

"This is a long awaited and excellent account of the multiplicity of hypnosis that will be a valuable resource for both new and experienced therapists."

Tom Barber, Contemporary College of Therapeutic Studies

FOUNDATIONS OF CLINICAL HYPNOSIS

From Theory to Practice

Edwin K. Yager, PhD



*Foundations of
Clinical Hypnosis
From Theory to Practice*

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Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk
www.chpus.com

First published by

Crown House Publishing Ltd
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.crownhouse.co.uk

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC
6 Trowbridge Drive, Suite 5, Bethel, CT 06801-2858, USA
www.CHPUS.com

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN 978-184590122-6

LCCN 2008931998

Printed and bound in the USA

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Preface

I began writing this book with two major goals in mind: (1) To provide the necessary information to clinicians who are new to the subject of hypnosis and are preparing to employ the skill in their practices, and (2) To inspire those already skilled in hypnosis to continue their training by sharing personal insights and experiences with them. In my practice as a psychologist, I have found hypnosis to be of immeasurable value in helping people to help themselves. I want to present this ancient art in the form of practical, immediately usable techniques. I want to share what I know.

I have studied, taught, and clinically employed hypnotic principles for almost 40 years, and have found their use to be an effective and efficient way to accomplish desired change. This book is the product of my ongoing study, my front-line experiences, and the conclusions I have reached in consequence of those experiences.

As clinicians, we carry an ethical obligation to provide our patients with the most effective treatments available. To do so, we must avail ourselves of current information about developments and improvements in our specialties, not with the mandate to adopt all of them, but rather to evaluate each for the benefit of our patients. This obligation applies whether our discipline is surgery, psychotherapy or general medicine, and if we are exposed to a technique that purports to improve our skills, and we are satisfied that it is appropriate, we are obliged to give it serious consideration. Hypnosis offers valuable skills to *every* clinician. A wealth of validating literature is available, published in journals of medicine, dentistry and psychology, as well as in the journals of *The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis* and *The Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*. We typically resist leaving our comfort zones, preferring to continue using the methods and techniques we were trained to use and are familiar with. Yet, after exposure, one cannot deny the advantages of hypnotic techniques. Once informed, are we not obligated to study and use them?

Chapter Two

*The Language of Hypnosis**

When observing its clinical use, a person who is not well-informed about hypnosis may be confused by the language employed, impressed by the clarity of the communications, or offended by the violations of “correct” grammar that occur. The language is often not conventional, but, nevertheless, there is clear purpose behind it. Both subtle and blatant instances of such uses are included in this chapter to inform the reader and to provide a common basis of understanding for those more advanced in the field.

Although employing the principles of hypnosis does not necessarily require the use of language (any vehicle of communication can be employed), verbalization is essential in the clinical setting. As clinicians, we offer suggestions, either covertly or overtly. We guide the patient to consider possibilities and to experience life in different ways, ways that are therapeutically beneficial. We may be authoritative or we may be permissive in our approach. We sometimes take liberties with the language we use, defying customary rules of syntax and presentation. We say things that would be confusing or incomprehensible to the rationally competent individual, yet they are understood at an unconscious level by the patient in trance.

A common characteristic of hypnotic work is the necessity of bypassing conscious resistance to the experience and to the healing process that is engaged. A belief that limits the acceptance of a concept held either consciously or unconsciously, can impede or altogether derail the acceptance of suggestions that would benefit the patient. The language we use is of prime importance in bypassing such limiting beliefs when they are held consciously. For example, a patient might consciously not accept the possibility that a necessary procedure can be experienced without discomfort and, unless

* This chapter is influenced heavily by the teachings of Dr. Steven Bierman, and Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

that resistance is bypassed, the resistance (the non-acceptance) will prevail and the patient will be unable to alter his or her perception of the experience.

We recognize that certain individuals have influenced masses of people in profound ways through the use of language. For better or for worse, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, King and Lincoln all used language to influence their audiences. Concepts such as implied authority, the phenomenon whereby an individual simply assumes the mantle of authority, were manifested without being verbally expressed and were therefore not resisted. In much the same way, the clinician can influence the experience of the patient, and this is especially true when the patient is in the trance state of hypnosis. Many clinicians in the field hold that the greatest value of hypnosis lies in its use without formal trance, through beneficial concepts communicated in ways that are not resisted.

In his lectures, Dr. Steve Bierman defines hypnosis as “Ideas Evoking Responses.” I embrace that definition. The “Ideas” of this definition can be a product of imagination, implicit in a situation, communicated by implication, or expressly verbalized. And, whether or not the “Idea” evokes a response is determined by a complicated process of believed-in efficacy on the part of the patient, possibly further complicated by unconscious resistance to the concept. In the clinical setting, where communication is largely via words, the ideas may best be expressed in the language of hypnosis.

