 1980's, with a plethora of evidence-based research showing positive results in cases of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) and even IBD (intestinal bowel disease). Studies involving children has shown that using guided imagery, especially when the child continues to use it as self-hypnosis, results in great improvement of symptoms.

Whether your child has a chronic gut issue or suffers from the "Monday morning tummy ache", some Mindful Hypnosis can help! Now, I'm a proponent of taking a day off every now and then for family wellness, but when it becomes a chronic issue and doctors have ruled out any physical disorders, it's time to take action.

The digestive tract, also known as the enteric nervous system, has a pretty fascinating job. Think about it: from the moment we think of a certain food, our related taste buds are immediately activated and from that point on the digestive process begins. It is so complex that the digestive system needs its own management process – this is referred to as the "second brain" or the "abdominal brain" and is comprised largely of the cells that line the tract.

Your child might be surprised to learn that these management cells are very similar to the ones in our head brain that manage our emotional responses! It makes sense that when we are experiencing heightened emotions, those cells in our gut are activated, too! Everyone knows the feeling of butterflies in the tummy or how when we are sad we may get a lump in the throat, not be able to eat or we may mistake those feelings for hunger and try to eat them away!

Simply engaging your child in some of the calming tools I've offered in this book can help calm that response. When our body is in a stress state, the "fight or flight" response, energy is diverted away from the digestive tract – after all, we don't need to be wasting precious energy digesting our breakfast when we are escaping the woolly mammoth! That energy is instead sent to the large muscle groups, empowering us to fight or run.

Kids don't yet have the emotional intelligence to be able to decipher what their feelings exactly are and what they are trying to signal. Instead, they are aware that their gut, or tummies, just don't feel right. Being able to stay home, safe with family, affords them a way to calm their emotions and calm that physiological response.

You can start to change things by explaining the mind-body connection in an age-appropriate way to your child. I usually make a drawing, showing how the brain talks to the body parts and the body parts talk to the brain.

Kids get this idea, especially when you show them examples of how they can start laughing if you even pretend to start tickling them, even though you aren't even touching them. Or, how jumping up and down makes them feel excited in their mind...

Ideomotor Pendulum

I even use an ideomotor pendulum in my practice to show kids how powerful their thoughts are. It's not a parlor trick and it's certainly not witchcraft, but an ideomotor response is a scientific mind-body response. The name itself means: *ideo*= thought, or idea, creates *motor*= motion.

Having a kid hold a metal washer that's hanging on a string and asking them to think the word, "Yes"...and then watching their face as the pendulum begins to swing in a distinct

pattern is pretty cool. They know that the pendulum is not swinging of their own conscious volition and it blows them away to learn that their own mind is sending tiny muscular movements through their body, into that string, affecting its motion. (Be clear that the pendulum action comes from their own thoughts and not from some outside entity!)

The ramification of this becomes clear even to a small child: that our thoughts influence our physiology. This is sometimes news to adults, too! From this point, a window opens as people begin to think how they might construct helpful thoughts to help their body.

Helpful Thoughts and Imagery

Moving your kid from the stress response into the relaxation response will return normal function to their digestive system. This alone will cause improvement. Further relief can be obtained through Mindful Hypnosis visual imagery of soothing the digestive tract. Once again, it's best to use your child's ideas but here are some to get you started:

A smooth flowing river (if things are stopped up, add metaphors of clearing log jams, removing sharp bends, adding a current that mimics peristalsis)

An imaginary tiny, miniature version of your kid, dressed in a painter's coveralls and equipped with a special "protective comfort liquid" can be "swallowed". Guide your kid to imagine this tiny painter applying the soothing, comforting protective layer through each section of the digestive tract. Add descriptions that they tell you make it feel better – a color, a temperature, etc.

Object imagery is very effective in soothing stomach issues. Your kid can "pull" the feeling out of their gut and have it hover in the air in front of them as they play with it. This approach works not only for uncomfortable sensations but

also for uncomfortable emotions. (Details for this technique are contained in Chapter 8...)

Healing Color

An easy way to elicit relief is to utilize color therapy, which I mentioned previously as a way to calibrate pain levels. Once you have an idea of what color seems to make your child feel better you can utilize it in several ways.

Have your child imagine that they are being wrapped gently in a soft blanket of their favorite comfort color. If you have a physical sample of the color, that makes it even easier for them to begin to embrace the feelings the color brings to their mind.

Suggest that the color, like a gentle wave, begins to move into and through their body. You might suggest that it comes floating down from a fluffy cloud above and starts to come into the top of their head...or the bottom of their feet. It winds its way through their body, soothing, calming, comforting. Repeat this description or whatever other patter is effective, suggesting that the color is not only bringing comfort but is healing whatever needs to be healed.

If a certain temperature provides relief, add that to the color. For example, for if your child is suffering from inflammation, you might say, "And that cool, blue color is gently floating...like a soothing wave...into your _____...washing away whatever you don't need right now...leaving such a nice, comfy feeling there...that it makes you want to take a deep breath in...and as you breathe out...you feel so much better..."

Or, if a warming feeling helps, using your child's comfort color, you might say, "And you can feel that warm yellow color easing your muscles...right now...I wonder if it will move into your left leg first or your right leg first...you can

notice what that feels like...that warm...yellow... comfortable...color..."

Simply by using a specific color, you are anchoring comfort and relief to that color. You can then use a tangible object as an easy way for your child to access that – maybe a stuffed animal in their comfort color, or a blankie, or a rubber bracelet. Show them how they can, by simply looking at the color, they can allow it to help them feel better.

Get Spitty

A Spanish doctor, Angel Escudero, created a therapy (no-sitherapy) in which he teaches his patients to increase saliva flow. He found that when people are stressed or in pain, their mouths are dry, a result of biofeedback from the brain. He surmised correctly that by reversing that feedback and using thoughts to create saliva, a relaxation response occurs, providing relief.

There are many ways to use our minds to control our body responses. You can guide your child to think of their favorite treat; perhaps what it feels like to lick an ice cream cone, if they enjoy that, for example. A classic hypnotic trick is to imagine a big, juicy lemon...taking a bite of a slice of it. Even as you read this, you may be finding your mouth puckering a bit and the saliva appearing!

Most kids have tasted sour candy, so replace the lemon with their favorite candy and watch them grimace, then relax as the spit flows.

Mental Rehearsal

A bad habit that kids learn (often from adults) to do is to worry about what they are afraid might happen. Now, this expectation may come from past experiences or it may come from hearing about some other person's experiences or even watching it in a movie.

Even a child's young mind doesn't like uncertainty, so it tends to fill in the blanks, often with a worst-case scenario. The problem with this is that not only is it causing suffering in the moment, before these future catastrophes have a chance to occur, it sets the stage for a negative outcome.

This is important because the subconscious mind, in charge of our beliefs, doesn't have the discerning, judgment abilities of our conscious thoughts. Acting as a great "eavesdropper", it simply responds to what it takes in, whether the source is one of those hypnotic influences mentioned earlier or the most influential voice of all: our own.

So, imagine your kid is spending time worrying about going to get some stitches removed at the doctor's office. Their colorful imagination goes into overdrive, creating a scene in which this simple event fills with trauma and pain. You can guess how the time leading up to the appointment will go, along with how stressed out both you and your kid will be by the time you arrive at the doctor's.

A simple cure for this is to help your child create a more desired outcome. Either in conversation or through an artistic rendition, you can ask them, "How do you want it to go?" and "How do you want to feel?"

