

Week 9 Video 1 Stress Management and Balloon Breathing

I tend to get referrals from physicians who send me their patients for stress management. Of course, people are stressed about all sorts of different things. Coming from physicians, those referrals tend to be really stressed about their physical issues and what their future is going to be like. Most people are rarely stressed about past experiences but they do come in and cause stress, so with stress management hypnosis, it's a series of three to five sessions and through those sessions, I teach my clients how to do, number one, a special kind of breathing that I call balloon breathing and the second is the most important aspect of stress management which is teaching them how to condition their mind and body to relax.

Now of course, underlying all of this has to do with thought changing because whatever they're thinking about is causing them stress. It takes a while to teach clients that this is what's going on. We don't want our clients to come in and say, "Okay, just do hypnosis and let it be a magic pill so I'm no longer stressed." Well, that's not going to happen because many people, if they're not stressed about this, they are going to be stressed about this. You do your best to teach them and give them the tools.

So, I'm going to give you the one called balloon breathing, and it's a very simple breathing technique. When a client uses this breathing technique, it's almost impossible for them to feel the physical stress that they feel. Balloon breathing is something that some people in yoga have used. It's a wonderful way of adding visualization along with breathing. So I'm going to teach it to you right now. It's a lot of fun, it's very simple.

I want you to imagine that in your stomach that you have a big balloon, and in a moment, I'm going to ask you to breathe in and I'm going to ask you to imagine that you're actually breathing in and making this balloon fill up and you can kind of see that my belly is sticking out because I'm filling up the balloon. When I exhale, I'm going to allow that balloon to kind of collapse, okay.

So do me a favor, you can close your eyes while you listen to me or keep your eyes open but I'd like you to imagine this balloon in your belly and while you're sitting down, just drop your shoulders just a little bit. Most of us tend to breathe up here and when we get stressed, we're breathing up here and our breathing gets shallow. Allowing the breathing to go lower and lower down towards the diaphragm automatically has a physical way of relaxing our body.

So now, I'd like you just to imagine that balloon, it doesn't matter what color it is and as you inhale, make your stomach go out and fill that balloon up. So inhale now, fill up the balloon, pause for a second, exhale, and allow that balloon to collapse. Now, you're going to do this in your own time as quickly or as slowly as you want and continue to do this kind of breathing but you're going to condition your body to keep on slowing it down. So let's do about five more of these breaths. The next time when I ask you to fill up the balloon, when you exhale, I want you to imagine any way you choose, that worries, negative thoughts, anxiety is being exhaled out of your body. So, fill up the balloon breathing in, fill it up, pause, exhale. Just imagine the stress, the negativity leaving your body. Good. And when you're ready, fill up the balloon again all the way and as you exhale, just imagine it leaving and some people imagine it leaving almost as if the way steam dissipates above a pot of boiling water. Whatever you choose is absolutely fine. Continue to breathe in, fill up the balloon, exhale, and imagine that stress physically leaving your body. And you can continue to do this while I'm talking for the next few minutes. As you continue to breathe, just focus your attention only on the breathing and exhaling, breathing and exhaling, filling up the balloon. Keep filling it and exhaling. Simply doing this for a minute or two minutes a few times a day is going to help you and the client feel more and more centered, more physically relaxed.

When we're stressed, we're up like this. When we're physically relaxed, we can't have that kind of stress like that. And in fact, you cannot have that balloon breathing occurring and feel stress in your shoulders at the same time. I want you to try it out, see, test it. And as you keep on breathing, just focus your attention back here on me and let me share with you the second part of stress management with hypnosis.

The second part of stress management with hypnosis is the conditioning part of this. I have a client a number of years ago came to me, he was about 71 and he was retired from Bryn Mawr College. He was in the Languages. And somehow, retiring caused him to be even more stressed than working full time at Bryn Mawr. He came, referred to me by his physician, because one of the things he wanted to do was reduce his high blood pressure medication. He hated how it made him feel and the only way he could do that was reduce his stress and also prove to his physician that he could keep his blood pressure down by reducing his stress. So, the first session is really about finding out what's going on in this person's life. What are the stress thoughts like? Where does he feel the stress? And asking him to go to a favorite place in nature, a place where he always feels calm and relaxed.

So, he closed his eyes and he described this beautiful beach scene. He was the only person on the beach and he described the horizon where it meets the ocean and he described a little white sailboat way over there just slowly sailing over the horizon. And he's describing this and I'm writing down everything he says, every single word about that little white sail that he said almost looks like a white triangle. Okay, white triangle.

Once I had a serene place, then I was able to teach him self-hypnosis and in self-hypnosis, that's the place where he always goes to. His homework assignment was to do this three times a day for about two minutes each time. In addition, I also did a hypnosis and in that hypnosis, I used the ego strengthening, I used direct suggestions reinforcing that "three times a day, you use your self-hypnosis and you feel calm and relaxed for hours and hours after you do your self-hypnosis" adding in more and more of those direct suggestions to help him as he goes throughout the day. The ego strengthening, the direct suggestions, the reminder to do that self-hypnosis, teaching your client the importance of the reinforcement and the repetition.

So he did this, he came back every week. I would ask him how he's doing. He would check his blood pressure probably 10 times a day which probably caused him even more stress but that's how he wanted to do things, but he told me, he said, "It's going down each week. It's lowering, it's lowering each week." And at the third session I said, "I'd like you just to close your eyes and tell me about your favorite place in nature again." And I noticed the change I wanted to share with you. He just was talking about being in the sand automatically relaxed and he said, "There's that white triangles that just goes slowly over the ocean." He'd changed, not even the word "sailboat" was a part of it anymore. And so, in that hypnosis, what I did was I added that anytime he notices anything that's white or square or rectangular, he automatically takes a gentle breath, exhales, and relaxes. Well, he sees a lot of white pieces of paper in his office at home. He sees a lot of white squares and things like that, so I just gave him that suggestion to notice anything white, square, or rectangle helping you to relax more and more and this is a subconscious suggestion.

We continued just to do simple hypnosis and having him continue that self-hypnosis every single day three times a day. He would come back at each week with other things that would cause him anxiety and worry and we would put that into the hypnosis session.

After the five weeks were done with this gentleman, he went home, he was doing really well. He said, "I'm going to be seeing my doctor in a few weeks to see if I can reduce my high blood pressure medication." And I heard from him about a week after that and he

said, "You know, good news..." He said, "It really did work." He said, "I was able to reduce my blood pressure medication by a half" which kind of blew me away.

He was very grateful. He said, "But I'm going to continue to use these same techniques every day because I'm feeling so much better, so much calmer in my life, and really looking forward to some of the new things I'm doing."

Taking your client to their favorite place is an automatic stress reducer, using the balloon breathing, teaching them these techniques. Stress management comes in all different sizes. Some of the stress problems are due to people's thoughts and worries and in Week 10, I'm going to teach you some other techniques that are going to help to reduce this, but doing the hypnosis each session, teaching them the self-hypnosis, mentioning in the hypnotic session, "Yes, you do your self-hypnosis three times a day and you feel great. You love how that feels." Keep on adding all of that because really, they're the ones in charge of reducing their stress.

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