Ericksonian Conversational Hypnosis

Sentence Starters for Gentle Suggestions

These phrases help convert ordinary conversation into **permissive hypnotic suggestion**, allowing the client's mind to naturally explore experience.

Awareness Starters

These direct the client inward.

Sentence starter → Sample suggestion

You might notice…
→ *You might notice your breathing beginning to slow.*

You may become aware…
→ *You may become aware of a growing sense of calm.*

You might begin to notice…
→ *You might begin to notice your body relaxing.*

Perhaps you can notice…
→ *Perhaps you can notice where that feeling lives in your body.*

I wonder if you notice…
→ *I wonder if you notice any change in your breathing.*

Process Starters

These encourage gradual internal change.

You may begin to…
→ *You may begin to feel a little lighter.*

You might start to…
→ *You might start to feel more comfortable.*

And as you continue…
→ *And as you continue breathing, your mind may settle.*

Something inside may begin…
→ *Something inside may begin to soften.*

Over the next few moments…
→ *Over the next few moments you may notice a shift.*

Pacing and Leading Starters

These link current reality to a suggestion.

And as you…
→ *And as you sit here listening, you may begin to relax.*

While you…
→ *While you think about that memory, calm may begin to spread.*

As you remember…
→ *As you remember that place, the body may soften.*

And when you notice that…
→ *And when you notice that feeling, it may begin to change.*

As your attention moves inward…
→ *As your attention moves inward, your thoughts may slow.*

Curiosity Starters

These stimulate unconscious exploration.

I'm curious…
→ *I'm curious what happens in your breathing when you think of that.*

I wonder…
→ *I wonder how relaxed you might become.*

You may discover…
→ *You may discover that this feeling changes on its own.*

You might find…
→ *You might find your shoulders beginning to soften.*

You may be surprised…
→ *You may be surprised how easily this shifts.*

Permission Language

Removes pressure and resistance.

You don't have to try…
→ *You don't have to try to relax… it can happen naturally.*

You can allow…
→ *You can allow that feeling to move however it wishes.*

It's okay if…
→ *It's okay if your mind wanders.*

You may simply…
→ *You may simply notice what happens.*

You can let…
→ *You can let that feeling soften.*

Indirect Suggestion Starters

These introduce change without direct command.

Some people notice…
→ *Some people notice their breathing slowing when they talk about this.*

Many people find…
→ *Many people find their body relaxing as they explore this.*

It often happens that…
→ *It often happens that understanding brings relief.*

People sometimes discover…
→ *People sometimes discover that the mind settles.*

It's interesting how…
→ *It's interesting how the body knows how to relax.*

Time-Based Suggestions

These create expectation of change.

At some point…
→ *At some point you may notice this feeling shifting.*

Sooner or later…
→ *Sooner or later your mind may find a new perspective.*

Over time…
→ *Over time this becomes easier.*

Eventually…
→ *Eventually the body remembers how to relax.*

Before you know it…
→ *Before you know it you may feel calmer.*

Sensory Exploration Prompts

These deepen trance through experience.

What do you notice first…
→ *What do you notice first when that feeling appears?*

Where do you feel that…
→ *Where do you feel that in your body?*

What happens when…
→ *What happens when you simply observe it?*

If that feeling had a color…
→ *If that feeling had a color, what would it be?*

What changes when you watch it…
→ *What changes when you watch it for a moment?*

Erickson's Favorite Language Patterns

Milton Erickson frequently used these phrases.

And the interesting thing is…
→ *And the interesting thing is your mind already knows how to do this.*

You may be surprised to discover…
→ *You may be surprised to discover how easily your mind changes.*

At some point…
→ *At some point something inside may shift.*

You don't even have to try…
→ *You don't even have to try to relax.*

And you can learn something important…
→ *And you can learn something important without trying.*

Your unconscious mind already knows…
→ *Your unconscious mind already knows how to solve this.*

And you can begin to wonder…
→ *And you can begin to wonder what will change first.*

A Simple Ericksonian Session Formula

A useful conversational flow:

1. Pacing
"You're sitting here thinking about this…"

2. Awareness Question
"What do you notice happening in your body?"

3. Observation
"Many people notice their breathing slowing."

4. Suggestion
"And you might begin to feel calmer."

A Helpful Reminder

Pace → Observe → Allow → Suggest

Erickson often said:

“Use what the client brings.”

The client’s **experience is the doorway to trance.**