



Park Cities People

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TEXAS' BEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

ONE DOLLAR

COMMENTARY

First Sign of Hypnosis' Success: I Wrote This Quickly

When Oak Lawn hypnotherapist Valerie Grimes told us about her services, I jumped around in front of my boss: "Hypnosis!"

It could make for a wacky column, I thought, and either be amusingly self-help-ish or — for all I know — a magic fix to whatever's ailing me. I'd take it. Valerie's appointment calendar is often booked, so when we finally had a minute on the phone, I started rattling.

"I've always been anxious," I told the mellow, flawlessly smooth voice on the other end of the line. "And my procrastination ... whew."

Valerie spent 20 years in the advertising world before switching careers, I learned, and she's especially passionate about helping "almost-alcoholics" get well. Many arrive with doctors' referrals.

Hypnosis isn't brain-



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washing, she said, and it'll never make you do something you don't know you're doing.

"The mind starts trying to protect us from what we feel is painful, but there's no conscious awareness of it. It happens in sales all the time; people don't get the deal or don't make the call because of their perception that it's going to be painful."

In other words, the idea that Coors Light brings fulfillment, or planes are scary, or public speaking is worse — well, we've already "hypnotized" ourselves to believe as much.

The therapy "helps to

weaken and eventually break old neural pathways," Valerie explained, "by creating stronger ones of what we really want."

The more she spoke, the readier I was to slay my biggest demon as a writer: procrastination. Most people need at least three sessions, but we'd see what we could do in one.

When a coworker and good friend heard my plans, he laughed so hard that he started yipping and shaking.

"Shut up, Rick! You know it's gonna make me do the story faster."

"We should take up a collection plate for you," he zinged as I left for my appointment.

I'm nervous when I get there, but Valerie herself is petite and stylish and wholly unthreatening. Her office feels modern, with organic art and a green wall that offsets a close view of Lee Park. I notice an odd recliner that

proves immensely comfortable, ambient music, and a smell like unburned incense.

Much like she wouldn't tell a weight-loss client his only goal is to drop three pant sizes but forgo health, Valerie says curbing procrastination could mean rediscovering the fun of writing. Shedding old hang-ups will make the words fly because I'm already dying to let them.

After some background discussion, she tells me to "let those thoughts, worries, and concerns about whether you're doing it right or not just floooooat away on a cloud." Her voice seems to rise and fall with my breath as I nestle under a blanket in the darkened room. "There's no right or wrong way. And when you have a conscious thought, you can just let it float away, and as your mind follows the cloud and it floats away, you're drifting deeper into

hypnotic trance."

I imagine Rick sliding away on a little magic carpet as Valerie slowly repeats certain words and counts backwards. I forget about my voice recorder, my dinner plans, my fear of drooling. It's beautiful.

I'm skeptical, however, until she suggests I try to open my eyes. The lids feel glued together. Strange.

Eventually, after a guided visit to my "garden of creativity," wherein I tear up and mutter about "cartoony flowers, like from *Fantasia*," I recall an editor from my high school paper. And if you think listening to a regular recording of yourself is bad, try this kind.

I barely knew Brittany, and thought I'd forgotten her years ago — her and her professional glamor shots that she left around the newsroom. I got A's in English class, but she tore my writing apart. I hated her.

Looking back, I realize Brittany was as miserable as me. I just can't believe she's still in my head.

Valerie asks me to thank the girl in spirit, to tell her I'm moving on. I give a few other people the what-for while I'm at it.

But that's not all.

Whenever I hear my phone ring — or get text or email alerts — I'll be overcome with the urge to write, Valerie says.

Before I leave, she asks how long I think the session lasted.

"Oh, 10 minutes?"

Try 30.

And whether it's the offbeat content or some change in me, I'm dying to get this all transcribed.

My phone dings.

"You are getting ver-ry gullible," my boyfriend texts.

I don't know if I'm a faster writer. Maybe. But for now, I'm a happier one.

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