Co-creating the best future experience will lay down a template for your child's mind to follow. If you help your child add special details, like, "I'll even giggle a little when it tickles!" or "I'll ask the doctor if I can keep a stitch for a souvenir...", everyone will be amazed when that happens.

We can use mental rehearsal for creating awareness of what we really want in life and spending a bit of time imagining it helps bring us closer to realizing those goals.

Story Telling

“Fairy Tales are more than true; not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.”

~G.K. Chesterton

Stories in the form of fables, myths and legends have been used for generations to educate and to help children of all ages develop resources to deal with challenges. Some people believe they don't have a creative enough imagination to engage in storytelling, but the good news is that your child DOES! (So do you, by the way...)

All you need do is to invite your child to start telling a story – you can ask them to pick up from, “Once upon a time there was a...” You may even be surprised at how easily the story begins to unfold. Listen actively as your child creates the tale; interjecting and encouraging if it's needed.

Once the story is complete, paraphrase the story back and ask if there's anything they want to change. Then, begin to break the story down, asking about the characters, the conflicts and the solutions. You will notice that the story contains parallels to your child's life.

You might even ask questions such as, “Can you see yourself in that story?” or, “What did that story say to you?” or, “Does that story apply to you in any way?”

Utilize key points and solutions from the story, weaving loops of alternative outcomes and positive observations. You may even find themes in the story surfacing in your daily life as you allow the fabric of the story to enfold you and your child in its healing properties!

Chapter Seven

More Techniques for Comfort

As a hypnotherapist, my primary job is to support and encourage of my clients, while I am teaching them how to help themselves. This prevents them from being dependent on me, of course, but when they practice self-hypnosis they move themselves more quickly into better places. In most cases, when they use these tools on a regular basis, their minds and bodies begin to self-regulate. This is a good goal for children, too: to become less dependent and to self-regulate.

Child as the Doctor

Kids in pain always visit doctors as the patient. Turn this around by allowing your child to be the medical professional. (Their intuitive insight can also enhance *your* life experience!) It's easy:

Ask your child if they'd like to play "Doctor" and let them create a "consulting space" with a table or couch and a swivel chair or stool. Use props and costumes, if possible. Call the "doctor" and make an appointment to come in. Upon arrival, take the patient's place, making sure that you are seated or lying in a lower or equal position to the "doctor".

Express your concerns about your "ailment" and ask the doctor what you should do. Take his advice seriously and ask questions to boost his feeling of expertise. Don't be surprised if you hear them repeat some suggestions they've been given in regards to pain management and healing! You might even ask how they knows that these things help...

Make a follow up appointment to relay how successful you have been in addressing your problem and in the interim,

remember to comment and display how you *are* taking their prescriptions to heart.

Can you imagine introducing your child to the “balloon breathing” exercise offered earlier in this guide...and then having them “prescribe” it to you?!

An adjunct approach to playing “Doctor”: Children see inanimate objects as being alive and you can take advantage of this: ask your child to select a stuffed animal or doll to be the “patient”. Perhaps you can be their nurse or assistant, helping them with necessary instruments, healing aids, etc.

Guide the action toward positive outcomes and let the surrogate patient show relief and gratitude toward your child healer; a little note or card arriving in the mail works!

The “Other Kid” Approach

Kids of all ages’ beliefs are ignited when they hear how something worked for someone else. You can use this approach by mentioning how another kid you know got over this problem. Maybe that “other kid” was actually you! If you describe healing and recovery, this can help create expectation on a subconscious level, which does promote healing.

Or, you can ask your child if they have any ideas to help another kid you know who is suffering with a similar ailment. This bit of dissociation activates every person’s deep need to help others, while inciting the creative imagination to find solutions.

Be sure to tell them later how successful their ideas were. Maybe they will even receive a thank you letter in the mail!

Provide Choices

This tactic is recognizable to most parents as being one which will guarantee you get cooperation. In the field of hypnosis, we call it a “double bind”. Following the theme of this book, it gives the child a sense of empowerment through the belief that he has a choice while every choice that is offered is helpful in some way.

“Would you rather sit on your dad’s lap or in this chair?”

“Would you rather that feeling become smaller...or colder?”

“Would it be okay to move that pain to your big toe or to the back of your left elbow now...or maybe you want to put it in the closet?”

Tip: To make a double bind even more effective, use your child’s input and preferences.

Dissociation

If your child doesn’t need to be present, paying attention to their discomfort, why not help them go somewhere they can be more comfortable? Here’s an easy way to guide them:

Imagine that you are floating up and out of your body. Your mind goes gently up...up...up...so that you can look down and see your body resting here. Maybe you can see me here, next to you. Good.

Now, let your mind go up even higher...through the ceiling and even through the next story (if there is one) and then out, through the roof...into the fresh air. You are comfortable and warm there...and you can let your mind go anywhere you like...

I wonder where that might be? Maybe you are flying...or maybe you have a magic carpet...or something else that lifts you up higher...you can breathe easily...it feels so good...

I wonder where you are going? Can you see it there in the distance?

You can continue on in this vein. If you know some of your child's favorite stories or places, you can certainly utilize them. Some children have very active imaginations and will want to dictate the experience while others are more passive and need you to help prompt them. You know your child best so follow their needs.

Your child can explore these experiences for indefinite amounts of time. While they are doing this, they are effectively dissociated from their current physical sensations, conscious awareness is bypassed or very limited. This provides a setting for relaxation and healing, while giving the child mental relief.

To emerge from the experience, simply suggest to the child that when they are ready, they can make their way back...drifting above the building, floating down through the levels until they are directly above their own body again...then easily settling back...into themselves, feeling whole and balanced.

You can add a powerful post-hypnotic suggestion that anytime they need or want to take another comfortable experience like this, all they need do is close their eyes, take three deep breaths, and let themselves launch on the adventure!

Another Option: Technology is Your Friend

Here's another way to help a kid dissociate from unhelpful sensations, especially when they are being treated for an injury or illness: Have them view the scene through a cell phone or tablet video app! Watching something through a camera lens distances us from things and promotes curiosity.

Practice ahead of time with minor scrapes and bruises to associate use of the camera in this way to a detached observing experience. Everything is easier when we practice in advance.

One More Option: Explore their Insides

Imagine how fascinating it can be for your child to pretend that they are a tiny explorer, moving into their own body! You can guide them through any part of their body – maybe in a miniature ship where they float through the circulatory system or perhaps they prefer to ride a roller coaster on their skeleton.

Give them the choice of where and how they will travel. Keeping their mind on what they discover there will certainly distract them from what's going on elsewhere. They may even decide to access control systems in the brain, turning off any unhelpful signals.

And, Another: Adventures in the Multiverse

I wrote a book with Don Gibbons, PhD., *Virtual Reality Hypnosis: Adventures in the Multiverse*, in which we describe how we take clients to alternate or parallel universes for therapeutic change. This approach can be used to change how a person feels about their life experiences and also to create and supercharge future goals.

I love taking kids to the multiverse, where anything and everything is possible! I often use Don's Riding the Rainbow induction because it is not only a captivating way to lead people to this special place, it's therapeutic in nature, imbuing the listener with positive resources. You can find it in the Appendix at the end of this book.

Relocate Sensations (Displacement)

There may be a time when a child doesn't want to let go of the feelings, but it would be helpful to just move them. It is

now easy to understand a valuable purpose in not only becoming aware of a sensation, but for objectifying it...giving it a shape or a color: we can displace the feeling easily when our imagination sees it as an object.

“How would it feel to move that feeling to another place...to your big toe or maybe even over and out of that window?”

