



The Contented Gut
Relax, Reset, Restore

Hypnotherapy

What is it and could it help with MCAS symptoms?

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What I will cover today:

- Hypnotherapy training
- Why and how we use hypnotherapy – The Contented Gut
- What is hypnosis and what it isn't
- Hypnotisability – can we tell who will respond?
- Why it could be helpful for MCAS symptoms
- Hypnotherapy course for MCAS symptoms



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Graduate Certificate in Clinical Hypnosis and Related Techniques



BSCAH
Est 1952

British Society
of Clinical and
Academic Hypnosis



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University



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Gut Directed Hypnotherapy online group courses for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Using North Carolina Protocol
Up to 6 people per group

8 sessions over 2-3 months
Via zoom

Email: hello@thecontentedgut.com



Hypnosis

Focused attention +
reduced peripheral awareness + enhanced
capacity for response to suggestion

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Conscious level
Modifies negative thought patterns

Hypnotherapy

Therapeutic use of hypnosis

Meditation

Contemplative practice involving
focused attention, detached, non-
judgmental awareness of thoughts,
sensations, and experiences

Gut Directed Hypnotherapy

Suggestions focus on gut function

Mindfulness

Paying attention to present moment
without judgement



Trance

More **open to suggestion**

Natural state e.g. being absorbed in a task/watching film/reading good book

Logical/left brain - less active

Creative/right brain - problem solve by considering different possibilities



Metaphors

Right hemisphere:

Linked to autonomic nervous system e.g. heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, bowel function, temperature control etc

Responds better to imagery and emotion, encourages to see problems differently

Left hemisphere:

Processes the words making suggestions more powerful



Suggestion

Therapeutic suggestion depending on what trying to achieve e.g.

pain management: control room - adjust dials/levers, feel warmth from hand

gut symptoms: river imagery e.g. changing flow of river or drinking a soothing medication

gut-brain connection: telephone exchange or motorway - improving connections or changing flow of traffic

itchy skin - apply a cooling, soothing balm, bathe in a healing pool





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Hypnosis is NOT.....

A tool to **control** another persons thoughts, feelings or actions

A **weakness** (to be hypnotisable)

A tool to make subject **forget** (may not recall all of the session)

