Scripts and Strategies in Hypnotherapy with Children
For Young People Aged 5 to 15

Lynda Hudson
# Table of Contents

**Table of Scripts** ................................................................................................................. ii  
**Acknowledgements** ................................................................................................. v  
**Preface** ...................................................................................................................... vii  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>A Solution-Focused Approach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>Inductions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>Ego Strengthening and Self-esteem</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>Nocturnal Enuresis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>Encopresis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
<td>Tics and Habits</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
<td>Separation Anxiety</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
<td>Obsessive Thoughts and Compulsive Actions</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
<td>Sleeping Difficulties</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eleven</td>
<td>Being Bullied</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Twelve</td>
<td>Behaviour Problems</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Thirteen</td>
<td>Learning and Exams</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References and Useful Resources** ........................................................................ 227  
**Index** ...................................................................................................................... 237
# Table of Scripts

All ages given are approximate

## Inductions
- Resting story (5–7 years) ................................................................. 18
- Talk to teddy (5–6 years) ................................................................. 19
- Swinging hammock (6–10 years) ...................................................... 19
- Your mind shows your body how to get heavier (12 years upward) .......... 20
- Relax and catch the numbers (12 years upward) ................................ 21
- Land of sweets/candy (6–11 years) ................................................... 22
- Hop onto a passing cloud (6–12 years) ............................................. 23
- Finger or hand levitation (10 years upward) ................................. 24
- Find the right place (10 years upward) .......................................... 25
- Pretend the chair has turned into a spaceship (5–8 years) ............... 25
- Look at the light switch (8 years upward) ....................................... 26
- Comfortable cushions (any age) .................................................. 26

## Ego Strengthening and Self-esteem
- You are very special (5–9 years) .................................................. 33
- Be good at being yourself (6–12 years) .......................................... 34
- Compliments (any age) ............................................................... 34
- You are a good friend (7/8 years upward) ..................................... 35
- Ladder of confidence (8–12 years) .............................................. 37
- Wash off harmful messages from the walls of your inner mind
  (10 years upward) ................................................................. 38
- STOP messages on your mind computer (12 years upward) ........... 40

## Nocturnal Enuresis
- Stay dry all night long (5/6–9 years) ............................................. 53
- Wake up and get up when you need the toilet (9 years upward) ........ 54
- Calm and stretch your bladder (8 years upward) ........................... 56

## Encopresis
- Poo in the toilet (4–6 years) .......................................................... 68
- Robot help station (4–6/7 years) .................................................... 70
- Change your toilet habits (8–12 years) .......................................... 72
- Right time and place jigsaw (8–12/14 years) ............................... 74
- Mr Smelly Poo (5/6–8 years) ...................................................... 76
Table of Scripts

Tics and Habits
Spaceship master controls (5–8 years) .......................................................... 82
You are in charge of your muscles (6/7–12 years) ........................................ 83
Turn off the tic (any age) ............................................................................... 85
Noises or twitches (10 years upward) .......................................................... 87
Tic Script Extracts: ....................................................................................... 89
  Various suggestions dealing with: the urge to blink/the urge to
clear the throat/embarrassment or shame/explaining the problem
to others/dealing with other people’s negative responses to you
Stop sucking your thumb (4–7/8 years) ....................................................... 92

Anxiety
Rewind procedure (any age) ........................................................................ 105
Throw anxious feelings into the bin (4–8 years) ........................................ 111
Lucky dip (5–8 years) .................................................................................... 113
Treasure hunt (8–12 years) ........................................................................... 114
Worry castles in the sand (8–12 years) ...................................................... 117
Virtual reality (10 years upward) .............................................................. 119
Summary of Hypno-desensitisation procedure ......................................... 121

Separation Anxiety
A selection of useful suggestions (different ages) ........................................ 131
Keep your thoughts in the right place (6–12 years) .................................. 133

Obsessive Thoughts and Compulsive Actions
Diminish the power of the unwanted thought (8/9 years upward) .... 143
Future time capsule (8–12 years) ............................................................... 145
Thought-stopping on your computer mind (12 years upward) ............. 147
Wait before you act (10 years upward) ....................................................... 149
Trichotillomania hand levitation (10 years upward) ................................ 154

