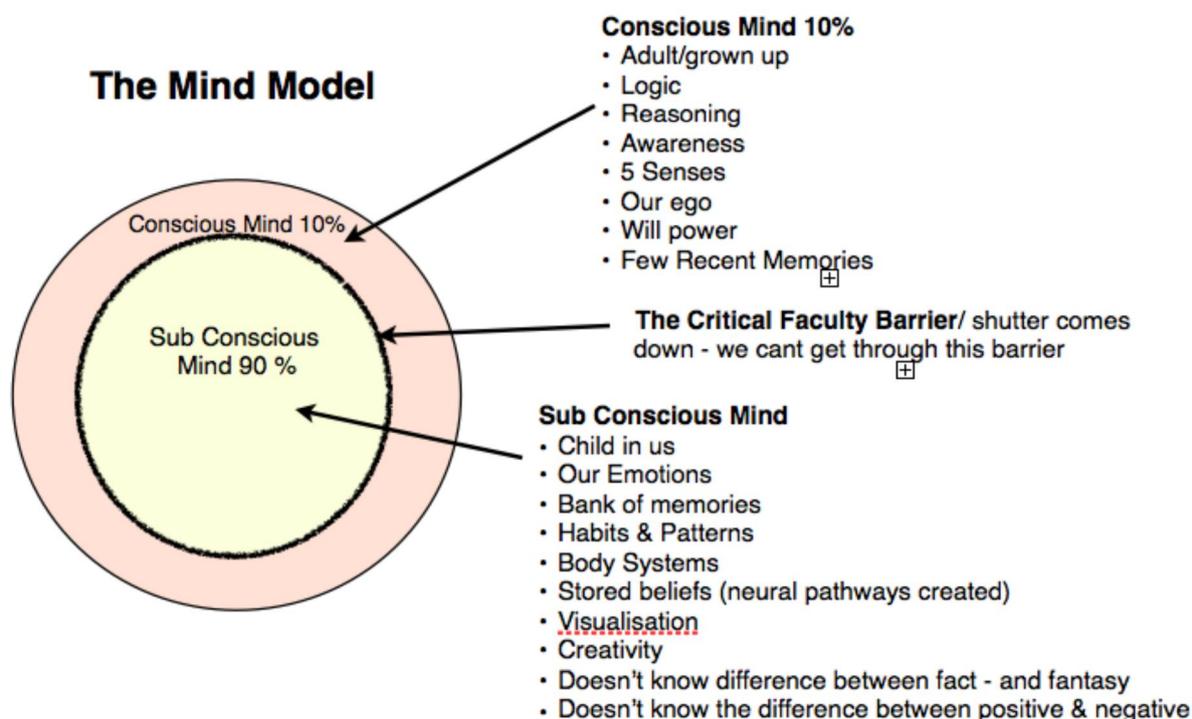


## Hypnotherapy in chronic disease

As I've already talked about in the free **Introduction to Hypnotherapy**, hypnotherapy is a very simple and effective way to change negative beliefs or habits that can keep an individual stuck in a particular way of behaving. This can make people can feel anxious or negative, feeling as if they are being ruled by something that is out of their control. They may not be aware of this negative programming – the continually repeated thoughts that play through our minds subconsciously – you know the sort of thing 'I'll never manage this or that, I always screw things up, I'm a fraud", etc.

According to psychology, in a working model of the mind we have the conscious and the subconscious process. The subconscious controls 90% of what we do and it here that we have our long-term memories, and our beliefs about ourselves.



Individuals can then become limited by repeated negative thoughts playing subconsciously so that they begin to believe them and it stops them achieving their goals. These thoughts or memories often come from childhood and based upon 'learnt' values and beliefs downloaded from our parents and the experiences we have. And as we know, beliefs produce thoughts which produce feelings, behaviours and finally actions. If negative beliefs (especially limiting ones) are thought often they can be like a default pattern in our minds and they block us. We become 'stuck'. So it may impact on everything we do, even as an adult.

