



Clear Thinking Issue 105

Join Mark Tyrrell on an online course in November

Enhance your skills with a fully-featured multimedia online course:

Precision hypnosis advanced hypnotic language training - Nov 2nd

How to stop anyone smoking - Nov 3rd

Fast trauma and phobia treatment - Nov 4th

In this issue:

- Hidden in plain sight: how to use the power of exceptions
- How to stop anyone smoking

Hidden in plain sight: how to use the power of exceptions

3 ways to use exception questions in therapy – by Mark Tyrrell

Emotional problems demand our attention. They make us focus on them. But to overcome them we ultimately need to direct our attention to *not* having the problem – and it is the same for your clients.

Your client has within them the capacity to ***not have their problem.***

And it's that capacity we need to identify, nurture and develop so the problem can be assigned to the past as soon as possible.

As well as asking about the problem, I ask clients to tell me in detail about the exceptions - times they *don't* smoke (or whatever the problem behaviour is). The information they provide starts to form the basis of their escape route away from problematic feelings and actions.

For example, one man told me he didn't feel the need to smoke:

- on long haul flights

- when visiting a sick friend in hospital
- when swimming every other day in his local pool

So although he thought of himself as a 'compulsive smoker', we now have three exception times when the behaviour *isn't* compulsive at all.

When I used hypnosis with him, I would talk about "getting that swimming pool feeling" during the times he would normally feel triggered to smoke (for example, just before work, with a coffee, after a stressful work-frenzy and so on). This is a vital principle.

Spreading the good stuff

If someone tells me they feel terrified when speaking in groups, I might ask them when and where they feel at their most relaxed. It doesn't matter what answer they give - it might be in their bath tub! Because it's not that they don't know how to experience relaxation, it's just that they haven't (until now) been *using* that resource where they *could* be using it.

Hypnosis is the perfect vehicle for spreading a resourceful state from where it already exists to other situations in which it will be massively beneficial.

But you need to *identify* these resourceful states by asking the right questions. Here are three ways you can find the exceptions to problematic states to help you help your client expand the non-problem areas in their life.

1) Ask about times when the problem pattern doesn't happen

Ask about times they expected to feel angry, or sad, or to blush, or feel terrified when flying, but the feeling just didn't show up for some reason, or not to the degree they were expecting.

What times can you tell me about when you expected to feel embarrassed, but for some reason you just didn't? Really think about this...

When did they *notice* that they just weren't nervous, or sad, or whatever?

People don't have *exactly* the same experience every time, so what you are looking for here is times when it's *naturally* been better.

2) Ask what was different

Then ask:

What exactly was different about that time?

or even

How did you do that? What were you doing differently that time?

This helps to locate client resources as early as possible. And by asking how they did that, you are implying that the improvement was due to their own actions, thus helping them take credit for the good times.

3) Use presuppositions to help pinpoint resourceful exceptions

When you enquire about exceptions, it's great to use presuppositions

A 'presupposition' is a language construct whose phrasing indicates that an occurrence can be 'taken for granted'. It assumes that something will, or is extremely likely to, occur (or to *already have* occurred).

Presuppositions are a masterful way of communicating because they preclude doubt.

For example:

When do you feel calmer?

presupposes that there *are* times when they feel calmer, and *presupposes* a positive identification of such times, and so is preferable to

Are there ever any times when you feel calmer?

which concedes that there *may not* be such times, and readily allows for a negative response.

More examples of presuppositions to glean those precious exemption times:

Where are you when you find yourself feeling less depressed?

What occasions have you noticed when you expected to feel shy but you actually had a really good time?

In what situations would you be least likely to feel like bingeing?

Dr Milton Erickson believed that: “therapy should always be designed to fit the client, not the client to fit the therapy.”

You and I may know all the psychological theory and practice under the sun, but I think we do well to remember that - ultimately - our clients will find the cure from within.

How to stop anyone smoking

You’ll have appreciated from what I’ve said above that when it comes to helping people quit smoking, the ‘exceptions’ are among the most useful resources available to you. Nobody smokes *all* the time, not even ‘chain smokers’.

This topic is covered in detail as part of our comprehensive online smoking cessation training course. It’s all about activating unconscious resources and overcoming the emotional resistance that trips up would-be non-smokers at every turn.

With the skills you gain on this course, you’ll quickly be able to get your client ‘on side’ with you against the addiction, so that you can work effectively together to making smoking a thing of the past.

The next online smoking cessation training course starts on 3 November. There are still a few places left, and there’s only 25 places in total, so all participants get a high level of attention from the tutors.

You can sign up for how to stop anyone smoking here and read testimonials from former participants.

Read more about the online smoking cessation training course here.

See you in a fortnight.

Mark Tyrrell
Co-Founder
Uncommon Knowledge
Psychology trainers since 1995

More resources from Uncommon Knowledge...

- [Uncommon Knowledge](#)
- [Hypnosis Downloads](#)
- [Self-Confidence Course](#)
- [Panic Attacks Course](#)
- [Depression Learning Path](#)
- [Uncommon Forum](#)
- [Uncommon Help](#)

Who do you know that would benefit from this article? If this issue of Clear Thinking has been forwarded to you, you can sign up for [therapy techniques every two weeks here.](#)