

## **Chapter 11**

### **The Answers are Within**

I had been actively involved in personal recovery and personal growth for about ten years when I realized how fear and anxiety were controlling me. Although I appeared a confident, outspoken woman, I had been keeping my world small in order to deal with generalized anxiety. I was hypervigilant, always aware of my surroundings and worried about making a mistake. Where this fear came from was a mystery to me. My childhood was best described as benign neglect; I suppose that I came into this life with this fear. I imagined that the last thing that happened to me in my past life was I made some little mistake and came to a tragic end because of it. Now, I'm always looking over my shoulder wondering when the axe will fall.

This reminds me of how my brother died. He was a man who never lost his childlike enthusiasm for life. He played hard and all the time. He didn't wait for life to come to him, he made it happen in classic ADD (attention deficit disorder) fashion. He didn't grow out of his childhood diagnosis as hyperactive. Bungee jumping, parachuting, motorcycles — any activity that would give him a thrill was what he wanted. He wore his emotions on his sleeve and since he was generally optimistic, he was fun to be around.

In his thirties he had a premonition that he was going to die. He started getting his life in order and putting together his will. He also started being a little more careful. In fact, he was only going about 25 miles an hour on his snowmobile when he crossed an abandoned road and collided with a snow plow. Fluke accident. This road was never used and the snow plow had its blade up. He went right underneath and was crushed and killed instantly. I can imagine his last thought, “Oh shit!” And I know the look on his face. I'd seen it before. It would have been

the *I made a mistake I regret look*.

My mom tells a story of how he visited her the night he was killed. Woke her up and wouldn't let her go back to sleep. My brother had a heart of gold, and apparently he was fretting about donating his organs. He wouldn't let my mother sleep until she contacted the hospital and made sure that his organs would be used. Unfortunately, the hospital reported that my brother had been completely crushed and none of the visceral organs were salvageable. Interestingly, his head had been spared any damage. However, his eyes weren't his own. He had received them from an 80-year-old woman and apparently they couldn't be re-transplanted.

The reception party after the church funeral services was quite gay. Cake, balloons, lots of flowers. It was there I learned that before my brother began work at 7:30am, he would start his day by dialing up about a dozen people. In fact, it seemed that a great deal of people were dependent on his wake up calls each morning and I suspect his death may be responsible for the down turn in the economy in Michigan. Michigan seemed to be unable to get up and get to work without him.

He had called me once out of the blue. I lived in California at the time and his wake up call came at 4:00am. Since I thought he did it on purpose (he was such a tease) I never let on that he had woken me up. He didn't have anything of importance to say and luckily never called me again at that hour. Now, I suspect when he realized what time he had called me, he might have had that *I made a mistake I regret look*.

I like to think that my brother isn't in a new incarnation looking over his shoulder wondering when the axe will drop. He always seemed to feel his regret, amend the situation if possible and then move on. In contrast, I spent most of my life hanging onto my mistakes and carrying them around. I have felt a great deal of pressure that seemed to boil

down to the feeling of just never being enough. This feeling of not being enough permeated all areas of my life and controlled what I did, even when I wasn't conscious of it.

For instance on some level I thought it was my job to know all and be all. When I heard bad news, I felt that I needed to act personally. It was not okay for me to be happy, warm and fed when other people weren't. I avoided the media. The news wasn't just information it was a report on how poorly I was doing. How could I rest when there was work to be done?

By the time I hit my late thirties I was just plain tired of being anxious about things I intellectually wasn't scared about. I carried around fear and wanted to be free of it. But how does one get rid of subconscious fear and anxiety? Well, I'd heard of two techniques that could be used: neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and hypnosis. I don't really know anything about NLP, but I'd seen hypnosis used at Marine World and was interested.

The Marine World show was quite impressive. The performer was able to hypnotize members of the audience and get them to do all sorts of things. I was intrigued. If he could get people to salute at garbage cans as they walked out of the park, certainly this technique could help reprogram my irrational fears. I didn't want to have all my fears removed, but I did want to be a little less paranoid and more trusting in the basic goodness of life. After all, being afraid that unpleasant things are going to happen to me, rarely helps me avoid those unpleasant things.

