

Self-Hypnosis

4 Steps for Waking Up your Potential

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Where the mind goes, the body goes.

The body follows the mind.

—Miyamoto Musashi 1584-1645

The quote above from the famous swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi, tells us that the mind has a tremendous influence over the body. And it can be amended today to include the brain, because we now know that where the mind goes, the brain goes. When you practice Tae Kwon Do, you use your mind to deliberately be aware of what you are doing, which activates the attention centers in the brain. This process involves one more step: after you set yourself to perform the technique, you just do it. As you gain mastery of skills, automatic brain processing areas can take over, allowing for that flow that you feel when everything clicks. Now, you are activating unconscious pathways that help you move precisely and perform correctly.

Hypnosis can enhance these vital automatic processes that are so central to expertise in Tae Kwon Do. Using self-hypnosis, you can learn how to develop these brain processes. You can develop your mental capacities to set yourself on the right path, allowing yourself to perform effortlessly, automatically, and optimally. Here is a four-step method that will help you activate this important part of your mind and brain. You will also find some ways to apply the four steps to motivation and improving performance.

Hypnosis and How it Helps

Hypnosis can be clearly distinguished from everyday consciousness through distinct, recognizable changes that consistently take place in the brain. During hypnosis, people have more focused attention and higher absorption, more effective processing of information, faster reaction times, and better access to imagination and imagery. Improved efficiency in brain activity can be observed in the unique patterns of activation and inhibition of different parts of the brain. This improved brain efficiency means performing faster and better. Used in conjunction with regular practice, self-hypnosis can be a helpful tool. Try these exercises to experience self-hypnosis and apply it to enhancing your motivation and performance.

The Four-Step Method

There are four steps for using unconscious processes for change: observe, question, imagine, and allow. The process requires some diligence at first to set it in motion. First, you start by consciously observing and questioning, and then use, allowing your unconscious response to unfold.

Observe: Pay attention to what you are doing as you perform a technique. Notice everything about how you are moving.

Question: What are you doing right and what do you need to improve? Try to be realistic and objective.

Imagine: As you discover what you need to improve, close your eyes and vividly imagine yourself doing it correctly. Picture all that this entails.

Allow: Allowing involves giving permission to have a change take place and then just letting it happen. Hold the idea, image, or feeling vividly in mind and the natural response will take place. Response builds over time, so be patient with the process.

Keep working this way, first becoming aware, then questioning, then imagining the correct motion, and finally allowing the image of the correct motion. Don't blame yourself for making mistakes. Many people are overly self-critical, but being objective works better. Enlisting your unconscious processes will make it easier to correct your technique and perform better.

Self-Hypnosis

The four-step method will be even more powerful if you do it with self-hypnosis. To begin, find a comfortable sitting position, perhaps in a comfortable chair. Pick a time when you will not be interrupted for 15 or 20 minutes. Close your eyes or wait until your eyelids begin to feel heavy, and just let your eyes close of themselves.

When readying for your first self-hypnosis experience, you may wonder if you are going to experience something utterly new. The answer is yes and no. We all experience fluctuations in our awareness, somewhat similar to hypnosis, like when you are engrossed in a conversation and you lose track of time. Your ability to experience hypnosis is natural, just like other ways of being aware. So, in this sense, it's not new. But deciding to use your unconscious for improvement, is new and very helpful.

Just as you enhance your body skills with practice, you can enhance your mind skills with practice. Everyday awareness can vary a great deal. You can learn to use any of these variations to help you enter hypnosis. You begin with what you feel, and then develop self-hypnosis experiences.

Develop Self-Hypnosis

Sitting in your quiet, comfortable place, use the four-step method to enter hypnosis. **Observe** what you are feeling right now. **Question** what you might be doing to prevent it, like thinking about work or worrying that you can't do it. **Imagine** for a moment what you



expect hypnosis to feel like. People sometimes say that they expect to relax, to feel calm, to have their body become cool or warm, or become light. Now, picture yourself in hypnosis. Would you look relaxed? Are your eyes open or closed? Imagine this vividly. **Allow** your response. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that you become even more relaxed than you usually are.