Just as even a minor reduction in pain experience can make all the difference, being able to feel enough control to *move* an uncomfortable sensation can provide relief.

These object imagery recipes are not only effective, they are FUN, so children are more likely to engage with them on a regular basis.

Headaches, Be Gone!

Take advantage of biofeedback to teach your child how, by changing the temperature in her hands, they can relieve pain in the head. Research shows that elevating body temperature in the extremities changes the dilation of blood vessels in the brain.

Have your child hold the bulb of a thermometer and tell they to imagine that she is outdoors...it's a warm, summer day. They are on a swing, moving easily back and forth and it's so wonderfully warm out there. They can hear the sounds of children playing, dogs barking and their hands and arms are so warm...the sun is gently warming them...

As the temperature begins to elevate, have them notice the increase on the thermometer, while you notice that relief for the headache is also arriving! Teach them how to re-create this effect whenever they becomes aware of head discomfort. They may even want to change the scenery: dipping their hands and arms into a nice, hot bubbling bathtub or warming them over a campfire, etc.

Distraction

A 2009 University of Wisconsin study showed that singing helped significantly ease pain by distracting kids who were receiving vaccinations. Nurses or parents in health clinics engaged children in singing their ABC's while patting a leg at the same time, effectively disrupting the pain signal from reaching the brain.

One of our clients, a stressed child with autism, was calmed by singing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" and simultaneously tapping gently on her face and hands. (See our section on EFT.)

Heavy Leg Convincer for Pain Relief

This is a fun, interactive process that engages kids and empowers them. One of the standard convincers we use for almost anyone coming in for pain management is known as the heavy leg convincer. In hypnotherapy, this is usually more helpful with kids seven and up because it helps with the ritual of a more formal induction to set it up. Although many younger kids can play with this idea as well, it's the older kids and teens that are far more impressed with the implications of this one.

Once your kid is in a relaxed and focused state say, *"And now let me show you how powerful you are in this state. You can make a suggestion to your self and your self believes you. It's so cool. First focus on those legs and imagine them heavy. Heavy like wood or lead. What would it feel like if those legs were so full of relaxation that they were heavy? Imagine that. Now, think the question in your mind..."my legs are so heavy" and because you're in hypnosis what you suggest has power. Now notice the heaviness in your legs. Do you notice how heavy they are?"* (Wait for kid to nod)

Then say, *“Some kids notice that heaviness even more, when they try to lift them, they notice they get even heavier. Now try to lift them and notice what happens”* most kids will smile as they are trying to lift their legs. Then you tell them to imagine that heaviness changing to a heavy comfort. Ask, *“What would comfort feel like?”* As they describe a numbness or warmth or whatever, show them how to imagine it spreading through their body and going to wherever they need it.

This is a good one because it proves a few things. One, they can go into a state where they have power over their body. Two, how amazing is this hypnosis stuff?! And three, by teaching them this, you get their full attention, excitement and open their mind to what else they might want to tell themselves.

The Eyes Have It

Teaching your child to switch into peripheral vision can be an easy way for them to shift out of pain and stop the self-talk that can sometimes make it worse. Position some cool, interesting thing in the room to use as a focal point, asking your kid to lock vision onto it. It can help to add an auditory “anchor word” so that they can achieve this state of focus easily in the future. You can offer suggestions, but the best words come from kids themselves. They may not even make sense to you, but just trust that they have a particular association for your kid!

Once your kid is staring at that spot, guide them to begin to notice all the space to sides of them by using your arms to draw attention. Once they can shift awareness out, have them press their thumb and forefinger together or press a spot on their leg as they say that word of their choosing.

Simply teaching your kid how, when they look down, the world automatically recedes and when they look back up, it’s like they are inviting everything back in, can be an epiphany

for someone who feels overwhelmed or over-stimulated. They can use eye movement to disconnect temporarily and employ some breathing and mindfulness to regain control of their responses to the outside world.

Another way of using the eyes as a distraction and induction is to have the kid imagine looking up through a window at the top of their head. With their eyes closed ask them to keep looking up through the top of their head and to try to open their eyes as they do. You will see the kid trying to open them but physiologically they can't so we link this with going into a hypnotic trance. This acts like a leverage induction. Here's an example:

I want you to close your eyes and imagine a window at the top of your head. Imagine staring out the window until you can see a light shining through it. Maybe it's a color, maybe the light has a feel to it. When you have that, try to open your eyes as you continue looking out the window on top of your head.

You'll find your eyes are stuck shut and that means you are in hypnosis and everything I say will help you to feel more comfort. As that light comes in imagine it soothing and spreading down from your head and comforting that area that needs more comfort.

Feel it filling you up with comfort. What does it feel like when you feel good? Have that feeling sink in even more. Maybe it's a color changing that whole area so it feels better. Maybe it's warm or cool or whatever you need to feel better...

Practice moving into peripheral vision with your child often – it gets easier with repetition!

Playing with Props

Everyday items can become objects of healing with a little bit of imagination and ritual. Here are some examples:

A rubber glove can be a magic hand that takes away pain, freezing it or draining it.

A coin can grow warm in the palm as it “soaks up” pain and anxiety.

A small treasure box can be a receptacle for worries, especially one that comes with a lock and key!

A hand puppet can provide means for dissociating from the pain. One of my best props that I use in my practice is Mr. Nutty, a squirrel puppet. Mr. Nutty is a fabulous confidant – kids tell him all sorts of things and he often has just the perfect answers. It’s especially great when I give my kid client Mr. Nutty to handle and they create the solutions together.

Soap bubbles can be popped to let go of discomfort and stress.

A magnifying glass, binoculars or a kaleidoscope can be used to change perspective.

A stone can be rubbed to “rub away” bad feelings and “rub in” good ones.

A tiny starfish can weave a wonderful story of survival...

Use a pair of yellow safety glasses as “happy glasses”. When feeling down, donning a set of bright lenses changes everything. An online resource for high quality colored lens glasses is rainbowoptx.com.

Imaginary Props

Children who enjoy video games can easily imagine having the controls of not only their comfort sensations but their bodily functions, too.

An invisible beanie might have controls to dial down “bad” feelings and dial up “good” ones. I worked with a child who used her “dream beanie” to select the type of dreams she wanted every night!

Describing their brain as the control room and their body as the robot it commands is a metaphor that teaches children how they can gain control and learn to master their feelings.

Chapter Eight

Metaphors for Relief

Object Imagery

Using your child's creative imagination to objectify the suffering, reducing or even eliminating it, is a realistic goal.

Here is an example:

Begin by having your child focus on the problem and have them imagine it as a shape...ask her what shape it could be?

Next, let them pick a color for the shape and then ask them to describe how it feels if they were to touch it...hard or soft, firm or squishy, etc. choice.

Finally, have them select the size of this object; as big as a plane or boat...or maybe it is the size of a cereal box.

Begin to help your kid change this object that represents the discomfort; starting with the shape itself. "What shape would you like it to become?" Instruct them to watch it change into the newly desired image. Let them next change the color and the feel of the object; have them describe this as it is happening and help if needed.

Tell your child that they can see it changing, transforming under their command! Now, ask them to change the size of this discomfort, so that it can appear completely different than when they first saw it.

Now it is time to create a way to let that object go. They may want to attach a helium balloon to it or place it on the wing of a bird. It doesn't matter how but have them notice the feeling

as they watch that transformed object slowly float away, drifting up beyond the clouds of their thoughts.

Tell your kid that, in the future, they can recreate this activity, imagining the discomfort in any way they want. They may even enjoy drawing before and after pictures of their object transformation!