Something that occurs without **full consent**

The same as **sleep**

Just **placebo**





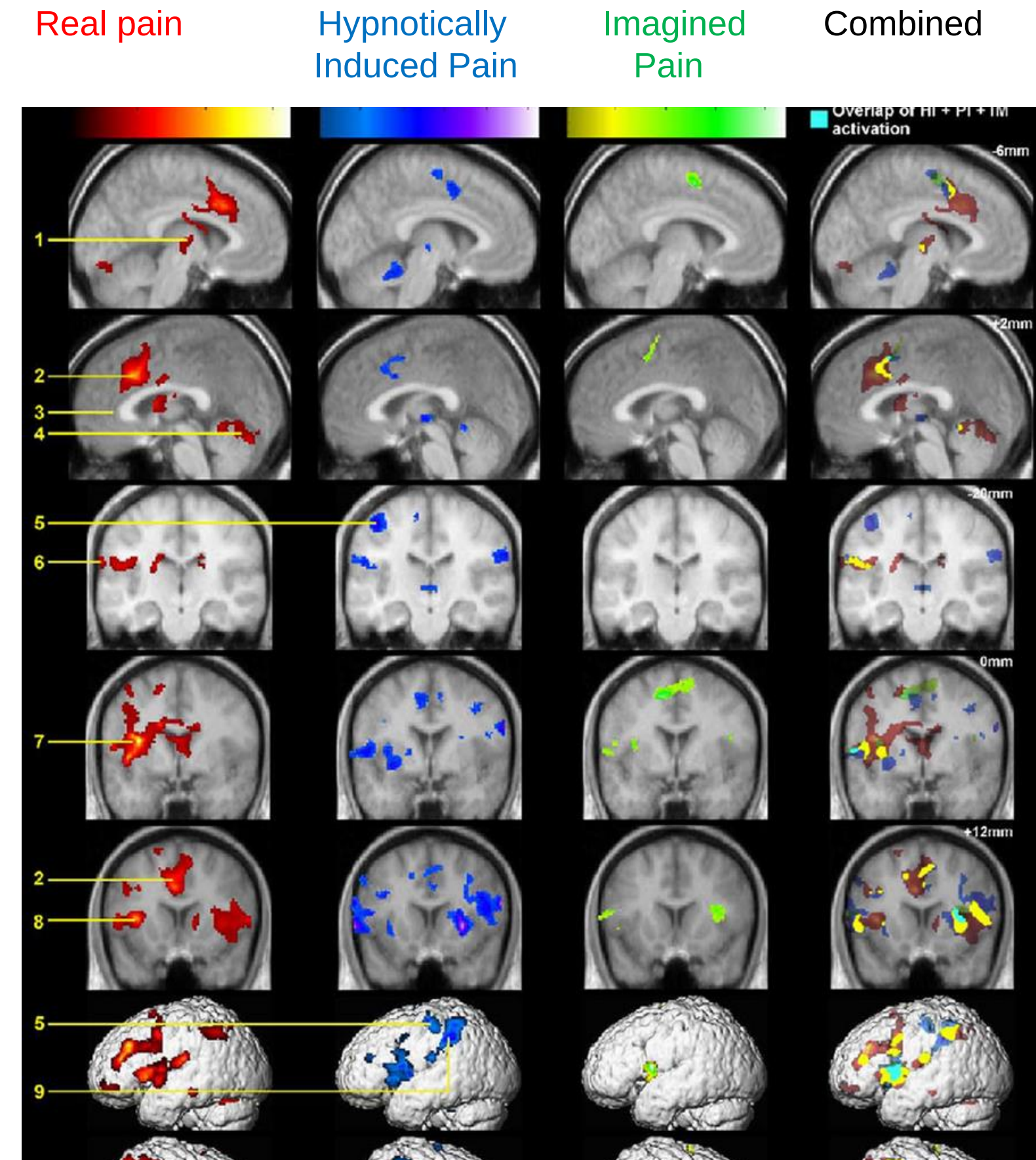
fMRI scans show area of brain activated during real vs hypnotically induced activity

5 highly hypnotisable Women
3 highly hypnotisable Men

3 mins of actual heat pulses
3 mins of hypnotically induced pain
3 mins of imagined pain

Rated pain intensity using verbal rating scale

Same areas of brain activation seen in actual and hypnotically induced pain (more intensity in actual pain).
Imagined pain showed minimal activation





Hypnotisability

Greater connectivity between:

Salience Network (involved in attention, awareness of emotions, thoughts and bodies) and
Executive Control Network (problem solving, reasoning, memory, focused attention)

Hypnosis makes it easier for Salience Network to affect ECN activity

Hypnotisability scales - long and time consuming, not practical for daily clinical use

Influenced by motivation, expectancy and engagement.

Do you ever get lost in a good book or film?

Can you picture in your mind your.... kitchen/ garden....

can you hear the sounds.... notice any smells..... feel the texture/temperature.....

