

Hypnosis is not Suggestion!

Analytical Hypno-Psychotherapy - Hypnosis as a tool in therapy.

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Hypnosis is one of those things shrouded in misunderstanding, by both many therapists and lay-persons alike. All too often the term Hypnotherapy is used in place of the term Suggestion Therapy. This happens so much so, that the two are considered to be the same thing. Suggestion Therapy may be conducted with or without hypnosis. However when it is conducted with hypnosis, the suggestions are more likely to be carried out if they are accepted.

Hypnotherapy is the process of healing and overcoming problems utilizing the hypnotic state.

Hypnosis used in therapy is used to enhance other modalities of therapy.

Primarily, hypnosis is a tool that provides access to the subconscious mind. We then use this access to improve the effectiveness of other modalities of therapy.

We use it to access imagination, motivation and inner resources when we use it in with suggestion therapy and self-hypnosis. When we do this we are bringing useful and beneficial information *to* the subconscious mind. When conducting suggestion therapy with or without hypnosis, it is far more powerful to take a client centred approach and use their ideas and solutions.

Or we can use hypnosis as a tool to gain access to unconscious beliefs which are causing problems. When we use hypnosis this way, it is almost the opposite of suggestion therapy. We are going into the subconscious to bring subconscious material into conscious awareness so that the limiting beliefs are not running around unchecked or unchallenged. Hypnosis can also be used to find the *root cause* of a problem. When we use hypnosis this way we are using it as a tool to access memory and emotions. When we do this, we are also bringing subconscious material into conscious awareness.

Now how does this help people with overcoming their problems ? Let's look at **Anxiety** as an example.

When some-one presents with anxiety, they describe their symptom in terms of racing heart, shortness of breath, pounding head, nausea, sweating, an overwhelming feeling of dread etc.(fight or flight response)

They have this symptom of anxiety because of some kind of internal conflict that is not in their control. When we have an internal conflict, it needs to be expressed in some way. Before we go any further, let's look at how we use our subconscious minds in everyday life.

When we tie our shoe laces, we don't consciously know which muscles to move in which direction or in what order. But at a subconscious level we do. We consciously decide to tie our shoe laces but our subconscious mind ties the laces. It knows what to do in the "tie-the-laces situation" because it learnt a long time ago what to do. It's a great way for our minds to work, because if we had to tie our laces completely consciously, we would never make it to work on time. The same thing occurs with

anxiety. We find ourselves in a situation which at a conscious level seems to be ok and safe enough, but then suddenly we start to experience all the symptoms of a fight or flight response. At a subconscious level we have recognised something dangerous about the situation we are in. So our subconscious mind sets into motion what it considers to be the appropriate action. It learnt a long time ago what to do in this situation, Get out of here!!!!.

Let's look at how hypnosis can be used to help overcome anxiety.

1. We can use suggestion therapy to help control the symptom of anxiety by giving suggestions for calmness, safety, control etc. This is a bit like putting a big band-aid over the symptom. It may even hold for a period of time. Most probably the symptom will return (if suggestion alone is used).
2. We can learn self hypnosis to help control the anxiety when it occurs. This is what I call symptom management. Also we can use self-hypnosis as a tool to develop qualities that will help us to move forward in a more beneficial way and to build a whole new set of responses to previously difficult situations.
3. We can use hypnosis as a tool to enhance the experience of integrating different parts of ourselves in order to resolve an inner conflict.
4. We can use hypnosis to access the subconscious material that is causing the internal conflict which is expressing itself as the symptom of anxiety. We do that by looking at unconscious beliefs and where they came from. Or we can find the Initial Sensitizing Event in subconscious memory when we first became sensitive to a certain type of situation (the connection is rarely one that the conscious mind would have made). There are many ways incorporating hypnosis to achieve this (besides following the feeling back to the first event).

Two types of understanding occur when we find the root cause of the problem:-

- Intellectual understanding about why we feel a certain way or do a certain behaviour. This helps us to make a conscious decision for change.
- Emotional understanding because we are using hypnosis which gives great access to our emotions. This helps us disentangle ourselves emotionally from the event.

Hypnosis is a great tool for accessing the subconscious. With access to Emotions, Imagination, Motivation, Hidden Resources, Beliefs and Memory, we can really begin to understand how and why we do our problem; and begin to build and move forward using the very same access tool (Hypnosis).