

Balloon Self-Hypnosis Technique for IBS and Abdominal Pain—A Guide for Clinicians

This clinical tool offers a script you can follow to help someone with abdominal pain from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), or other causes, use self-hypnosis to more effectively manage their pain. It involves three steps:

1. Guiding a person into a trance state.
2. Moving through the balloon exercise to ease pain.
3. Guiding him or her out of the trance.

It can be done in about 10 minutes. To learn more about the research on clinical hypnosis for IBS, refer to the [“Irritable Bowel Syndrome”](#) Integrative Health tool.

1. Entering the Trance

Read the following script

“Imagine a beautiful staircase. It is your favorite color. It has 10 steps. These 10 steps lead to a peaceful and relaxing place—your favorite place.

We are going to count backward from 10 to 1 as you go down each step. After each step, focus on a different part of your body. Allow yourself to gently relax deeper and deeper with each step.

As you start at the top of the staircase, release any tension or strain in your body each time you breathe out.

10. Relax your face and jaw, letting your tongue gently rest at the floor of your mouth...
9. Relax your temples, eyes, and eyelids as you step down to [your favorite place]...
8. Relax the back of your neck and shoulders, simply letting go...
7. Relax your arms knowing that there is nothing for them to do...
6. Relax your chest, with each rise and fall of the breath...
5. Relax your abdomen setting the muscles free...
4. Relax your pelvis allowing it to sink into the chair...
3. Relax your legs giving them the day off with nothing to support...
2. Relax your toes as you arrive at...
1. Your favorite place.

Now, take a few moments to explore your peaceful place in your mind’s eye. Involving all your senses will help you feel like you are really there.

- What do you see? What colors? What objects?
- Do you smell anything?

- Do you hear anything?
- What is the temperature?

When you feel comfortable and safe, find a place to settle down or sit.”

2. The Balloon

“Begin by asking the person to identify to colors:

1. What color best describes the pain? (Pain color)
2. What color should your abdomen be? (Preferred color)

Next, take them through the following script, filling in the bracketed areas with answers to questions 1. and 2., above.”

Read the following script

“Focus your attention on your pain. Now, imagine your discomfort to be a large [insert pain color] balloon. Your discomfort is a large [pain color] balloon. Watch this [pain color] balloon get smaller and smaller as it slowly loses air.

See the color of the balloon beginning to lighten, slowly changing to a soft [insert preferred color], reducing in size. As you watch, the balloon becomes smaller and smaller, you feel less and less discomfort. The balloon gets smaller still, and you feel less discomfort. You begin to feel better and better; you feel better as you watch the balloon lose air and become smaller.

Now watch the pale [preferred color] balloon become tiny and tiny, smaller and smaller. It is shrinking to a small [preferred color] dot. A small [preferred color] dot.

Now see it simply disappear. When it disappears you feel much, much better. You feel better, more comfortable. You feel better. More comfortable. You feel completely comfortable.”

3. Coming Out of the Trance

Read the following script

“Now, let’s reverse the process. You will climb back up the staircase. As you do, feel the energy coming back into your relaxed muscles.

In a moment you will climb the staircase. You will feel a sense of happiness and ease, knowing you can visit this place whenever you wish. You can return to your favorite place and work with the balloons whenever you wish.

1. As you proceed up the first step, allow the energy to re-enter your body starting at your toes...
2. And now allow it to flow up your legs...
3. Into your pelvis as you feel it press into the chair...
4. Traveling to your abdomen, feel your body come alive...
5. Take in this energy with each rise of the chest...
6. As you feel it travel into your arms...



7. Going up to the shoulders and neck...
8. Into the temples, eyes, and eyelids...
9. Feel your tongue, jaw, and the muscles of the face energize and allow your eyes to open when you are ready.
10. When you are ready slowly return your awareness to this room."

Resource Links

- [Irritable Bowel Syndrome](https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/tool-ibs.pdf): <https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/tool-ibs.pdf>

Author(s)

This tool was adapted for the University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Program from the original written by J. Adam Rindfleisch, MPhil, MD and updated by David Lessens, MD, MPH (2014, updated 2020). Some sections were adapted from "[Self-Hypnosis Balloon Technique for Abdominal Pain](#)" by David Rakel, MD, and "Self-Hypnosis Techniques" by Steven Gurgevich, MD (*Integrative Medicine*, 2nd edition).

This Whole Health tool was made possible through a collaborative effort between the University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Program, VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, and Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.