Soothing Skin Issues

The skin, it has been said, is a barometer of the emotions. Hypnosis is an effective approach for reducing the discomfort and ensuing scratching and picking of conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne. The elevated stress response from having skin problems often keeps kids stuck, preventing healing.

A metaphor of a healing color or a magical soothing lotion can be used to ease the nervous system into a healing response. You can arrange a “healing area”, maybe using a soft blanket and some soft music. Have your child lie down to get a special treatment and use a version of a progressive muscle relaxation, adding in the idea of their favorite character helping to apply this soothing, healing substance. Use descriptions that reflect what makes your child feel more comfortable; it may be a cooling sensation, for example.

If itching is present, you can add the following approach to empower your child to be able to turn down the “itch switch”.

The Control Room

A popular hypnotic approach for giving clients control over their perceptions of pain is the idea of a “control room”. When we explain to our clients that “the body is a robot and your mind is the command center of the robot” a light bulb clicks on!

Use this idea as follows:

Invite your child to explore a special control room, explaining that we all have one...it exists deep in our mind. Describe it as a really big space that is lined with walls which have control panels containing softly flashing colored lights, gauges, dials (wheels), levers, etc.

Have them explore the wall that relates to physical sensations. Play there for a while, teaching them how they can find a tummy tickle button, or nose itch switch, for example.

Have them activate a saliva control, increasing the amount of spit in their mouth. (If they are having trouble making physical responses occur, add some hypnotic patter: do you remember how it feels to suck on a sour candy...or a lemon?! I'll talk about the power of making spit a little later in this book, btw.)

When you can see that they understand the concept, tell them to locate the controls for the part of their body that is uncomfortable. If possible, have them calibrate the level of that sensation.

Next, tell them to INCREASE the discomfort, just for a moment. It's important to do this, because it will create expectation and belief in the process. Once they acknowledge that they have been able to do this, have them REDUCE the discomfort...turning it down to a level lower than the original calibration.

You can also let them find controls for comfort, relaxation, temperatures that make them feel better, etc., and turn these up!

Once your child has learned self-control via a control room, you can shorten the process by having them later just think of their control mechanism, whether it's a dial, a wheel, a lever or some other device and make the required adjustment. (Don't be surprised, however, if they enjoy returning to their control room and playing, though...)

Mind-body tactics such as this are proven to help not just in the area of psychological suffering but also to create actual physiological changes. We can use the power of our minds to adjust blood pressure, enhance the immune system, reduce bleeding, increase circulation, stop the inflammatory response and more!

By teaching your child this modality, you open the door for them to gain self-direction toward his own healing. As you have probably noticed, a primary theme in this book is empowering kids with their power of choice. Letting them take some responsibility for their levels of comfort and happiness is a lesson that will benefit them for a lifetime.

Protective Bubbles

Kids can easily grasp the idea of a protective bubble, especially if you join them in drawing a picture of themselves surrounded by one. Make sure you have one for yourself, too!

The metaphor of a protective bubble can insulate and protect your child from negative energies that are sourced outside of your child. These might come in the form of particular people, animals or environmental triggers. When people are undergoing physical challenges, their ability to manage sensory sensitivities can be reduced.

For example, perhaps your child is stressed over the noises in a hospital setting. You can suggest that their protective bubble muffles those sounds. Or, if there is a scent related to a medical procedure that triggers an anxious reaction, you

can suggest that the smell doesn't get past the bubble to bother them.

When creating this imagery, you can build belief by first pointing your child's attention to how it felt without the protective bubble, briefly reminding them of how they reacted to one of those unhelpful stimuli. Then, suggest that they are in a perfect, safe place where they can relax and imagine that they are surrounded by a wonderful bubble.

They are floating comfortably inside of it and they can breathe easily. It's just the right temperature inside their bubble. It's transparent, or see-through, but maybe they want to add some of their favorite color or even some sparkles.

They can make the bubble hard and firm...or soft and squishy. Let them choose. The more they can describe it to you, the better. You can share what your bubble looks like and feels like.

Suggest that they can bring in something they love, like a favorite smell or a pet or a toy, maybe even some music. This will serve as an additional resource that's available to your child.

Tell them that this bubble will keep those bad things out – they will just bounce right off the outside of the bubble so that your child can stay feeling good inside.

L

et them know that if they want to send anything out of the bubble, that they can. You might even ask them what they might like to send. This is a good opportunity to foster positive emotions such as love, patience, forgiveness, humor, etc.

Next, with your child, imagine stretching your bubble way out to the edges of the room, so that you are actually inside

each other's bubbles. You can both notice what that feels like. This gives a sense of control over the mechanism and further empowers your child.

Bring the bubbles back, close to yourselves and then suggest that your child revisit that experience that made them uncomfortable ...this time with their protective bubble! Remind them that they can make it as strong as they want. If they want to include those extra resources, remind them that they can do that.

Tell them to notice how it feels different, how much more comfortable they are this time. Guide them through this fairly quickly and then have them imagine using their bubble in the future...especially in any situations that you know they have been worrying about.

Not only does this metaphor help a child feel protected, it dissociates them a bit from whatever is going on and it can give them a different perspective. They may even find it interesting to observe things calmly from that place, noticing something that previously they were missing due to their stressed reactions.

Of course, I recommend that you be like a hypnotist, and “go there first”. When you discover the power of your own protective bubble, you’ll find it even easier to share it with your child!

Dragon Taming

Carl Jung noted that, “what you **resist** not only **persists**, but will grow in size.” We have shortened that observation to “what resists, persists”, but the meaning is the same: try to make something be quiet and it only yells louder.

Have you ever noticed that when you tell yourself, “Don’t think of that thing...” that all you really notice is that thing

you were hoping to avoid thinking about? This is often true when we tell our kids, “Don’t spill the milk!” Seconds later, splash! Or, “Don’t forget your homework!” and, “Don’t slam the door!” You soon hear the front door slam and see the homework still sitting on the counter.

This effect happens because the creative imagination, housed in the subconscious processes, has to first create the image of what you are attempting to prevent or suppress. And since this part of our mind is faster than our conscious thoughts, it jumps right into that image, sustaining it.

So, when we tell a child, “Don’t think about the pain,” or, “It won’t hurt,” we are only drawing their attention toward that pain experience. It’s much better to either think about comfort or distract their imagination in a more useful way.

Here’s a more useful way: When we use a creative metaphor to represent a feeling or even a part of us that is maintaining a feeling, we can then manipulate it. The language of the subconscious includes metaphor, so we immediately capture that important part of the mind.

Simply by guiding your child through the following process, you will change not only how they are experiencing life, but how they feel about the experience, too. For best results, experience it yourself by choosing something in your life that you’d like to change – maybe a sticky habit or an inner conflict. You will find that things feel different afterward.

The Dragon Metaphor Process:

This approach works because it utilizes the way metaphoric processes structure our minds. Metaphor theory states that at a fundamental level our minds work in metaphors, and the metaphors we use are exact representation of how our minds structure our problems. If you have a problem, your mind holds that problem as one unique structure and one unique

metaphor describes that structure. A different problem will have a different structure and a different metaphor. Therefore, if you examine the metaphor you can learn how the mind represents the problem.

However, metaphor theory goes one step further and says that if you change how the metaphor is represented, then the structure underlying the metaphor will alter to match that change. And if you change the structure then you change the problem. Problem behavior is actually caused by the way your mind is currently structuring your previous experience.

By changing that structure, you effect the thing that is causing the problem, and therefore the instant the structure changes, the problem literally disappears.