I decided to look into hypnosis. I was in graduate school at the time, so I went to the student health clinic. There I easily got an anxiety disorder diagnosis and was referred out for short term psychotherapy. Now the trick was to find a provider who did hypnosis and was covered

by my school's health insurance. There was one woman listed. That made the selection process extremely simple. I gave her a call. We made an appointment.

She worked out of a home office and when I arrived I waited outside in the carport on a bench. She forgot my appointment so I called her on my cell phone from the bench. Finally, she came out to greet me and let me into the office. It was a small room attached to the carport. The room was cluttered with stuff. Boxes were piled up in front of bookcases and I remember quite a few antique looking dolls. Her desk was also extremely busy, with stuff all over it. She moved a couple things off the couch so I could sit down and she sat in the desk chair a couple feet from me.

We talked about my situation, what I was looking for and other preliminaries. I was surprised when she revealed that she had once had a problem with alcohol, but she now drank without it being a problem. She claimed alcoholism was curable. Given the condition of her office and her manner I didn't think she saw many clients. She was a little queer. I imagined that she may have once been successful, but speculated that perhaps the alcohol was still a problem. Despite my assessment, I was ready to jump right in. Unfortunately, she insisted that we not begin the hypnosis sessions until the next week. I was a little disappointed, but made an appointment to return.

The next week we talked again and ended the session with a brief hypnotic session. She set the stage and counted me down into trance. The session was short and I don't remember much of the particulars except I was very disappointed when we were done. From my perspective, I didn't enter into any hypnotic "trance." I lay there, she talked, I listened and then we were done. It didn't seem that my consciousness had changed at all. When I expressed my concern to her, she reassured me that was the way some people experienced the

hypnotic state. She asserted that it was working and that with each session I may experience a deeper state of relaxation and enhance susceptibility to the suggestions.

I wanted Marine World and instead I got a different experience. Regardless, I signed up for another session. In the week that followed I thought about what had happened. I considered the possibility that she wasn't very good at this. However, what she did was similar to the Marine World performer. Truth be known, it was amazing that it worked for him. Who would think that counting down into progressive relaxation would allow a person to take on suggestions for thought or behavior changes. Since what the performer and my psychotherapist did was essentially the same, I figured both had the same potential for similar results. If I wasn't getting the results I wanted, it was possible that I might not be very susceptible to hypnosis.

I accepted the fact that I didn't feel any shift in consciousness during the hypnotic state. I decided to believe that hypnosis could work for me regardless of my preconceived conceptions regarding how it was supposed to feel. I intended to use hypnosis to relieve myself of some fear and anxiety. I didn't know the origins of the fear, but I knew they were deep seated. I wanted to come fully equipped to the next hypnosis session. I wanted to attack that fear with all my guns loaded.

I proceeded to memorize a symbol I learned as part of my Reiki training. The Hon She Ze Sho Nen. This symbol is used for distance healing, but also allows for healing across time. I was taught that this symbol could be used to reprogram present life traumas and release past life karma. It seemed like a perfect tool for the work I was about to undertake. I wanted to release fear and anxiety that did not seem to benefit me. My intention was set and I was prepared.

At the next session we quickly moved to begin the hypnosis. I lay

down on the couch and got comfortable. She counted me down into relaxation while I visualized my Reiki symbols and set my intention with a prayer. She then said we were going to step into an elevator and go down. Each floor would represent an age in my life and I should lift my finger to indicate when I was ready to get off.

She started counting down the floors. 12, 11, 10 . . . I could feel we were off sync . . . 9, 8, 7, 6 . . . I was feeling more agitated . . . 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. I didn't get off at any floor. It wasn't working. I simply couldn't listen to my inner voice with her making all that noise. I explained my frustration to her and she suggested that I go down the elevator by myself and stop at any floor I wanted to. I liked this.

I got back in the elevator and started down. I was surprised when I got off at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. I didn't think I had any issues at this age. I was expecting to either get out at school age or perhaps in infancy. At both these ages I knew I had gotten messages that said I was not okay. As an infant, I'd been fed on a strict schedule. I imagine getting hungry as a newborn and being denied food because it wasn't time to eat yet. I think this may have been the first “You are not okay” message I got from the world.

