

Becoming a Professional Hypnotherapist: The Confidence Equation

The Eight Things You Need For Automatic Confidence as a Professional

by Katin Imes, President of The American Association of Professional Hypnotherapists

Confidence is your number one asset as a professional hypnotherapist.

The number one thing you need to be successful in your own business as a hypnotherapist is confidence. When you are talking to people about hypnosis and yourself, confidence is the magic element that will engage their curiosity to listen to you, and inspire their trust to believe in you. When you are hypnotizing people, confidence is the most influential element regardless of method or technique.

If you are faltering in your explanation of things, or unsure in your answers to their questions - if you aren't 100% congruent and confident - then people just won't trust you. They won't be attracted to your offer, and your business will be slow going. Hypnotizing without confidence will be tough going.



How do you create a solid basis of confidence as a professional hypnotherapist?

You are looking to create solid opportunities and openings with many, many people, and that means confidence is required.

You can think of confidence in yourself and in hypnosis as a beautifully baked and decorated cake, delightful in presentation and delicious to experience. Everyone who sees that cake will want to try a slice! Let's look deeper at the recipe for this cake. What is it, really, that culminates into solid confidence as a hypnotherapist?

There are eight key factors to creating a strong foundation of confidence that emanates from you unconsciously, all the time.

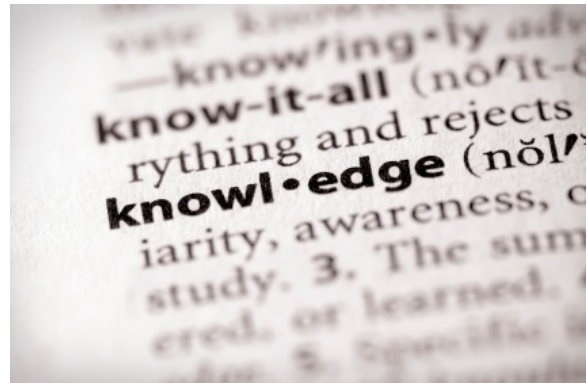
1. Solid knowledge of hypnosis and hypnotherapy.

Of course, there is always more to learn, and no one can know everything about hypnosis and hypnotherapy, but you should know a lot. For a list of hypnosis subjects that you should know well, check out the list in Appendix A.

Knowledge of the field, industry, methods and techniques.

Classes, books, web sites, videos, podcasts and trivia should all be part of your learning experience. This is the 21st century, and a critical business skill to have is the ability to manage and direct your own learning, leveraging all the resources available on the Internet. Your instructor-led class at a hypnosis school will probably have one or two textbooks, but you should have read at least twenty books on hypnosis and hypnotherapy, including three to five books on your specialty, before considering yourself well-versed in hypnosis.

Much of that reading can be done even before you begin classes. In fact, most people read two or three books on hypnosis before even deciding that they want to be a professional hypnotherapist, and in that case, they already have a good start on their reading list.



Ongoing continuing education and lifelong learning.

Once you have completed your training at a quality school, plan to make it part of every week in your professional life to engage in some kind of continuing education. Always be reading, researching, writing, attending conferences, exploring blogs, listening to podcasts, taking online classes, home study classes or watching videos to be constantly expanding your knowledge of the field and the industry status quo. That's part of being a professional, and that continues to build your knowledge and confidence.

2. Experience putting people into trance and managing trance sessions.

This is one area where classroom, instructor-led training is so important. There is so much subtlety in various aspects of effectively hypnotizing someone, so many tiny things that weave together to make a session truly enjoyable, smooth and professional. There is no substitute for being in the room with an experienced teacher hypnotizing someone, and then hypnotizing someone (your classmates, usually) yourself ten minutes later. There is also tremendous learning in being hypnotized many times by your teachers and fellow students.

This is the missing component of home-study courses, distance-learning courses and Internet courses. These kinds of learning have value, to be sure, but the confidence that comes from the hours of classroom, face-to-face experience just can't be matched by any other way of learning. There is something about actually hypnotizing people under the eye and guidance of a quality teacher that creates a level of confidence and competence that I haven't seen people get any other way. It is the fastest way to learn proven methods and techniques, unconsciously absorb subtleties, and see and learn things that you just wouldn't otherwise. Classroom practice is productive practice.

Can you learn to be a good hypnotherapist without classroom training? Of course you can. It is just a longer path that has more potholes of mistakes, trial-and-error, and possible missing resources. I think practicing willy-nilly on people when you don't have actual training is rather rude, and yet you must practice on people to be good at hypnosis no matter how you learn it. Hypnotherapy is a live, in-person skill and process for your clients; the best way to learn this skill and all its aspects is from a qualified instructor, in a live, in-person way.

After you have 50+ hours of classroom training and experience, then you can really make great use of the home-study and distance-learning programs to expand your knowledge.

