



Clear Thinking newsletter from Uncommon Knowledge - Issue 88

In this month's Clear Thinking...

1. Using hypnotic phenomena to enhance therapy
2. Online course: Precision Hypnosis

3 ways to use hypnotic phenomena to aid therapy

Learn to use hypnosis and its associated phenomena deliberately to help your clients more effectively

Hypnosis happens in *all* therapy. Sure, the therapist might not *think* hypnosis is happening – but it is. One characteristic of the hypnotic state is *abstraction*. By that I mean physically being in one place but psychologically being in another. This happens to a profound degree when we dream at night. *Physically* you're in bed, but *psychologically* you're somewhere else.

Fish asking what water is

Consider counseling. The counselor may regard hypnosis as 'a no go area' for their depressed client, even as they start asking the client about their life and their past. *But as soon as you ask a client questions relating to realities outside the therapy room, you are inviting them to 'trance out'.*

When the client becomes more psychologically tuned in to – say – the divorce they went through last year than to the right here/right now therapy room, then the 'abstraction' element of trance is in full play.

This type of hypnosis is so familiar to us all that it's easy to conclude that, well... "It's not really hypnosis!"

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Constantly hypnotizing someone to feel bad (by keeping their focus on negative events and experiences) should not be part of any modern therapy, despite much ‘therapy dogma’ to the effect that there is ‘no gain without pain’. We really have moved beyond that.

3 ways to put hypnosis to work in your therapy room

1. Bring back the good times

The first way you can usefully and naturalistically use hypnosis (and remember, if you are a therapist you are using it anyway!) is to *focus people’s attention on times they’ve felt really good*. Once you’ve done that, you can use those good feelings as a bridge to therapeutic gain (without any pain).

Hypnosis doesn’t just happen when we close our eyes. You can easily become more attuned with your memories or fantasies than with your immediate surroundings even with your eyes wide open

So you might begin by asking someone to describe the last time they felt good/relaxed/joyful/interested – or just ‘okay’.

Now ask for a description of those feelings. What words would the client use to describe them? (e.g. ‘lightness’, ‘energy’) You can then suggest that, as you talk, they can begin to notice those very feelings developing in their body. You could suggest that certain great memories come to mind or, if memories are associated with loss, you could suggest that as those feelings develop, certain positive images ‘from the future’ will come to mind.

This really isn’t so different from asking someone to recount how they felt during a past upset!

Recently I worked with a woman who found it difficult to feel as ‘good as the other mothers’ when collecting her daughter from school. I helped her recall a time when she felt strong and relaxed. Then I got her to ‘keep those feelings’ while she strongly visualized picking her daughter up at the school gates. Hypnotherapists just *extend* what all therapists do when they ask clients to talk about their lives.

2. Use post hypnotic therapy – build positive expectation

We’ve all seen (or heard about) stage hypnotists using ‘post hypnotic suggestion’ - for example, “When I click my fingers, you’ll sing like a canary!” But PHS happens all the time, to all of us. A soldier is traumatized by a bomb blast in Afghanistan. Months later, they’re back home and a car backfires – working as a natural post hypnotic suggestion to feel terrified, just as they did during the initial explosion. PTSD is post hypnotic suggestion working *pathologically*. Placebo, in which someone believes, for example, that a white sugar pill is a powerful antidepressant and so recovers from depression, is also a form of PHS.

*The moments when **expectation** is created within the mind are hypnotic moments.*

Making positive expectation statements to your client when they are focused enough to hear them and register them can be hugely therapeutic:

“And you can be curious as to just how this confidence is going to manifest next time you’re at the school gates...”

“It’s a strange but amazing feeling the first time you wake up in the morning and realize you actually feel compelled to start the day...”

Use positive expectation because it’s hypnotic.

3. Use hypnotic phenomena to demonstrate that they can change

During hypnosis it’s quite easy to produce phenomena such as hand levitation, time-distortion and numbness. Experiencing this kind of thing can powerfully *demonstrate to the client that they can do things they ‘didn’t know they could do’.*

For example, I taught one man to repeatedly ‘switch off’ feeling in his hand by visualizing it packed in ice, then switch sensation on again. I linked this to his public speaking anxiety and suggested that, if he could switch off physical sensation so easily then switching off public speaking fear would be a ‘right doddle’.

Which, in fact, was just what he found!

The art of post hypnotic suggestion

What happens in the therapy room is very important, of course. But not as important as what happens *outside* the therapy room, after your client has left.

So being able to select, and implement, just the right post hypnotic suggestions to have the greatest possible therapeutic impact for your client is a vital skill.

Our [online course in precision hypnosis](#) devotes considerable attention to crafting and targeting post hypnotic suggestions, as well as teaching you how to take your general hypnosis skills to a whole new level.

The next Precision Hypnosis course starts on 13 April 2010 and we are offering a 25% Early Bird discount until 23 March. Places are limited, so make your reservation early.

See you in a fortnight.

[Mark Tyrrell](#)

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Psychology trainers since 1995

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