Sleeping Difficulties
Deal with unwanted night-time thoughts (9 years upward) ............ 166
Whisper away night-time worries (5–8/9 years) ....................................... 167
Sounds don’t bother you at all (8–12 years) ............................................. 169
Suggestions for fear of the dark. ................................................................. 170

Being Bullied
Shrink the bully (6 years upward) ............................................................... 178
Protective bubble (verbal taunting or abuse) (8–12 years) .................. 178
Museum of your mind (Building confidence, resilience and positive
tinking) (10/12 years upward) ................................................................. 180
Defeat the bully (8 years upward) .............................................................. 184
Cyber bullying (12 years upward) ............................................................. 187
Scripts and Strategies in Hypnotherapy with Children

**Behaviour Problems**
- Good boy, well done (5–9 years) ................................................................. 198
- Calm and polite (9/10–14 years) ................................................................. 199
- Calm and well behaved in class (8/9–12 years) .......................................... 200
- Congratulations on progress (5/6–8 years) .............................................. 202
- Manage change and disappointment (9/10 years upward) ...................... 203

**Learning and Exams**
- Listening and getting started (8/10–14 years) .......................................... 213
- Concentrate and stay focused (10 years upward) ..................................... 215
- Improve your studying/reading for information skills (homework)
  - (12 years upward) .................................................................................. 218
- Spelling strategy (adaptable to any age) .................................................. 221

**Learning and Exams**
- Magic bus (Be confident for class work and tests)
  - (adaptable to age 6–9 years) ................................................................. 222
- Overcome exam nerves for older children (12 years upward) ................. 224
Chapter One

A Solution-Focused Approach

Differences between Working with Children and Working with Adults

Children are usually very open to hypnotherapy and they generally have fewer misconceptions about it than do adults since children, the younger ones at least, have not seen or heard of stage hypnosis.

Perhaps the biggest differences in working with children are in the degree of formality employed in terms of the structure of the session, the techniques used and the style of interaction with the child. Children tend to be accustomed to using their imagination; they live in it on a daily basis, switching easily from being a dinosaur, to a knight, to a Dalek or to a nurse in a matter of minutes. When I ask children to see a picture of themselves at school, in their bedroom or at the dentist, for example, I rarely encounter the response I sometimes get from adults who say that they can’t visualise the images or colours; children just do it. Similarly, if I ask a child to make a character bigger or smaller, it is done in a trice, which leads me to another difference in working with young people: the sessions often progress far more quickly than ones with adults.

Considerations

Always be prepared to use children’s metaphors when they are offered, since theirs will generally be far more effective than any you have dreamed up in advance. Children will identify intensely with their own ideas, characters, language and metaphors and thus have a more personally meaningful experience when their ideas and vocabulary are accepted and used.
A child’s age is an important factor to take into account, as it will affect his or her level of understanding of the concept of hypnosis. Having said this, chronological age can be very misleading; some 10 year olds are ‘going on 16’ and others are more like naive 8 year olds. Older children may have seen television programmes that show stage hypnosis, and so may have certain preconceptions about what is going to happen in the session. Think in advance about how you are going to explain to children what they are going to do and how the process will help them. Two or three stock ways of explaining the process to different age groups should be available. With younger children I usually talk in terms of having a ‘special’ part of their mind that is going to help them stop sucking their thumb or learn how to have dry beds while in a kind of daydream. Or I may ask them to play a special imagination game with me. If speaking to an older child, I generally use an explanation similar to the one I use with an adult perhaps substituting the words ‘inner mind’ for ‘unconscious mind’. I find that almost everyone understands the concept of an unconscious mind when I interrupt what we are talking about to ask the name of their favourite TV programme or if they know their phone number. Once they have answered, I point out that, although they were not consciously thinking about it beforehand, the number was stored in their unconscious (or inner) mind along with other memories, feelings and the knowledge of how to do all kinds of things, such as walking, using the computer or sleeping. These examples can be changed according to the interests of child, his or her age and the presenting problem.