Picture an apple

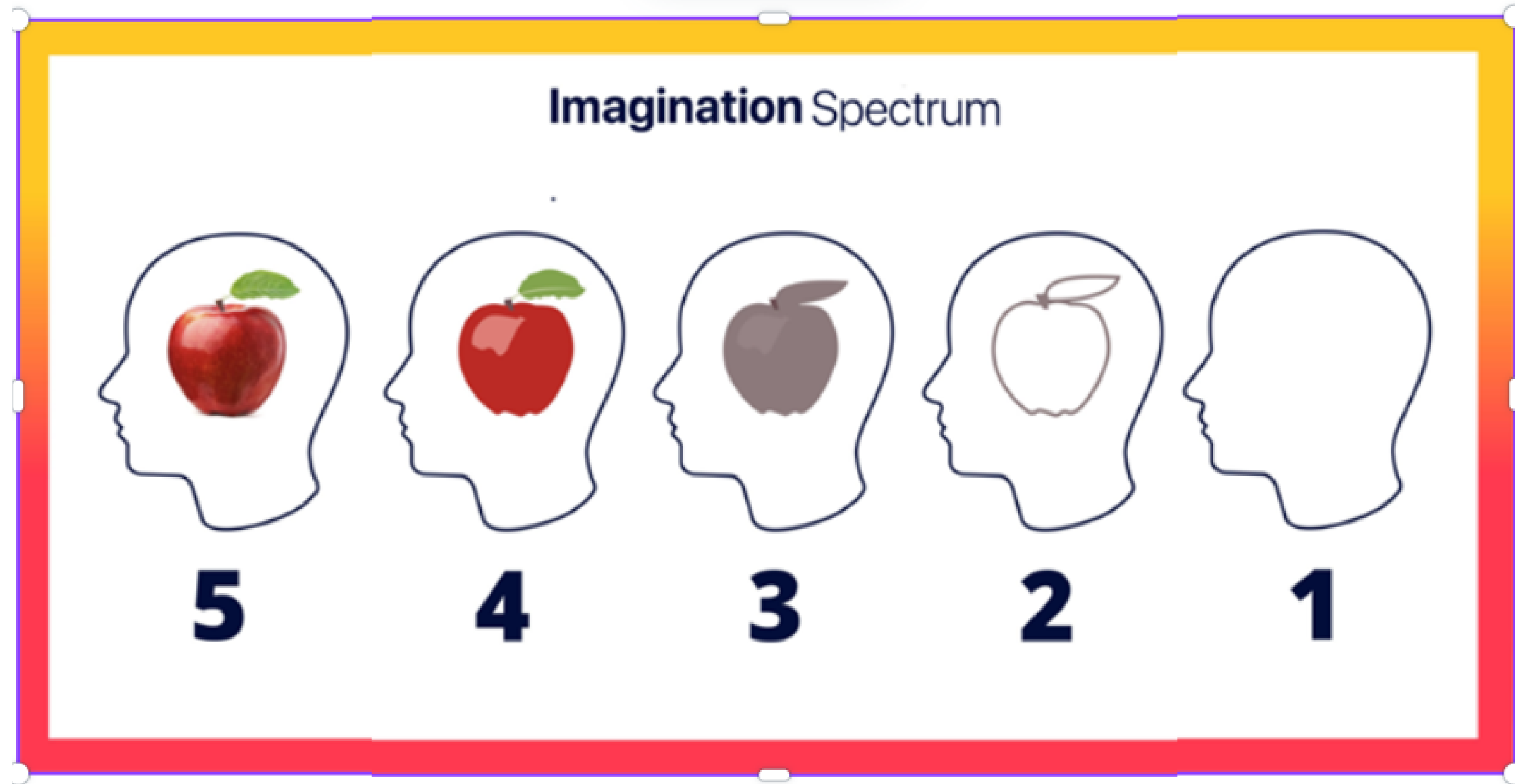


Image credit: Aphantasia Network

Hyperphantasic (3% population)

Aphantasic (1% population)



Hypnosis – the process

Induction

Enter into altered state of consciousness:
eye closure, whole body relaxation and
calming imagery



Deepening

Deeper relaxed state – using
metaphors e.g. staircase or a cloud.
All 5 senses are used

Suggestions

Symptom specific depending on need

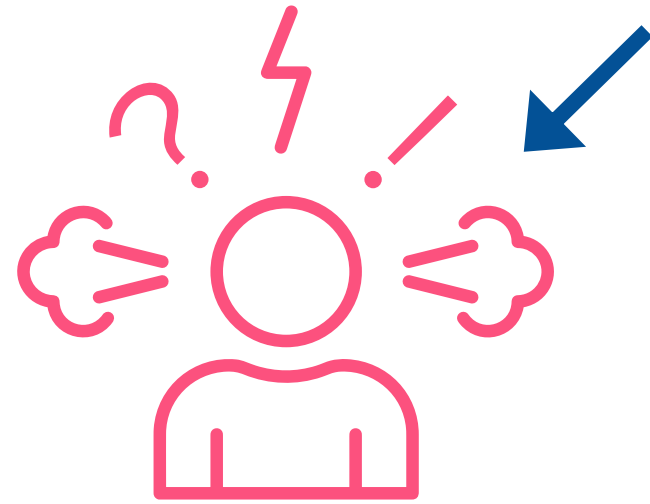
Return
to conscious and alert
state

Regular practice with recordings in between sessions is encouraged to create the new pathways/responses