Begin with helping your child by asking clean questions. This means not leading or offering the answers. Each time they answer, repeat the answer back to them:

1. Identify the problem. Point your child's attention toward whatever is bothering them, whether that is a physical sensation or an uncomfortable emotion. They can give it a name, if they like.

2. Objectify the uncomfortable feeling, suggesting that they imagine that it is a dragon. Ask your child where their dragon is, in proximity to their body.

3. Get a description. Ask them, "What color is the dragon?" They might reply: "It's red".

Continue to get details about the appearance of the dragon:
How big is it?

What does its skin look like? Feel like?

Does it have a tail?

Does it have wings?

What does its head look like? Teeth?

How about its eyes, what color are they? Where are they looking?

4. Next, ask your child, "What kind of mood is that dragon in?"

5. And "How do you feel about your dragon?"

Many kids will give a pretty elaborate description of their dragon. You may even find it helpful to have them draw a picture of their dragon.

6. Next, ask: "What is it that the dragon is trying to do for you?"

Depending on the age of your child, they may already have some insight on why the dragon is present. Perhaps it's part of a healing process, for example. Or, if the dragon represents an emotion, this is an opportunity to talk about the value of emotions.

7. Remind your child that there was a time before that dragon arrived, when they felt more comfortable.

8. Point out to your child what is "on the other side of the dragon" – how it will feel when the dragon isn't being a problem anymore. Encourage them to get in touch with comfort and other positive feelings.

9. Remind your child of their description of the dragon and then ask them, "How would you like the dragon to look?" Have them change the size, the color, the location, all of the details, to better suit them.

10. Once these changes have been made, ask, "How would you like that dragon to feel?" Suggesting that the dragon be like a playful puppy or kitten is often a welcome choice. Kids will usually respond that the dragon is friendlier.

11. Next, ask, “And how do you want to feel about your dragon?”

Note: there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are designed to activate your child’s creative problem-solving skills while allowing you to better understand their perspective on what they are going through.

12. Ask, “It’s time to move forward now. What do you want the dragon to do? Will it come along, or perhaps it can fly off to chase a butterfly?”

13. Provide positive suggestions for feeling better, enjoying the rest of the day, etc.

Have fun with this. You may find that the dragon makes an appearance from time to time and that’s fine – these are great opportunities for your child to get a sense of control over something that used to make them feel out of control.

The original script for this process was titled, Slaying the Dragon, and was created by Wendy McLaren. When utilizing it for children, I quickly found that kids didn’t necessary want to kill their dragon and some even felt affectionate toward it. So, for them, the “taming” frame is more palatable, but I suggest you follow your kid’s lead.

Chapter Nine

Strategies for Medical Procedures

Many of the approaches described in this book are effective for helping your child endure medical procedures, especially if you have practiced them ahead of time. Fear is mostly learned, based on past experiences or from other people's renditions of what they suffered. It's also sourced in the unknown – our imagination is pretty good at filling in the blanks with negative ideas. Reducing fear not only makes it easier on a child, it makes it easier on parents and medical personnel. A relaxed body is much easier to treat than a tense one!

So, you can make these techniques even more compelling when you combine them with expectation that things will go better than imagined. You have already learned about the importance of mental rehearsal, so you can combine the practice of these techniques with creating mental blueprints for smooth sailing through any medical experience.

Magic Spot for Injections

Create belief and expectation that you are going to make a “magic spot” on your child which will prevent them from ever having to suffer from an injection. Show them where you will create this magic spot and just how amazing it is going to be. You may want to create several magic spots, on the upper arms, the hip, etc.

At home, prior to the inoculation appointment, dab the pre-selected location with a Q-tip or piece of cotton wool that has been moistened with icy water and have them notice the cool sensation, telling them that all they will feel is that coldness. Ask them whether it feels like snow, or a bucket of ice cubes, etc.

Later, at the doctor's office, have your child show the doctor or nurse their magic spot locations. Draw attention to that cool feeling as they receive the injection, asking them to notice once again how it feels like snow or like a bucket of ice cubes, etc.

Instruct them that if they ever need another injection, they can point out their "magic spot" to the doctor or nurse. Imagine the sense of empowerment this is providing!

Glove Anesthesia

Hypnotic anesthesia has been used for decades, especially in cases where a patient is not able to tolerate conventional anesthesia. This "feeling of no feeling" is easy for kids to achieve. Here's a recipe:

Hold your child's hand in yours. Tell them to stare at the back of their hand as you place a finger from their other hand on the place they are looking at. Have them imagine that their pointing finger is "chilling" the spot on their hand, that it is sending cool, cold feelings into that spot. Once they agree that they feel the cooling, tell them to allow it spread out, radiating into the hand and becoming even cooler.

You can use some descriptive language to enhance the effect, like, "It's beginning to feel like you put your whole hand into a bucket of ice!" or "Soon, you can notice that your hand is feeling numb...kind of like when you go to the dentist and he makes your mouth numb."

Elevate the feeling with, "Now it feels like your hand is so cold, it can't even feel anymore. It's just like a piece of wood!"

Once this anesthetic sensation is installed into your child's hand, you can suggest they move it to their cheek and transfer the same feeling into his cheek. They can try this on their nose, or on a toe, becoming more adept at applying the

numbing sensation, until they choose to transfer it to the actual site of discomfort.

Ask them if they'd like to remove the "feeling of no feeling" from their hand or if they would rather keep it. Show them how they can easily re-create it on their own by placing the finger tip on the back of the "numbing" hand.

I certainly prefer to use mental anesthesia for kids who have dental phobias over chemical applications. While it may be tempting to have your kid "knocked out" during dental procedures, there is always a risk and it isn't very empowering to the child, either.

Controlling Bleeding

The very first time I taught my own son, then age 8, the power of his own mind occurred when he came running into the house, wailing loudly. He had cut his finger on a piece of glass. It wasn't a deep wound, but the sight of blood certainly added to his fright.

I held his hand under the tap, rinsing it with cold water and instructed him to close his eyes...go into a very special control room in his mind...where he will find the faucet for the bold control flow to that finger. I told him to tighten that faucet, righty-tighty, turn it really low...maybe just to a trickle to clean out any dirt. And when he felt it was clean, he could turn it all the way off.

After a minute, he opened his eyes and was amazed to see that his finger had stopped bleeding. Now, this worked quickly for a small cut and if there is a serious injury, obviously more is needed. But, for minor injuries and things like dental procedures, giving a kid a sense of mastery over things like saliva and blood flow is a big deal. When they feel prepared and able to gain some control, fear is lessened. When fear is lessened, tension is reduced and when that

happens, doctors find that tissues are more pliable and surgery is easier!

Additional suggestions for speedy, comfortable healing can also make a positive difference. Imagery that supports wounds closing cleanly, repairing themselves without scarring, etc., promote faster, better healing.

Distraction Techniques

Kids can be distracted by listening to a story – especially if the story has some surprise element to it. You can take one that you know by heart, maybe even a nursery rhyme, and change it to really grab their attention. For example, maybe “Mary” doesn’t have a little lamb, but she does have a big, purple dinosaur!

You can also direct a child’s attention to the mechanics of what is going on in the room, describing in detail elements of the environment such as the sounds, smells, lighting, etc. Drawing their awareness to specific things makes it harder for them to stay in fearful states. Here’s a simple recipe you can try right now:

Look around your environment and notice all of the yellow things.

Now, notice all of the blue things.

And the green things.

Close your eyes and become aware of a sound. Notice one thing you can hear.