A child’s ability or willingness to relax for long periods of time is, in part, determined by his or her age. Young children will wriggle about, often prefer to keep their eyes open, may physically act out your suggestions and appear far more ‘awake’ than their adult counterparts. They are likely happier engaging in a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) procedure than in a standard ‘adult’ relaxing induction. At the same time, you can find exactly the opposite response. With the right degree of rapport, using the most appropriate induction for the individual child and given the right ‘mood of the moment’, even the youngest of children can surprise you by enjoying a deeply relaxed, even sleepy state of hypnosis. However, just because this has happened on one occasion, doesn’t mean it will happen again the next visit. The same child may be less tired at the next session or just feel like having
a more active interaction than before. The best advice is to always
be on your toes and ready to swap a planned out approach for one
that seems more appropriate at the time!

The age range I am focusing on in this book is from about 5 or
6 years old to 15 years old (although I have included the occasional
script which could be used with children as young as 4 years old)
but it is important to remember that anyone under the age of 18
years old is considered a minor in the eyes of the law in England
and many other countries. I highly recommend that therapists
working in private practice with children investigate and comply
with the legal requirements and safeguards that apply in their
own country. This step is essential for the protection of both the
child and the therapist. For the safety and comfort of all concerned
I am very happy to have a parent in the room, but I am careful to
explain beforehand that generally I will be speaking to the child
directly rather than about the child to the parent. This brings up
another difference when treating children: parents and children
may have different agendas regarding treatment goals and these
may be either explicit or covert. For example, a child may feel
perfectly happy just to improve classroom behaviour so as not to
get into trouble at school whereas parents may feel that treatment
has not been successful unless the child has stopped being difficult
at home. It may be that such discrepancies need to be brought out
into the open; how, when and where this is done will depend on
individual circumstances.

When I speak to the parent initially, usually on the telephone, I
explain that however young the child may be, it is important to
set up the appointment so that the child wants to come. When chil-
dren feel they are being dragged along against their will, they are
unlikely to respond positively. I normally suggest that the parents
say something along the lines of, ‘We’ve spoken to somebody who
has helped lots of other children to stop sucking their thumbs (or
whatever the presenting problem may be) and she thinks she could
help you too, but only if you want her to help you. What do you
think?’ This puts the onus of choice and responsibility on the child
and lets the child know that you (the therapist) are on his or her
side. In fact, when I first meet children I also check out that they
really want me to help them, and it isn’t just their parents who
think it’s a good idea. Normally, children are a bit surprised that I
am asking and the interaction helps establish rapport.
Although it is important to sound confident about the likely success of treatment, words should be chosen carefully when talking to the child so as not to engender feelings of failure if the treatment doesn’t work as quickly as expected, or indeed occasionally, does not have an effect at all. It is good to be confident but also include various possibilities: ‘Usually children come to see me two or three times to sort out this kind of problem but everybody is different and you will do it in your own time and in your own way. Who knows, you might only need this one visit!’

It is important to explain the approach to parents before treatment begins and to gain their commitment to supporting the work to be done. This may mean practical support in terms of limiting drinks at bedtime in the case of nocturnal enuresis or it may mean more nuanced support in asking them to change the way they talk about the problem. A change of tense can be very significant; it can set the original problem firmly into the past and allow the possibility of change once the treatment has begun by simply learning to say, ‘He used to wet the bed nearly every night’ rather than, ‘He always wets the bed every night’. It is also wise to explain that, although change sometimes comes immediately, it can also happen gradually with the occasional setback if a child is tired or unwell. It is important that parents avoid making negative statements such as, ‘Oh, he’s gone back to square one this week’ and instead describe the situation in a way that doesn’t defeat the child, such as, ‘There have been a few blips this week because he hasn’t been feeling well’. The most helpful thing parents can do is to acknowledge positive change wherever they notice it, and be supportive and not make an issue of it if there is little or no immediate change.

Summary: Things to do – Things to remember

To do:
• Check out legal and safety procedures and requirements when working with children.
• Prepare some age-appropriate explanations of hypnosis.
• Gain parental support for your approach between sessions.
• Speak directly to the child rather than about the child during the session.
• Use the child’s own ideas.
A Solution-Focused Approach

Remember:
• Positive language is important.
• The session is more informal.
• Children show a willingness to use their imagination.
• The progress of the session can be extremely fast.
• Expect the unexpected.