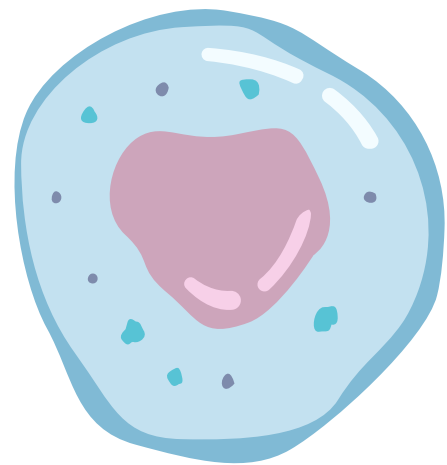
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Psychological/Physical stressors



Dysregulated autonomic nervous system

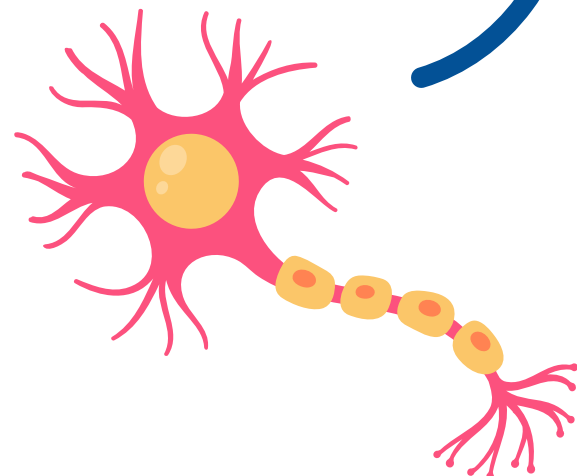
HPA axis,
Sympathetic Nervous System -
Corticotropin-releasing hormone
(CRH), neurotensin, Substance P