Now, pay attention to a sensation. It may be a feeling in or on your body. (Direct the child’s attention to some part of the body that is not involved with the treatment.)

You can practice this in advance, at home, in the form of a fun game. Imagine that it's a form of Therapeutic "I Spy" and get the whole family involved. When I do this in my hypnosis office, I have one of those colored things be a little surprise for the kid. We later use it to create a tangible object for a positive resource state that can be utilized in the future.

Inner Space Trip

Imagine taking an exploratory trip inside your body...sounds like a great theme for a movie, right? It's also a great theme for a Mindful Hypnosis journey, one that kids love. It's as simple as suggesting that they look at one of their palms and pretend that they are holding a miniature version of themselves, a replica of themselves that is so tiny that it can easily go inside of their own body.

You can then guide your child to explore various systems of the body in a comfortable and fun way. Perhaps they will ride the currents of their blood vessels or maybe they will climb the bones of their skeleton. They can visit any place they are interested in and many kids will give you a running commentary as they do this.

If appropriate, you can suggest that they have a special tool kit to make any repairs that are needed. They can even go to that control room and make any adjustments that will help them feel even better.

Practicing this before any procedures or treatments will make it easier for a kid to repeat it when needed. You can together create a word or phrase that helps them "shrink down" and go inside their own inner self. Be sure to create a command for coming back out, too!

Burn Treatment

Hypnotic approaches are particularly helpful in attending to burn injuries, both immediately following and during the

healing process. When suggestions of cooling are given soon after a burn occurs, the progressive inflammatory response can even be halted.

Some pretty brilliant work with hypnotic and virtual reality technology is being done at many burn treatment centers. The docs at Harborview Burn Center in Seattle, WA, for example, have pioneered the use of virtual reality for pain relief by having patients who are undergoing debridement procedures play a “snowy wonderland” VR game. This greatly reduces their pain experience during what typically can be very uncomfortable.

You don’t need to have fancy technology, however, to make a difference in what your child is experiencing. Kids have the ability to not only create but to step into their own inner fantasies – they just need a little guidance at times. Help your child come up with some imaginary adventures that contain healing, comforting components and let them go!

Some kids like to share what they are imagining, so encourage them to tell the story. Or, you can simply tell them, “It’s none of my business!” if they want to keep it private. Give them the choice to build their sense of control.

Remember, practice before the big game. It’s important that your child is adept at using any of the techniques we offer before they are critically needed. It’s best if they start becoming automatic, in fact, activated with one of those easy anchors that the two of you created!

Utilize a Recording

One of the ways that we hypnotists help people is through the use of repetition – what we are exposed to repeatedly becomes our normal state. Recordings are helpful in this manner, especially when they are customized and contain personal aspects that resonate with the listener.

When you find that a particular approach helps your child find relief, you might make a recording of it. Kids really like to be part of this but you can also just make one yourself. If you don't have recording software on your computer, you can download a free version at audacity.com. This is a program that's easy to use and there are lots of tutorials on YouTube if you need help.

Remember to use positive language and frame suggestions in a present tense, utilizing what you know about your child. Focus on solutions and desired feelings rather than what they may be afraid of.

A recording of 15 to 20 minutes is plenty long enough to input helpful ideas. Keep the content simple and repeat important ideas, allowing for pauses. Silence helps a listener absorb and digest what you are saying.

Have your child listen to the recording every evening, about half an hour before bedtime. Using a Mindful Hypnosis recording during the week prior to a medical procedure or surgery will make a significant impact. And, if desired and appropriate, you might even have them listen to it at the hospital or clinic.

EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique)

There's another easy, organic way to help kids get more comfortable in the doctor's clinic or hospital. I'll introduce you to EFT in the following chapter...

Chapter Ten

Dealing with Painful Emotions

It's not so much what happens in life, it's the meaning we place to it that determines our levels of joy...or suffering. When pain experiences are accompanied by heavy emotions, it often magnifies the physical sensations. This is why I can help someone who has chronic pain change the way they are feeling about themselves and their life, so that even if they still have the pain, it doesn't bother them as much!

Encourage your child to express themselves – some kids believe they need to be “tough” and prevent themselves from getting in touch with the sadness, frustration, disappointment and fear that can accompany chronic illness and pain. Discharging these emotions helps relieve tension and stress, thereby increasing comfort.

Here's a technique we like to use for helping children (and adults) let go of limiting thoughts and feelings. We recommend you check it out!

In all my 20 years of clinical experience, I have yet to encounter any healing modality that is consistently as effective in resolving human health challenges as EFT.

~ Dr. Joseph Mercola

EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) is a simple, yet amazing energy technique for safely releasing negative emotions. It involves tapping on various acupressure points on the body and can be used to effectively handle your child's emotional crises and at the same time diffuse and calm your own reactions – making it an empowering method for both children and parents.

Emotional Freedom Technique, otherwise known as EFT, is a form of energy psychology that involves tapping on powerful acupuncture points while redirecting the mind. We don't claim to know exactly how this thing works, we just know that it does, time and time again. With kids, we find the short version to be easier for them to own so we will be sharing the faster EFT process. This consists of tapping on four points and conditioning in an anchor for a state of calm. This variation was developed by Robert Smith and you can learn more from his free videos on his web site, fastereft.com.

One of the most important aspects of using EFT involves creating expectation within your kid that what you are sharing with them will help. For teens, do a sound setup in this regard, explaining how our body downloads the emotional content of what we experience and how that might take a toll on us. Using EFT helps to discharge that download in a very organic way, often without having to even delve deeply into the conscious awareness of the problem. This can be very attractive to young people and get them on board.

Start by setting an anchor for peace and calm. With adults, we usually have clients simply think of a vacation spot or whatever it is that allows them a sense of peace. With kids, it's not always that straight forward. Sometimes asking kids how they will feel when this problem is solved and have them imagine feeling it, will get you the dose of relief that you can then anchor.

As a parent or caregiver, you have the advantage of knowing your kid better than we do in a clinical setting. So, you can guide them to have them think about something or someone that makes them feel better. It may be a person, but it could be their pet or a favorite meal or a sport they enjoy.

When you see them accessing this resource state, you can simply have them open their eyes and grab their wrist as

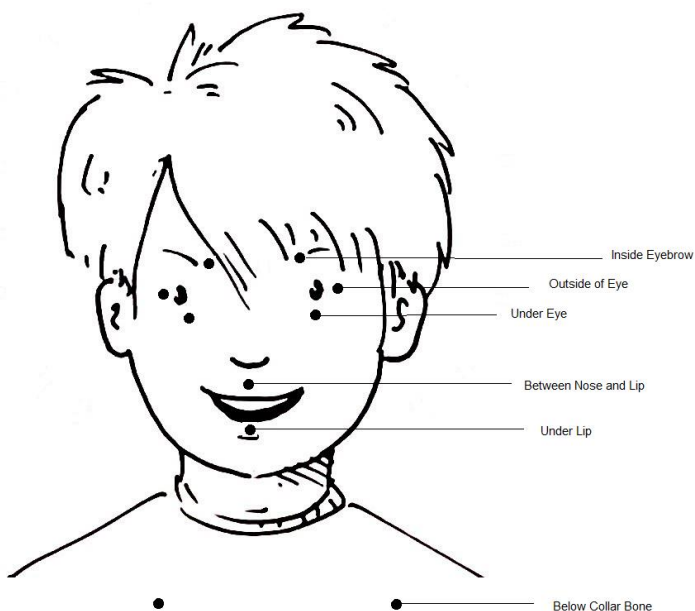
they take a deep breath in and exhale saying “*let go*” or “*feel good*” or you can have the kid come up with a word or phrase that feels good.