A Word About the Solution-Focused Approach

The Brief Solution Focused Model of therapy was originated and developed in the 1980s by Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg, Larry Hopwood and Scott Miller at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the United States. Steve de Shazer published the model in Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy (1985) and Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy (1988). Here is not the place for a detailed discussion of the solution-focused approach but the interested reader will find a list of books and helpful websites at the end of the book. Suffice it to say that taking a generally forward-looking approach with children is very safe and will normally bring very positive results. In my opinion, general regression techniques are out of place with children except in special instances by those with very specific training and qualifications.

Basic Structure of a Solution-Focused Session within a Hypnotic Framework

When you use the following structure, adapting it, leaving out parts and doubling back as appropriate, you will find that the therapy is already taking place as you ask the questions. You will be putting across to clients that change is possible/likely/inevitable so that they fill in the details of the achievement scenario in their own minds. By the time you come to the hypnotic script, you may merely be reinforcing a change already made or, at least, begun.
Find Out About the Problem

- I spoke to your mum on the phone and she told me a bit about the problem as she sees it. Can you tell me a bit more about how you see it?

If the problem is embarrassing, such as bedwetting or soiling, it is better for you to mention it first in a matter-of-fact way so that it is easier for the child to talk about it. Ask parents beforehand how their young children refer to the problem and use their language where appropriate. Following are some examples of questions that appeal to different personalities, genders, ages or cultures.

- Your mum told me that although you don’t have any problems in the daytime, you aren’t having as many dry beds as you would like at night. Is that right?

- Mummy told me that sometimes your poos pop out into your pants without you noticing it. Does that happen more when you’re busy playing or when you are watching TV? How would you like it if they only popped out when you want them to? How would it be if we try to find out more about when and where it happens so we can help you to feel more in charge?

Find Out What They Want To Achieve

As with adults, but perhaps particularly with children, it is important to wait to hear what a child has to say before making a hypothesis about cause and treatment. Listening actively will give you the required information and suggest a suitable strategy for the first treatment session.

- What would you like me to help you with today?

- In a perfect world what would you like me to help you do?

- If you had a magic wand, what would you want to happen?

- If you had three wishes to change the way things are, what would you wish for?
A Solution-Focused Approach

- Suppose we could ask the magic fairy to sprinkle fairy dust/the wizard to cast his spell/Harry Potter to cast his spell, what would be different tomorrow?

- Suppose a miracle happens tonight when you’re asleep and when you wake in the morning the problem is completely sorted out, what would be different?

- Suppose Father Christmas came early this year and sorted out this problem and that was his present to you, what would be different in your life?

- How will you know next week that it was worth coming to see me today? What will be happening that is different from before?

More Detailed Questions about the Achievement Scenario

- Once you have sorted out this problem, what will you notice first that is different? What then? What next? How does that make a difference to you? What’s better about that now? How is that better for you? (Notice the deliberate shift to the present tense, which has the effect of encouraging the mindset that change is possible.)

- What else will have changed? (Translate absence of symptoms into beginnings of new behaviours, for example, ‘Oh, so you won’t be frightened of going into school now. That’s good. How will you be feeling instead? Will this mean you can walk in on your own or will you be chatting with your friends? What will you be doing instead of crying?’)

Relationship Questions that Further Enrich the Achievement Scenario and Allow You to See the Family’s Attitude and Reactions

- What will your mum/dad/best friend/grandma/sister/brother/teacher/teddy/dog/worst enemy see you doing that will let them know that you have made an amazing change?
Work through a good selection of these questions, making sure to include people the child has told you are important.

- What will you notice that’s different about your mum/dad now that this change has happened/now that you are having more dry nights/now that you aren’t sucking your thumb/now that you aren’t pushing your sister anymore?

- Who else will notice the change? What will they think/feel/say?

Ask questions that include a mix of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities to ensure maximum appeal and involvement in all the senses.

**Exception Questions**

- Are there times when some of this already happens/the spell already works/small parts of the miracle already happen/things go just the way you want them to/you already know how to do this?

