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Self-Hypnosis: personal development for the psychotherapist

As a psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor, I have noticed that other members of the helping professions are among the most frequent clients in our center. They may come as students, clients, supervisees, peers, but they come. For all the richness and diversity inherent in the practice our art, we have to recognize the stresses and risks of burn-out that we all face. So I was wondering how I might better support my personal and professional growth and development—take care of myself—while taking care of others. Self-hypnosis provides some answers.

As an Ericksonian hypnotherapist, I appreciate both the notion and the value of the everyday trance. The hypnotic state represents an amplification of natural processes and rhythms we have all observed in our daily lives. For self-hypnosis we can not only recognize these patterns but welcome them and use them to guide us.

My favourite definition of self-hypnosis is one of Erickson's: "thinking for the self, by the self, and thinking freely and easily, just wondering about what the self has to offer for the self" (quoted by R Havens in *The Wisdom of Milton H Erickson*, New York: Irvington, 1985). We find here that the self becomes the center of interest—at last! The relationship is free and easy, for the self is curious, wondering how it can be of service to itself. In self-hypnosis there are no time pressures since there is no time. It doesn't exist. There is no critical voice to tell us that's not the way we should be doing this. There is cooperation, there is wonder, openness to questioning, suspension of judgement, self acceptance. Self hypnosis means spending time with yourself—quality time in close company with someone who is always there *with* you, and *for* you, if you play your cards right, no matter what, for ever.