Inflammatory
mediators:
Histamine
Cytokines
Nerve growth factor



Neuropeptides
Neurotransmitters



Increased mast cell
activation



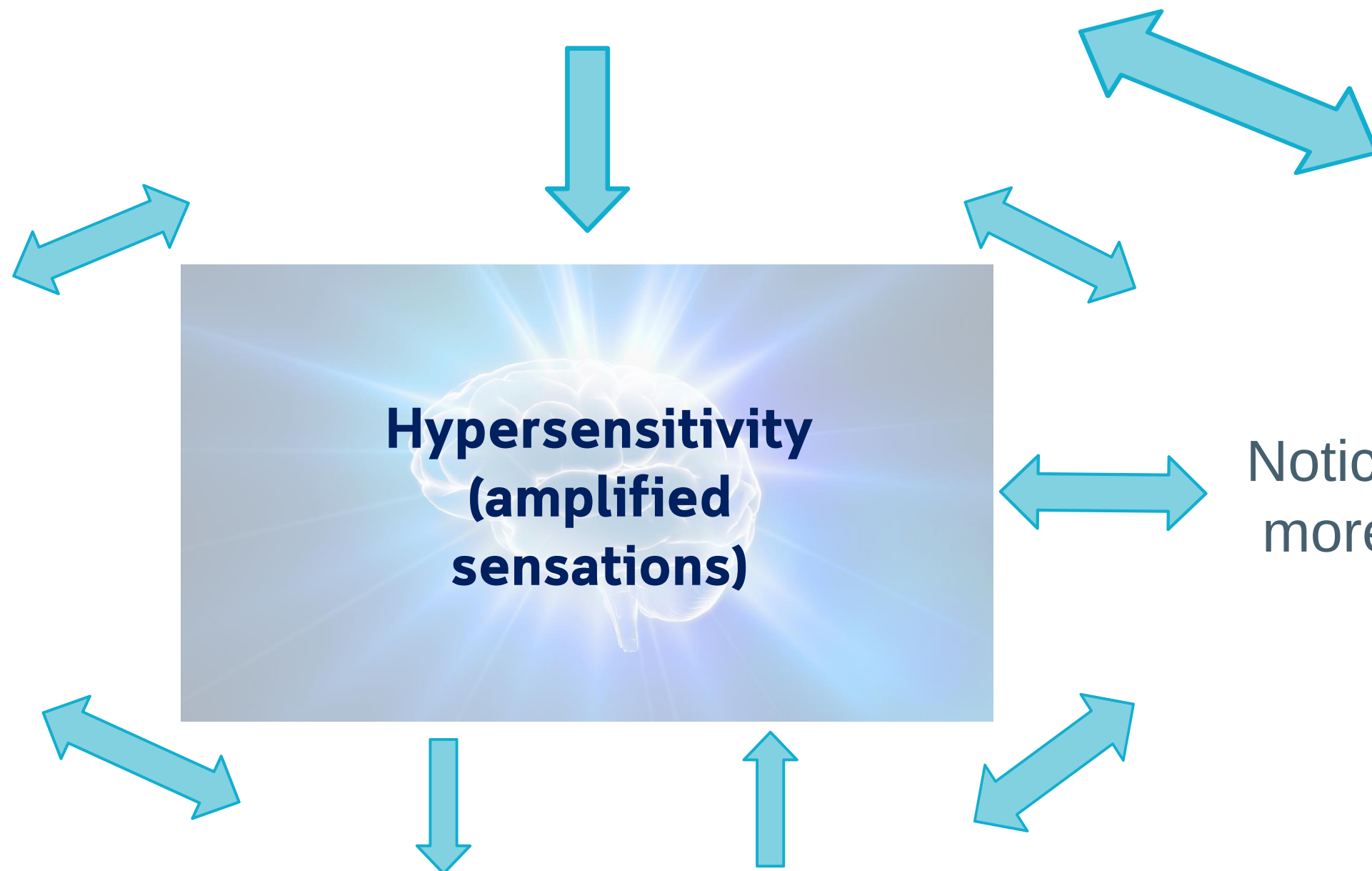
Symptoms



Increased stress, anxiety,
trauma, infection

Thoughts:
what's wrong,
worry, ?triggers

Emotions:
anxiety, anger, frustration,
low mood



Hyper-vigilance
(Conscious thoughts: constantly
asking 'what's wrong'?
Stress centre in brain keeps sending
stress signals)

Notice
more

Change
behaviour
e.g. food
avoidance,
limited social
events,
travel etc



Mastocytosis

- 20 patients completed the study
- Mean age: 53 years
- 75% female
- Most had systemic mastocytosis

Common symptoms:

- fatigue (100%)
- musculoskeletal pain (100%)
- abdominal pain (90%)
- itching (85%)
- flushing (85%)
- headaches (85%)

Hypnosis:

- 2 sessions, 45–60 minutes, 8–15 days apart,
- individualised
- did not teach self-hypnosis.

Significant improvements seen in:

- **Abdominal pain** - number of painful days, pain intensity after the first session, and again after the second session.
- **Fatigue** - significantly improved and remained improved at 1 month follow-up.
- **Overall symptom burden**
- **The AFIRMM score** (mastocytosis symptom severity questionnaire)
- **Social functioning**
- **Long-term benefit** - half the responders reported sustained improvement at long-term follow-up (median ~776 days).

No statistically significant changes in:

- Global pain scores, flushing intensity, diarrhea frequency, Energy scores overall
- So some symptoms may be more modifiable than others.
- No control group comparison



Hypnosis can help with:

Bowel movement:

Hypnotically induced emotions of anger & excitement increased movement
Happiness or hypnosis alone reduced movement
Whorwell and Houghton (1992)

Over-sensitive gut:

Hypnotherapy improves abnormal sensory perception in IBS, leaving normal sensation unchanged.
Houghton et al (2002), Lea et al (2003), Simren et al (2004)

Stomach acid production:

Can increase or decrease depending on imagery used (studied in subjects without gut disease).
Klein and Spiegel (1989).