Also, your teachers will require you to practice hypnotizing everyone you know as homework (after your classroom practice). Friends, family and co-workers are all possible subjects in your quest for confidence by practicing with as many different people and as many different mindsets as you can. The extra push to do this as required homework is really handy to get you actually do it. The time you spend practicing with all these different people with different perspectives is invaluable, and it is a huge element of building your confidence.

*Direct experience
and success
hypnotizing many
different people for
many different
kinds of things.*



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*Skill and training
in hypnotic
language design;
getting beyond the
need for scripts.*

3. Skill and practice creating custom sessions on the spot.

I know that many hypnotherapists use scripts for partial or entire sessions, or even just for suggestion wording. If you rely on a script for each session, then your confidence is gone as soon as someone asks for something for which you don't have a script. Plus, if you rely on scripts, your confidence will be shaken by the new MP3-download availability on the Internet, the iPhone applications (some of which are 12 sessions in one), and all the instant digital product that is rapidly becoming widely available for iPods and MP3 players. Why should anyone pay

you to read a script when they can get a script read to them on their iPhone or computer at one-tenth the price? And by a famous, high-profile hypnotist, at that? And when they can listen to the MP3 as many times as they want, whenever they want?



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To be successful as a hypnotherapist, you'll need to be able to remain confident answering those kinds of questions. You'll need to be able to explain why an in-person session with a hypnotherapist, even with its higher cost and required scheduling, is worth so much more than a downloaded MP3. Part of that

value is customized suggestions and tailored language to perfectly match the needs, the world-view and the understanding of the client. Scripts can't do that, and so you need to be confident in your ability to create custom sessions as part of the standard client process.

The skill of eliciting specific languaging and suggestions from the client and then tailoring them into hypnotic and post-hypnotic suggestions is not difficult to learn and practice, and it makes the session much more powerful and effective for the client. Once you understand how it works, your confidence to work with any client problem will be rock solid.

A good plan for handling clients that are beyond your skill, training, license or law.

4. A plan for identifying and managing referrals out to licensed health professionals.

Unless you are already a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist, you don't want to be hypnotizing persons that are suicidal, schizophrenic, psychotic, under heavy medication, or anyone who is mentally unstable. Even with 300+ hours of hypnotherapy training, you don't have the skill, knowledge or legal status to deal with serious mental illness. So you need a plan to be able to identify ill people, and a trusted place or person to which you can send them if they show up at your office.

Your intake form, along with a few questions on the phone or in person, will help you identify high-risks of serious mental illness. It is up to you to locate quality mental health professionals and facilities in your local area, and learn the best ways to refer people to them. Practice the conversation of referring someone many times in class so it will come easily and without stress when you need it.

5. A specialty that sparks your passion.

A hypnotic specialty that you love to talk about, learn about and apply.

And if possible, to demonstrate as well.

This should be something that piques your interest and fascinates you, something that sparks your passion. When you speak about your passion, you see, you light up like a pinball machine, and the words come naturally. The confidence level is usually very high with your specialty, since you have done all kinds of extra reading and practice with it. Extra study is easy and fun. Having a specialty is a huge advantage when talking to people. Besides giving you a terrific basis for sparkling conversation, it also gives other people a tag to remember you, something that makes you unique even among other hypnotherapists. It also makes you a shoo-in choice for people who want hypnotherapy specifically for your specialty.



There are big benefits to having a specialty - make sure you pick one that really is fascinating and exciting for you. If you don't find one in the classic set of specialties, you may want to invent a new one!

6. A professional support network.

Here is another area where the hypnosis schools with classrooms and instructors offer great benefit. Everyone has different questions about setting up a business, an office, and all the parts and pieces of that. Your classmates and instructors are very valuable resources.



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I went to night school for three semesters to get advanced certification in hypnotherapy, and my classmates included six nurses, two psychiatrists, four counselors, two dentists, a real estate broker, marketing specialists, an accountant, five life coaches and a man who had run his own auto-body shop for fifteen years, among others. After being in class with these people for an entire semester, they become your friends and colleagues, and they are an incredible source of knowledge, experience perspective and advice in the business and professional world. It's great to go to lunch with a few of these people and to share

expertise and resources with each other.

A network of people and resources to help you in any area of business that you need.

A set of professionals for tasks that are out of your areas of skills and knowledge: an attorney, a book-keeper, a web master, a print shop, a fulfillment house...

Another place to find resources, colleagues, answers and support is a professional association. Choose one that has the kinds of activities and resources that you want. Associations can also be good referral sources, as they often get calls from the public asking for good hypnotherapists. Some associations provide staff, advisors or online forums where you can ask questions and get advice.

An association can provide you with ongoing updates for intake and office forms, state laws, and industry news. Some associations offer continuing education programs, conferences and other activities. In many cases, you can connect with other professional hypnotherapists in the association to discuss business challenges, techniques and resources.

Having a solid network of support for your professional and business will provide an important element of confidence to you.

7. A business plan.

I don't mean a stuffy 30+ page document with market analysis, break-even analysis and financial projections that banks want.