After exiting the elevator, I found myself witnessing a scene in the family room of my family home about the time I was three years old. The room was filled with women and other young children. The atmosphere was playful and there was lovely banter. I described the scene to the hypnotherapist. I was quite pleased in my vision and I was the center of attention. All the ladies were talking with me and remarking about how amazing I was. Then my mother said something. She was behind me and I was facing the women. She said something that made me feel ashamed. I don't know what she said, but in an instant I went from feeling open, trusting and love to feeling ashamed, hurt and scared. I knew that in that instant it wasn't safe to be open and free. I

learned in that moment to hide and be cautious.

I was reliving that moment and knew what I needed to do when the hypnotherapist broke in. She was trying to guide me into exploring the moment more. She had some sort of agenda, but I already had a plan. I knew how to heal this. I shook my head and said, “No, no,” to shut her up. “This is what I'm going to do,” I told her.

I proceeded to rewind the tape. I went back to the day before. I felt myself three years old, free, open and delightful. I felt strong and sure of myself. I was a darling, happy little three year old. I went into the family room again. I was talking and playing with the ladies. I was getting a lot of attention. Then, my mother said her remark. I took a moment to notice how the other women were quieted by the remark. I sensed them cringe silently at how mean the remark was. I then turned to around to face my mother and said to her, “That's not true,” in a big bold voice.

In that moment, back in the doctor's office, my body began to shake and I experienced fireworks. It was a great explosion. Showers of white sparkling lights were bursting in my mind's eye. “Wow!” I thought as I lay there shaking. It was as if all the energy that was stored up in believing the lie that I was not okay was suddenly released. It was an amazing experience. I had not expected such a dramatic reaction, but I was pleased.

I reached out to embrace my hypnotist, but noticed she wasn't able to connect with me. I guess she was unable to see the fireworks. I was very appreciative that she was there to hold the space. Although it seemed that I managed the session and the healing myself, I know that she contributed to the healing. What her contribution was, I'm not sure. I do know that she held the space and she permitted me to direct my own healing.

I never went back for another session. Instead, I picked up a book on self-hypnosis and made myself a tape. I adapted the instructions in the book. After a couple of versions, I got rid of the counting down to relax part and simply relocated myself to a healing spot where I could relax. Perhaps, I lost the hypnosis part when I got rid of the counting, since it seems all hypnosis techniques share that characteristic, but I was happy with the tape without it. I included a long list of things that I believe to be true, but that sometimes I forget.

When I think back to my work with the hypnotherapist and the dramatic healing, I remember that the answers are within. My job is to listen for them and follow. As a health care practitioner my job is to listen, support and allow. Everything does work out. May peace be with you.

## **How I developed my self-hypnosis script**

I used “The Self-Hypnosis Book” by Cherith Powell and Greg Forde to learn how to create a script. I originally used the tape that comes with the book to “prime” myself to self-hypnosis. During the “priming” the book walks one through a hypnotic session and then plants a post hypnotic suggestion of how to quickly enter the hypnotic state again. Once “primed” the hypnotic trance can be entered by simply counting down 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and then saying “hypnosis now”. After testing a couple different script versions, I eventually dropped the count down and went straight to my personal relaxation spot without counting. I think my spot had been adequately “primed” when I dropped the counting and just visualizing myself at the spot allowed me to enter the hypnotic trance.

The scene I use is a composite of a couple of places I've visited in the Sierra Mountains. In addition, in order for me to relax, I must be comfortable. To achieve this I bring comfortable furniture to relax on. In addition, if bugs seem to be a problem, I enclose my relaxation spot with mosquito netting. I have one of those minds that can conjure up the worst case scenario when told to visualize something, so I've learned some tricks to counter the problems I mentally create. Mosquito netting is one of those tricks.

After the stage is set and I'm relaxing in my spot I begin with the suggestions. These take the form of affirmations. I have a long list of affirmations that I have developed myself or have adapted from statements I've heard or read. All the affirmations in my list are things that I believe are true.

When I say or hear these particular statements I take notice of which ones I am not lined up with at the time. For example, if I have been acting or feeling unconsciously that I am making bad decisions, I will feel a rush of emotion when I come to the affirmation that suggests I

make right decisions or the one that says I am divinely guided or even the one that suggest that everything I need comes to me easily and effortlessly. When I say or hear an affirmation that corrects a misbelief that I've been holding at an unconscious level I experience a relaxation and greater peace. It is as if I am connected to a peaceful light within me. This is what I call being lined up with the divine. It is a state of being lined up with the beliefs that support my well-being.