Sensitivity to pain:

Change brain responses depending on whether suggestions relate to affect or intensity of pain.

Gut-focused metaphors, suggestions, and imagery may help reset communication between the gut and brain, allowing healthier patterns of processing to develop.

Vasant and Whorwell (2018)



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Itching

Reduced itch and scratching: Multiple studies reported improvements in itching, scratching behaviour, and self-control.

Improved disease severity: reductions in eczema severity and disease activity.

Better quality of life: Associated with enhanced quality of life and reduced discomfort.

Psychological benefits: Relaxation, stress management, anxiety reduction, and improved coping were commonly observed.

Improved sleep: Some studies found better sleep alongside reductions in itch and discomfort.

Sustained effects: Benefits were reported to last for up to 2 years in some patients.

Limited but promising evidence: Findings are encouraging, but the evidence base is small, with few randomised controlled trials available.

Integrative treatment approaches with mind body therapies in the management of atopic dermatitis. Yosipovitch et al, J Clin Med, 2024.



Fatigue

Current evidence is based on a small number of studies in specific patient groups e.g. MS and cancer.

Can help with sleep, pain, anxiety, stress management.



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Hypnotherapy course for MCAS

8 sessions

Via zoom

45-60 min sessions

Up to 6 people per group

First trial course free (need 6 volunteers)

Future courses, same cost as IBS course
(currently £175)



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To take part you would need:

Laptop/phone/tablet & good Wifi connection & position it so that we can see you from waist upwards and hear us clearly

Be somewhere quiet and comfortable

Be where you will not be disturbed (by pets, people or technology)

Be prepared to attend each session and practice regularly between sessions with the recording

Complete questionnaires before and after the course





The course is not suitable if you have:

- Dementia
 - Past psychosis
 - Severe depression
 - Currently receiving care from a psychiatrist or psychologist for a mental health issue including an eating disorder
-
- Neurodiverse - 1:1 sessions may be more appropriate - if interested can discuss suitability first.

Free audio downloads

BSCAH's therapists are all healthcare professionals and have donated free audio downloads for anyone needing help to cope in these potentially stressful times.

The content in these audio recordings is NOT meant to replace medical or psychological treatment or consultation. Always continue to consult with your doctor regarding the management of your health problem or condition. Under no circumstances must you cease taking prescribed medication without your doctor's approval. Do not listen to hypnosis recordings whilst driving or operating machinery. The content of each recording has been chosen by a number of our practitioners, based on their extensive clinical experience.

These audio recordings will help you to become more physically relaxed and mentally calm. They utilise various forms of imagery to help focus your attention and give positive suggestion. Self-hypnosis is a natural state similar to daydreaming, or getting lost in a good book. This relaxed state is good for both physical and mental health, improves your immune system and helps you to recharge. Self-hypnosis can be done as often as you like; as with any skill it gets easier and quicker to do with practise, and after a while you may well find you no longer need to listen to the audio recording to enter a deeply relaxed state.

- It is important NOT to listen to these when driving or in any other situation that requires your full attention.
- If you have some active significant mental health issues please discuss with your doctor/counsellor/psychologist whether these recordings would be appropriate for you
- However relaxed you become, using these audios, part of you will remain alert and you will be able to stop at any time if there is an emergency that requires your attention and deal with it appropriately
- You may find you are very good at visualisation but just having some awareness of the imagery used is absolutely fine and works just as well
- If your mind wanders whilst you are listening, just gently focus back on the recording when you notice this, and don't beat yourself up about it – it's just what minds do
- Self-hypnosis is a 'being' state, you don't have to try and do anything..Just listen and allow yourself to become curious.

For further information about hypnosis click [here](#)

[Access Free Audio Downloads](#)



<https://bscah.co.uk/free-audio-downloads/>



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THANK YOU

ANY
QUESTIONS?

