



Southern Ontario  
Counselling Centre

## *Hypnotherapy*

By Anna Gold, M.S.W., R.S.W.

**Anna Gold**  
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Have you ever had the amazing, or perhaps bizarre, experience of watching stage hypnosis? Members of an audience are suddenly able to do any number of ridiculous things, including singing tunes, telling strangers they love them, or making animal sounds. Presto, with the clap of a hand, they are released from their trance! While it may seem as though these are magicians taking over the minds of others with secret powers, they are, in fact, trained hypnotists. The volunteer participants hand over their critical thinking, in other words their conscious mind. By doing this, they allow their unconscious, or subconscious mind to be accessed.

**Lee Horton-Carter**  
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**Dr. Mavis Kerr**  
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Hypnotherapy is hypnosis practiced by a registered psychotherapist with specific training in the field of hypnosis. Unlike stage hypnosis, individuals do not agree to act silly or do strange things. On the contrary, they bring specific goals to the session so that they may, in a safe therapeutic environment, concentrate fully on the suggestions of the therapist, filter out thoughts and stimuli in the conscious mind, and allow the unconscious mind to be open to suggestions of change. For example, we may feel stressed and automatically (in our conscious mind) think "I need a cigarette". However in hypnosis, we can access the part of our mind which is open to an alternate response to this same stressor, such that we automatically breathe deeply and notice a feeling of calm and peace overcome us. Thus the hypnotherapist can emphasize other suggestions or thoughts that will assist with the intended outcome of the session. The power to quit smoking, cope with anxiety positively, release oneself from a specific fear, or experience childbirth with increased ease, are some of the wonderfully positive effects achieved by many hypnotherapists.

**Neil Lackey**  
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