By having this anchor, your kid can sometimes just use this for a quick shift when EFT may not be appropriate or they're not comfortable tapping. (Although, it's a good idea to show a kid how they *can* tap covertly, under a desk or on their thigh, for example.)

Now let's link it to the tapping of the acupuncture points. Start by having your kid think of the fear or emotion linked to the issue. Ask where they feel it in their body and then tap on yourself and ask them to follow. At each tapping point you are just asking the kid to say, “*I can let this go*”. The first point is between your eyebrows (your third eye) Then tap on the side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, under the lip and then on the upper chest, all while repeating and having the kid repeat “*I can let this go*”. Then grab your wrist, take a deep breath in and as you slowly exhale say “*peace*” or whatever works for your kid.

We do this several times, sometimes spending a whole session tapping on any and all emotions linked to the issue. If it's for a habit like nail biting, hair pulling or some other compulsive feeling, we keep having the kid go and get the feeling right before they bite their nails or pull their hair and we teach them to tap it down. This gives them time to really learn this technique while systematically helping the brain to rewire the compulsion. You might be surprised how quickly and thoroughly this technique works for kids.

Note: You can use all the tapping points mentioned or you can just use a few of them. Don't overwhelm or confuse your kid – keep it simple!



For children who can't tolerate even gentle tapping, we suggest more of a soft, rubbing, circular motion. Options include allowing the child to do his own tapping or having the parent administer it.

We have found EFT to be especially beneficial for children on the autism spectrum. This gently energy work helps calm even the most anxious and distraught child. I've taught parents how to use EFT to calm nonverbal kids, stopping stimming and other stressful behavior.

One approach is to do the work in conjunction with a favorite song - this helps settle the nervous system and discharge negative emotions...all of which help take the suffering out of pain.

I suggest that you use EFT before bed: you can tap gently on your child as they tell you their story of their day. Or, you can have your child tap on themselves or even on you – the tapping ritual is a beautiful way to connect physically with your child.

Note: Although this section mentions using EFT for relieving emotional pain, it works wonderfully for changing physical sensations. I've helped kids tap away pain, itching, cravings and more.

Here are some links for additional information and free instructional downloads:

emofree.com

eftuniverse.com

tappingforkids.wordpress.com

Laughter Therapy

It's easy to assume that children are natural laughers and there is even an urban myth that espouses how children laugh 400 times a day, compared to an adult's mere 15 times. While children do tend to be more in the moment and able to enjoy life as it comes, the truth is that levels of anxiety and depression in children are on the rise.

Research demonstrates a dramatic increase in the occurrence of depression and anxiety in children over the last fifty years. One recently released study, conducted by experts at San Diego State University, examined research that compared young people's sense of control and found that a higher level of anxiety and depression was correlated with a lower level of sense of control over external influences. In other words, the more children worried about things outside of their personal, intrinsic control, the more they suffered from mental distress.

Carol Dweck, in her popular book, *Mindset*, makes the point that children do not build self-esteem and create success by being told how good, smart, able, etc., they are; instead, it is through experiential lessons that they become equipped with the confidence and skills required to thrive in life.

When working in the area of pediatric hypnosis, we recognize the value of empowering children with a sense of control. Teaching them to self-regulate not only emotionally, but physically, is one of the common goals with the hypnotic approach. And when it comes to teaching someone of any age something that you want them to learn, if you make it FUN, they will learn it easily. Laughing is fun!

Many modern children are really lacking in the area of play. With over-filled, adult-managed schedules, kids are on task from their early waking moments through a busy day, often engaged with activities until late at night. The loss of play and free time is taking a toll on young people, not to mention overall family well-being.

Our friend and colleague, Michael Ellner, often mourned that too many people of all ages suffer from FDD – Fun Deficiency Disorder! Imagine using laughter techniques on a daily basis, to provide a fun and light-hearted approach to the *seriousness* of life. Incorporating some of our laughter exercises into your family's daily routine will not only help you help your child alleviate tension and stress, it will help them stay ahead of it.

I'm providing you with some recipes for laughter but, of course, you can also make up your own! Kids are filled with creativity and will quickly invent fun and crazy laughter exercises. When you engage children with finding solutions through play, amazing things happen.

Some families who really get into this start a Laughter Recipe File, decorating a recipe box or book and filling it with 3 x 5

index cards containing their laughter ideas. Randomly choosing the “Laugh of the Day” makes healthy laughter a regular part of your family’s lifestyle.

TIP: Make laughing with older adults a part of your child’s experience – these two age groups need each other for a variety of reasons! If you don’t have any in your family, reach out into the community and find some.

One of the traits of a person who is resilient in life is flexibility, so we encourage you to develop a wide range of laughs. Many of these exercises are ripe for improvisation and variety, which will help you discover the diversity of “laughter voices” you and your child possess.

Animals - Move, gesture and make laughing sounds like a lion, monkey, duck, horse or any other animal. Dave created a variant called *Cross Breeds* using the movements of one animal and the sounds of another. For example, a dog that clucks like a chicken, or an elephant that moos like a cow.

Moods - The gestures, expressions and sounds we make vary greatly based on mood and energy. Explore what it's like to laugh when shy. Try nervous. Then embarrassed. Imitate a villain doing an evil laugh. Notice the delightful strain in the cheeks and jaw when laughing in slow motion. Imagine being at a religious service and having to hold in inappropriate laughter when you hear someone fart. Allow yourself to exuberantly laugh in silence. Throw your arms out wide and laugh heartily with total abandon.

Sprinkler - Begin with one arm in front of you, elbow bent at a right angle so the hand touches the opposite elbow. Extend the second arm straight out and move that hand in an arc a few inches at a time, simulating the sound of a lawn sprinkler (ch-ch-ch-ch). When the hand reaches the end of its range of motion, incrementally bring it back to its starting position

“spraying” laughter along its path (huh-huh-huh-huh). Reverse arms and repeat. Then use both arms as sprayers. Finally, remove the nozzle and have a water fight with your friends.

Around the World - Many places have names that lend themselves to laughter sounds, especially those that end with vowels. Say each place, and then everyone around can repeat it with the extended laughter sounds. Examples: laughter yoga was invented in India-ah-ah-ah; in Finland, they laugh in Helsinki-he-he-he; Mexicans laugh in Baja-ha-ha-ha. Some names that don't end in vowels: Yuck-Yuck-Yucatan, Kandahar-dy-har-har, Cle-he-he-he-veland.

Laughter Center - Point to your throat, then your heart, then your belly, then your funny bone, then any other parts of your body and for each one discover that each part of you laughs with a different voice.

Hot Sand - Imagine walking on the beach on a very sunny day, hopping, jumping and otherwise staying light on your feet because the hot sand is burning them.

Gotta Pee - When you gotta go, you gotta go, but sometimes the bathroom is occupied. Do the pee-pee dance and laugh while you wait your turn.

Happy Feet Laughter

“Everybody laughs the same in every language because laughter is a universal connection.”

~ Yakov Smirnoff

I learned this laughter exercise from my friend and colleague, Nathan Welch, an incredible therapist helping children and families in the U.K.

Nathan was watching a documentary about an indigenous tribe in Papua New Guinea and noticed that these people rated their success and status on their ability to be happy. The chief was the happiest man in the village, which is a pretty cool way to run a meritocracy, when you think about it!

Whenever they wanted to generate more happiness the tribal members got together and started to dance and jump and the more they did, the happier they became. Fascinating things, dancing and jumping, and Nath got to thinking how useful and easy this would be to incorporate with his clients.