What I mean is simply a few pages that outline what you need for the first 12-24 months of business and how you are going to get those things you need.



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For example, a plan for your office space: will you rent, lease or share? Do you want to use hourly or dedicated space? How are you going to keep your bookkeeping? Do you want a separate bank account for the business?

A plan would include also simple checklist of things to do, such as purchase business insurance and register your business name with the county and state (which is the same as obtaining any required business licenses for your area). If you don't know how to do something, then the item on your check list would be to find the person or information that will help you figure out how to do it.

Do you want a web site? Who can help you with that, and what budget do you want to set for it? What about local groups and networking? Which groups would you like to join, and what are their requirements?

Do you want to provide clients with recordings of their sessions, and sell customized audio sessions as well? If so, what equipment do you want for recording those? Do you want to give out CD's or MP3's or both? If you don't know what you need to do that, then who can help you find out?

Your business plan is really just simple questions and simple answers for making sure you have the resources and support to cover all the usual aspects of doing business. Part of the plan can be to find the people and resources that you want over time; you don't need to have everything perfect on day one. The critical part - the part that gives you the confidence - is knowing that you are aware of all the business operational needs and that you either have them covered, or you have a plan in action to get them covered.

A written set of decisions and answers to the needs of any business, and a checklist for things to complete and have in place.

*A clean psyche
around success and
service.*

8. Belief in yourself.

Finally, if you have all of the above ingredients, and you still don't feel confident, then it is time to conquer the demons inside yourself or that linger in your past. Luckily, as a hypnotherapist, you have at your fingertips some of the best resources possible for doing just that.

Look to your classmates and instructors, or perhaps a mentor hypnotherapist to work with you to dissolve doubts and fears that are nagging at you from your past. Use whatever methods and modalities that you like: NLP, past life regression, inner child work, inner conflict resolution, anything you want. Jump in, and be as determined to learn as much from the process as to heal from it.

Afterwards, stay aware of your needs and aware of what makes you fly with energy and excitement. Whatever that is, arrange to get plenty of it. That way, your energy, sparkle, attitude and life will have plenty of zest and satisfaction.

*All combined, it
creates a very
strong foundation
for a natural and
sparkling
confidence.*

Welcome to Complete Confidence

With these eight factors in place, you will find that people are naturally curious and interested in you and in hypnosis. You will find that there are always people at every gathering, party or meeting that are interested and fascinated by hypnosis and

have questions for you. You'll be passing out a lot of business cards, so be prepared!

Enjoy the process and the attention, and give each person the same respect and focus when answering their questions regardless of how many times you've answered the question before or how elementary or basic the questions are, and you'll find your business quickly growing. It all comes so much easier with magic of well-formed confidence.



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APPENDIX A: TOPICS OF STUDY FOR HYPNOTHERAPISTS

2010

Topics of General Understanding

- Hypnosis in history
- Commercial hypnosis: hypnotherapy, stage, street, Internet
- Recent hypnosis research: fMRI, neuroimaging, other
- Status quo in medical, legal, research, general market
- Conducive environment & settings
- Related and similar fields & methods
- Trance-inducing technologies & devices

Topics of Specific Understanding

- Common myths of hypnosis
- Applications of hypnosis
- Principles of hypnosis
- Ethics & scope of practice
- Legal Requirements for Professional Hypnotherapists
- Record keeping & case files
- Client safety & testing limits

Topics of Understanding and Practice

- Self hypnosis techniques
- Rapport, pacing and leading to trance
- Suggestibility tests
- Induction techniques, incl. rapid inductions
- Trance deepening techniques
- Trance depth scales
- Somatic observation skills
- Touch training
- Trance management
- Time distortion
- Metaphor and transformative models
- Client interviewing & key suggestion and terminology elicitation
- Hypnotic language & suggestion structures
- Post hypnotic suggestions
- Voice training
- Recording sessions & audio production: technology, equipment & practices
- Advanced induction & trance techniques

Topics of Specialty (a sampling)

- Abduction & Encounters
- ADD & ADHD
- Athletic Performance & Sports Hypnosis
- Cancer Support & Healing
- Childbirth
- Corporate stress reduction programs
- Creativity
- Grief & Hospice Support
- Guided Visualization & Meditation
- Hypnoanesthesia
- Inner Child
- Inner Conflict Resolution (aka Parts Therapy)
- Learning & Study Habits
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming (big)
- Medical hypnosis
- Memory & Recall
- Motivation & Self-Esteem
- Pain Control
- Past Life Regression / Age Regression
- Phobias & Fears
- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Sleep & Insomnia
- Smoking Cessation
- Stage hypnosis
- Street hypnosis
- Stress & Anxiety Management
- Time Line Therapy
- Weight Loss & Weight Control

Hypnosis can be combined with nearly any other health modality to create powerful, fresh healing and health processes. Professionals often use hypnosis as an adjunct to another kind of therapy or work that they do.

What new and amazing combinations could you create using hypnosis? In what other domains are you an expert or explorer?