Exception questions are very important as they provide information about when, where or why a problem-behaviour does or does not occur already. Answers here will allow you to discover useful strengths, qualities or behaviours that the child already possesses or uses. If the child doesn’t provide answers, you can set a ‘noticing task’ for homework, for example, ‘What I’d like you to do over the next week is just to notice all the times when you manage to control your temper and come back and tell me about them next week. Will you do that?’ Not only are you giving the child a positive ‘noticing task’, you are also offering an implicit suggestion that there will indeed be times when he or she manages to carry out the desired behaviour.

**Scaling Questions**

- On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 means the nervous feelings are the worst they’ve ever been and zero is when you are completely laid back and calm, where are you now? *(Or you can*
You can scale any kind of behaviour, thought or emotion and this gives you useful initial information. It can also mark the progress in the next session: ‘Last week you were at 9, where are you now?’ It can allow all kinds of other questions to be used that help move the patient forward such as, ‘If you are at 5 now, and at 10 you wouldn’t be nervous at all, what would be different if you were at 7?’ This question breaks down the goal into smaller steps that may be more realistic and more manageable. You can use prediction questions such as, ‘Brilliant! You’ve gone from 3 to 5 in a week! What number do you think you are going to be on next week when you come back to see me? Oh, great. You’ll be at 6 and a half. What will you be doing differently when you are at 6 and a half?’

You can use scaling with much younger children too; you can draw a hill on a flipchart or page and give them the pen to show you how far up the hill they will be next time they see you. You can simply get them to show you with their hands how high or low they will be or have them build a tower of bricks. You can use your imagination to think of other examples but best of all, you can use theirs. They are likely to be even more imaginative than you are and the whole interaction becomes an enjoyable game in which they are already stretching or breaking through their comfort zones.

‘Anything Else?’ Question

Before moving on to any hypnotic intervention, it is useful to ask one of the questions below. It is sometimes the answer to this question that yields the most enlightening piece of the jigsaw puzzle, the one that helps you to conclude the therapy successfully.

- Is there anything else you wanted to tell me that I didn’t ask?
- Is there anything else important that you think I should know/I forgot to ask you about?
- Sometimes the tiny things are the really, really important things. Are there any tiny things you can tell me that I didn’t ask you about?
Scripts and Strategies in Hypnotherapy with Children

Hypnotic Intervention of Your Choice

Example of an intervention suitable for almost any treatment session

- Compliment the child on his or her part in the session.

- Gentle ‘day-dreamy’ induction (see Chapter 2). (Or you may choose to use a visualisation or NLP technique with no induction.)

- A means of letting go of worries and anxious feelings (see Chapter 7).

- Guided imagery of the achievement scenario using all the personal information you have gained in your solution-focused questioning.

- Find a way to include compliments on the child’s strengths/qualities that will be instrumental in achieving the goal.

Set a Suitable Homework Activity

- A ‘Noticing’ Task:
  - Notice what happens when you drink lots and lots of water during the day but don’t drink after 7 o’clock.
  - Notice how your teacher reacts when you stop pushing your classmates.

- Spend 2 minutes before you go to sleep imagining exactly what you want to happen (not what you don’t want to happen).

- Listen to a supporting CD every night (if you have made one or suggested one) (see Resource Section).

- Suggest that they do something different this week without telling anybody what they are doing. See how it alters the problem and see if anybody else notices. Offer an example of something carried out by another child in a different situation so they understand what you mean: ‘Somebody I know decided to count to 10 before answering his dad back just to see what difference it made’ or ‘Somebody else decided to put
In addition to providing a collection of hypnotic scripts for children from five to fifteen, this book offers easy to follow, solution-focused ways to structure treatment sessions. It also contains advice and background information, including contra-indications and possible pitfalls, on common and not so common childhood problems.

Clear and easy to use, it will appeal to all levels of experience. It has a variety of tried and tested inductions and scripts for different ages and thinking styles using up-to-date metaphors such as computer programs and PlayStations as well as the more traditional balloons, gardens and magic hammocks.

Issues include self-esteem, confidence, bedwetting, soiling, the effects of bullying, behaviour problems, school issues such as lack of organisational skills, study skills, exam strategies using accelerated learning skills, overcoming general anxiety, anxiety in relation to exams and school phobia.