Here is how to use feet and laughter to create happy states: Have you ever wondered about times when your feet have just been *so* happy? It's easy to remember times of kicking leaves, splashing in puddles, jumping, running and dancing...all times when feet are having such a great time.

You might even consider which foot feels the happiest or maybe you want to start smaller, with a toe. Focus on how happy one toe feels and then let that feeling spread to the next toe, and the next. Wiggle your toes a bit, letting them express those good sensations. Now, let that happiness move over to the other foot, too.

Have you noticed that your toes and your feet automatically want to start tapping and moving around? Go ahead and let that happen – invite the happiness to spread and become even bigger. Imagine what happens as those feel good energies move upward from your feet.

Now it's time, if you haven't already, to start giggling. When you are ready, turn the giggles into an audible laugh. Time your laughter with the wiggling and tapping of your feet and toes. If you are able, stand up and begin to hop, jump, or dance. Let loose! Laugh from the happy feet place and

imagine spreading all of that joy outward, even as you feel wonderful inside.

You can use this Happy Feet Laughter technique to move away from things that are not helpful and healing and move toward things that *are* helpful and healing.

Our thanks go to indigenous populations the world over who can teach many of us the true art of being happy and in the moment.

Laugh about Nothing and Turn up the Giggle Factor

“Let the giggles fill your mouth because nothing tastes as sweet as laughter.”

~ Richelle E. Goodrich

One of the most effective hypnotic visualization approaches for teaching a person how to self-regulate, whether it is for physical sensations or emotions, is by using the control room metaphor. Here’s how we do it:

Imagine that you are entering a very special room that is located deep within your mind. As you do, you notice that it is vast, and the walls are lined with banks of softly flashing colored lights. It occurs to you that this is some kind of control room...and you are right: this is a control room in which not only your anatomy is measured and regulated, but so are your emotions, hopes and dreams.

For the purposes of this book, I want to direct your attention to the area where your emotional feelings are calibrated and controlled. Specifically, imagine the controls for your sense of humor and even your giggle factor. You may see the measurement as some form of digital readout, or perhaps there is a lever or a dial or even a color-coded device.

Whatever you see is just fine. You might notice at what level that control is currently set; perhaps it's rather neutral or, if you were just thinking of something funny, it may be indicating a heightened sense of humor. What do you think might happen if you turn it up a bit?

What do you think might happen if you turn it up a lot? If you are curious and open to it, go ahead and do that now.

As you do, notice how that giggle factor almost feels like it is being tickled. It's a fact that your body is instantly responding to whatever you are thinking and when you are thinking of just laughing for no reason...your body delightfully responds. Go ahead...turn it up even more and enjoy the sensation of chuckling...giggling...you can turn it up to such an intensity that you can even start to laugh out loud.

Notice how great that feels! It feels great to giggle and laugh and it especially feels great to know that you are the one making it happen. Now you have a new tool for turning up the laughter factor and it's as easy as just imagining that control or gauge and then dialing it up. You may find that you want to do it, more and more!

Do-Re-Mi-Ha - This is a fun one, especially if you can't carry a tune with a bucket! Use the classic scale song, substituting "Ha" for each note. Start slowly and then speed up with each rendition. Focus on your breath, making sure to take in a deep breath before starting up the scale and also before going back down again.

The classic lyrics:

*Doe, a deer, a female deer
Ray, a drop of golden sun
Me, a name I call myself
Far, a long, long way to run*

*Sew, a needle pulling thread
La, a note to follow Sew
Tea, a drink with jam and bread
That will bring us back to Doe (oh-oh-oh)*

Wicked Witch Cackle - Admit it, sometimes it's *so* fun to be bad. Channel the Wicked Witch of the East and notice what a good gut workout you get. You might even see some flying monkeys!

Yodel-a-Ha-Ha - No lederhosen required for this one, but you might find that you imagine yourself in the Alps, belting out a lovely laughing yodel.

Santa Claus - Feel the deep belly breaths as you laugh like Santa "HO-HO-HO."

Woodchopper - Clasp your hands together above your head with your fingers interlaced. Bring your arms down in three swift movements accompanying three forceful exhales of "HA."

Alooha - Similar to Woodchopper, but more gentle and drawn out. Reach both arms above your head and say "Aloooo..." and when you've held that stretch and breath long enough then slowly bring your arms down and exhale with a hearty "HA." Another version is to do a Hawaiian hula dance, swaying your hips and alternating waving arms on either side of your body while singing "Aloha-ha-ha-ha, Aloha-ha-ha-ha."

Bathing Laughter - Pretend to take a shower and as you lather up let the imaginary bar of soap tickle you and release laughter bubbles. Or, bring a bottle of soap bubbles to bath time and challenge your kid to pop bubbles with their laughter.

Anti-Road Rage Laughter - While pretending to be stuck in traffic, or driving on a crowded roadway, discover what amusing laughter sounds your car horn can make (such as “A-OOO-GA”).

Sing and Laugh Rounds - Using your favorite “round” songs, exchange the lyrics for laughter. Songs like “Row, row, row your boat” work great for getting the whole family having fun and feeling good.

Clean-and-Laugh - Move about pretending to do ordinary chores while laughing.

There are unlimited opportunities for you to engage your children with laughter exercises:

- When waking them up in the morning
- Before enjoying a healthy meal
- During commutes to school or activities
- As a part of traditional Family Night
- Making laughter recipes a ritual for starting the weekend
- To complement household chores
- While in the bathtub
- Laughing away stress at the end of the day

Research has shown that distraction is a great pain reliever for children. Distract them with the silliness of intentional and unconditional laughter and watch them get in touch with more comfortable sensations. Not only does laughter help reduce the emotional suffering that comes with pain and illness, it elicits physiological changes in the body that improve comfort levels.

Combining visual imagery, along with other senses, is easy to do with children. Children are mostly in nice little trance states and children in pain are particularly suggestible.

Utilize those amazing creative minds with exercises that help them laugh the pain away.

TIP: It's not necessary to have children who are suffering exert themselves – even a gentle laugh will trigger relief.

The above laughter recipes come from the book I wrote with Dave Berman; you can read more about Laughter Therapy at laughterforthehealthofit.com

Your Inner Child Wants to Play

Children delight in learning creative mind-body play and when these simple exercises give them relief, they continue to use them. Kids also enjoy being able to present them to others, so let them know that they may just want to share their “secret powers” with family members and friends!

The most effective parents are able to join children in their own cognitive territory: the realm of the imagination. So, tap into your own inner child to be able to help your child feel better!

“A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men.”

~ Willy Wonka

I Am Here to Help

I wrote this book to educate and empower you to be able to make a difference in your child's life. There are many qualified and experienced pediatric hypnotherapists who are dedicated to providing parents and caregivers with a safe, effective and affordable approach to improve the lives and health of children living with pain.

Feel free to contact me for further help. If I can't serve you, I probably know someone who can!

Kelley



Kelley T. Woods is a Registered Hypnotherapist and has been in private clinical hypnosis practice since 2002, located in Anacortes, Washington. She is a well-respected hypnosis mentor and educator and is considered a thought leader in Pediatric Hypnosis.

In addition to several other trade books, Kelley is the co-author of *Integrative Hypnosis for Kids and Teens*, winner of the 2017 Pen and Quill Award for Literary Excellence from the International Medical and Dental Hypnosis Association. She also co-wrote *Secrets of the River: Riding the Creative Wave in Hypnotic Pediatrics and Family Therapy*.

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