You can deepen the experience by imagining a place you have been and really enjoyed; perhaps a vacation spot, a hideaway in the mountains, a secluded beach, a forest. Picture the beauty, look at the colors, walk around and reacquaint yourself with it. Then, allow your natural response to take place. You would be relaxed if you went there, so you can allow your body to naturally relax now while you think about this place. When you feel ready, bring yourself back to everyday awareness by counting backwards from five to one, becoming more alert and sensations returning to normal with each count until you feel fully alert.

Enhance Motivation

Nothing can substitute for good training. Getting the most out of your workouts requires more than just physical exercise. According to the old adage, "You get out of it what you put into it." But sometimes, like all of us, you may have difficulty getting motivated to work out hard. Hypnosis can help you activate resources to cope with that for better workouts.

Rediscover Motivation

Before your next workout, take a few moments to go into self-hypnosis. Relax your body comfortably and let your mind relax as well. Now use the four-step method:

Observe: Recall the first time you did Tae Kwon Do. Remember how stances seemed difficult and balance was awkward. Can you recall how great it was to throw your first sidekick, punch, and block? Re-experience your early enthusiasm and dwell on the details as vividly as possible.

Question: Do you feel the same enthusiasm now? Ask yourself, how is my enthusiasm different now?

Imagine: Imagine yourself feeling as enthusiastic about Tae Kwon Do as you did when you first started.

Allow: Now, stay with that image and relax more deeply in hypnosis. Keep holding the picture of being motivated. When ready, wake up, refreshed and alert. Your beginner motivation can emerge and stay with you now and into the future.

Peak Performance

Mental practice enhances performance. Research shows that people can acquire nearly as much benefit from actively imagining themselves performing their sport as from an equal amount of time spent doing it, and imagination during hypnosis can be even more powerful in its effects.

Add to Performance

Go into self-hypnosis. When you feel ready, apply the four steps. **Observe** by recalling a time when you actually did do well; kicking, punching, or breaking perfectly. Vividly picture and feel yourself at your best. Notice as many details as you can; feel your muscles responding. Focus your attention on this and nothing else.

Question what goes into the perfect kick, punch, or break? Are you loose at first and then focus at the end? Where is your balance? How is your breathing coordinating with the movement? Perhaps you notice some ways to make it even better.

Imagine Let yourself associate to inspiring images, associations, and thoughts about peak performance. Perhaps you would think about an inspiring tournament or a dynamic class when everyone worked out well. Use an image that means something to you.

Allow yourself to relax a little more deeply as you let this process of creative wandering take place. Your feelings of confidence and belief in your abilities will build as you imagine new possibilities. Continue until you are ready to awaken refreshed and alert.

Using the four step method with self-hypnosis, higher levels of skill become possible. You draw effortlessly from unconscious pathways of your brain that take care of movement and skill learning automatically. This article offered an introduction to self-hypnosis, but there is much more you can learn about it. Your potential is within you, just waiting to be released. As you learn to activate these potentials, true mastery can be yours. **TKD**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Annellen and C. Alexander Simpkins are psychologists, martial arts instructors, and authors of 24 books. Their most recent releases are *Neuro-Hypnosis: Using Self-Hypnosis to Activate the Brain for Change*, *The Dao of Neuroscience*, *Meditation and Yoga in Psychotherapy*, *Taekwondo: Building on the Basics*, *Chung Do Kwan: The Power of Tae Kwon Do*, *Meditation from Thought to Action with Audio CD*, *Self-Hypnosis for Women with Audio CD*, and the *Simple series on Eastern philosophies: Simple Zen, Simple Taoism, Simple Buddhism, and Simple Tibetan Buddhism*.