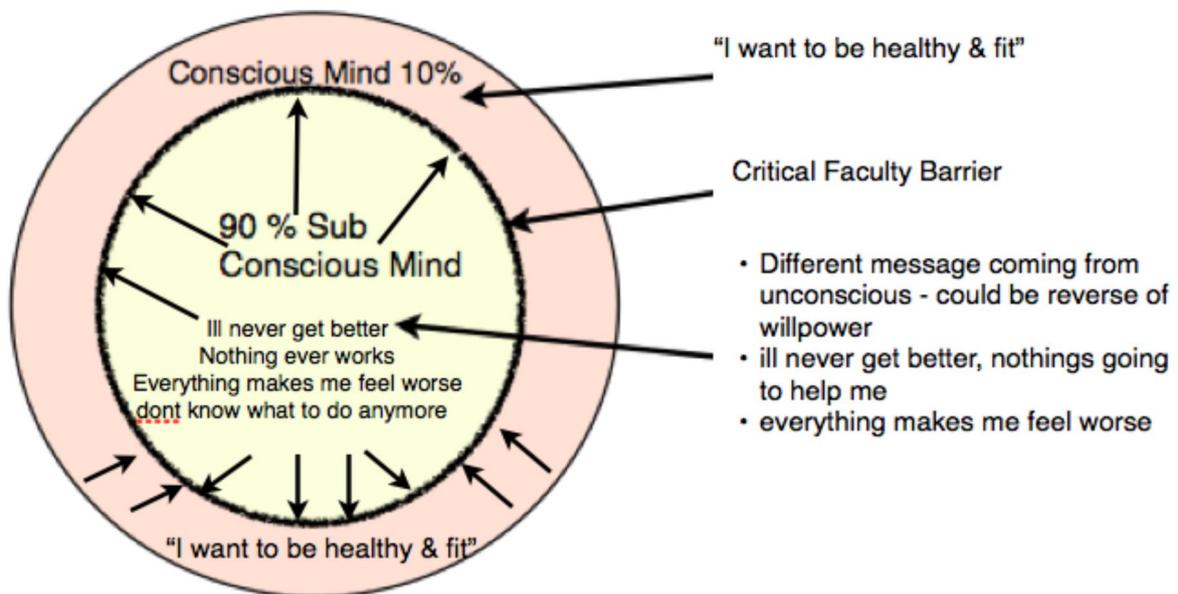
*This is never more true than in illness.*

Illness takes away our independence and makes us question our beliefs – we may wonder what our value is when we can no longer work or take part in social activities. Being subject to 'expert opinion' by our doctors or healthcare workers means we no longer know exactly what we should do and this

can further disempower us. The pain or dysfunction itself can render us helpless and frightened not knowing where to turn.

Once we caught up in an anxiety loop, we are **locked into alert** – so-called ‘**flight or flight**’ – adrenal overstimulation via a branch of the nervous system called the Sympathetic Nervous System (or SNS) flooding the body with hormones adrenaline (epinephrine in the US) and cortisol. The importance of this can’t be overstated. It affects *everything*: *energy, hormone balance, immunity, metabolism, brain function, etc.*

One major cause of keeping you locked into the fight or flight response is your negative thinking patterns. You may not consciously be doing this. You may want to get better logically. But something keeps you stuck.



Negative thoughts send a message to a part of the brain called the **amygdala** that we are in danger which in turn triggers the **HPA axis** (Hypothalamus /Pituitary /Adrenal) to activate its emergency stress response. Our body-mind works by co-ordinating many different parts together and this co-ordinated hormonal and nerve response evolved to deal with the many threats and dangers we may face in life. However, these systems were designed to deal with threat of a mauling by a sabre-toothed tiger not a stressful day at the office! Today our systems are so geared to constant stress that they never have a chance to release or turn off.

So, because these thoughts are not conscious you are not often aware of them, in fact you’ve probably got so used to them you no longer pay attention at a conscious level. Your body does however – it listens to these subtle messages and responds with pain or dysfunction. Depression is now understood to be such a symptom – it may present as low levels of serotonin or other neurotransmitters but this is not the cause. So is chronic pain and fatigue via a similar mechanism.

Thinking is a *process* – there is no part of the brain where ‘thoughts’ occur. It is simply a particular pattern of neural connections. The more we think a thought the more the neural pathways become entrenched to the point that these thoughts are so automatic they fire without a conscious negative thought.

## Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy allows us to interrupt this cycle and simultaneously stimulates the **Para-Sympathetic Nervous System** which helps to balance the alert mode with **relaxation and calmness**. It generally begins by relaxing the individual to block anxiety and the fight or flight mechanism. It can then have other beneficial effects; some coping mechanisms that you may have created to deal with the anxiety loop can be released. Often people with chronic illness can use food as a release to dampen the anxious feelings. Or it could be alcohol, caffeine, shopping, you name it. It has been noted that in M.E/chronic fatigue type illness a person put on 28lbs of weight on average<sup>1</sup>.

So, our approach after releasing anxiety is to focus on changing limiting beliefs. These can be released when you let go of old patterns ingrained in the subconscious and new positive beliefs can be then be created in their place. It is the case that in most long-term/chronic illness you will be 'tired but wired'. In other words you will have suffered to the point of exhaustion (insomnia can be a big predisposing factor) but your body is on high alert so you find it hard to relax.

Self sabotage may be a small part of the unconscious that is not ready to let go of old thoughts or habits. This can affect relationships. With a technique called the two mind process (or parts therapy) we can investigate this and let them go. We may also use a technique called **regression** using a timeline of going back to release the thought/beliefs around significant events. (Note this is *not* the same as past-life regression which is a controversial and somewhat unproven technique). We cannot undo what has been done in life but we can fundamentally **change your response to those events**. This can often be a key part of the therapy – though not always used depending on your issues it can be very significant. Trauma (particularly childhood trauma) is a clearly implicated in many chronic illnesses. It need not be a major one either. The key point is your response to the event i.e. did you feel it was significant at the time. It can range from being reprimanded by your parent all the way to childhood abuse. As a child you had no way of defending yourself from these attacks and your body (and mind) found ways to defend you *internally*.

Depending on your issue we may also use future transformation – taking you forward to a time when they can feel or visualise a healthy future. This again is vital as it breaks the anxiety loop of depression and despondency of illness.

## Treatment

So for example in 3 – 7 treatment steps a person may be asked to do the following:

- Break the anxiety cycle – grounding the mindbody
- Concentrate on the positives in her life – creating a gratitude diary
- Look at beliefs and thus behaviours
- Regression to release emotions at specific events
- Examine the parental relationship
- Support the inner child
- Discover their life purpose - finding the thing that makes your heart sing

You may be given a healing mediation – recorded onto CD/mp3- to open up those beneficial neural pathways; a mantra, if you like of ‘I can relax’. You may be shown how to internalise self-love (pour love and reassurance into the child you were). Another option is to use the power of your imagination to create the life you would like. This may sound fanciful – somewhat childlike perhaps but the subconscious is both childish and illogical. It does not respond to will-power and ‘pull yourself together stiff upper lip’ behaviour. It is simply no use trying to deal with deep-seated issues this way.

We look at self-sabotage patterns. If you find it hard to shift the old thought processes we may use various techniques to find out why you do the things you do. We may use your to communicate to find out why you do the things you do e.g. using NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) processes to visualise and change these. Parts integration is a technique that can be useful here too – getting the different parts of the mind to talk to each other. We all have different parts of us that have different goals; one may want us to be more adventurous, the other wants to keep us safe. By exploring and uniting the parts we can get co-operation and agreement between them. The great thing about being in hypnosis is that this becomes way easier as the critical mind is taken out of the picture.

We may use other techniques such as wellbeing coaching. We look at things from a different perspective as a coach would. Often by looking at a situation from this altered viewpoint you can see solutions that previously were hidden. We encourage a communication /dialogue between your coach and you. We may even use psychosensory techniques such as Emotional Freedom Technique (tapping on various meridian points while recalling the issues) to release stuckness. It is remarkably effective.

We then look at Future transformation– visualising yourself in the future getting better and better. Seeing yourself as a healthy, functioning individual can make all the difference to your physical health. We then reinforce your self-development by reinforcing that fact you are working on yourself, improving your life, etc. This then become more applicable to future situations giving you added benefits in other areas of your life. It truly is life changing...

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<sup>i</sup> Chrysalis Effect module 4 notes. [www.chrysaliseffect.com](http://www.chrysaliseffect.com)