Patterns

Richard Bandler and John Grinder studied the work of Milton H. Erickson in an attempt to explain the mechanism whereby he had such profound influence on his patients. They presented their findings in their book *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson* (Bandler & Grindler, 1975). The following discussion is based on that work. I have taken liberties with their work, incorporating explanations of my own and extracting from the lectures of Bierman, but the fundamentals are theirs. I encourage you to read their book for further comprehension of designs for bypassing resistance. Bandler and Grinder defined the following terms:

Causal Modeling refers to relating two events by implication or by direct suggestion: “While you sit in that chair, you can feel at ease,” and, “Any time you do that, you will”

Specific/Non-Specific refers to the use of soft, ambiguous words in direct, specific ways: “A certain degree of lightness” Or “A particular feeling of numbness can develop.”

Implied Contrary refers to the opposite of an imperative. “You will ...” is easily resisted, whereas words like “might, could, can and if” cannot be disagreed with and therefore cannot be resisted.

Transderivational Phenomena refers to a statement in which the subject must furnish an interpretation in order to attach meaning to the statement. If the subject is allowed to attach a meaning that makes sense to him or her, there will be nothing to resist: “You don’t have to feel this; you can be like a bump on a log...” Or, “Many people, while they are here, begin to think of places they like.”

Insert the Proper Name refers to using the subject’s proper name in an indirect suggestion. “Some people in this situation, Cathy, as they listen to me, find that time passes quickly.” Or, “I wonder if, Pete, while you are sitting there, you can remember a time when”

Selectional Restriction Violation refers to metaphors that communicate suggestions. Standard rules of language may be broken and metaphors may be used in order to evoke the desired therapeutic response. For example, “A bicycle can have scrapes and scratches and doesn’t need to feel them.” Or, “A rock doesn’t have feelings.”

Deletion refers to suggestions that allow the person to create and attach the content of the suggestion, as opposed to specifying the specific content within the suggestion. Subjects will not resist what they have supplied themselves: “You can sit there and enjoy....” Or, “While you are with me you can wonder...”

Play on Ambiguities refers to loading suggestions with words, figures of speech, or phrases that have double meanings, one that is recognized, the other having therapeutic meaning. “Right and write, know and no, visiting relatives, the touch of a man, the feel of a sofa” are examples. The phrase “speaking to you as a child” is a way

Chapter Thirteen

Applications Having Unique Characteristics

*Argue for your limitations,
And sure enough,
They are yours.*

Richard Bach (1997)
Illusions

In this chapter, I address a number of applications of hypnosis that I have personally and successfully employed. I offer clinicians my insights and guidance in each case, with the hope that his or her range of use will be expanded. The literature on the applications of hypnosis is voluminous, covering a wide range of problems in the medical domain that are not included here. The reader is referred to the *Journal of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis* (JASCH) for many such applications.

This chapter is dedicated to listing some of the more typical applications that respond well to hypnotic treatment. In a few instances, I have offered details peculiar to that disorder; however, in most of the applications the following, general procedure can be employed:

1. Establish rapport. This is always essential for success.
2. Educate the patient. Provide the information necessary for that patient, at his or her level of sophistication, to comprehend the procedure you propose to employ. Surprise should never be part of the treatment.
3. Employ hypnosis, suggestively, analytically or in combination, as you deem appropriate.

Academic Applications

Studying

Learning requires perception and understanding of the perceived material; the material must make sense because if it doesn't, it will not be remembered. The focus of attention provided by hypnosis, in combination with suggestions that enhance understanding, can be effective in achieving actual comprehension. The use of the following suggestion, originated by Camilla VanVoorhees, M.D., is preferably read or recited to oneself while in the trance state. It has been found to be of value by undergraduate, medical and law students.

As I now close my eyes and take a deep breath or two, and let it out slowly, I notice a feeling of relaxation flowing through my body.

As I touch my thumb to the ring finger of my right hand, I may feel a special "tingling" sensation spread through my body, permitting ever-greater release of tension and softening of muscles throughout my body.

And, with each breath I release, I can experience yet a little further release of tension, and my mind becomes calmer and less hurried.

Then, focusing my attention on my eyes, I am aware of a different feeling there, no longer responsive in usual ways, reluctant to open, and resisting my efforts to open them, and then refusing to open.

And now I focus my attention on some sound that is present – and the more I focus my attention on that sound, the greater the release of tension within my body and within my mind.

And, while my body feels completely relaxed, and my mind feels at ease, all sounds fade into the background. As I focus my attention on these words, I am ready to consider suggestions of ways in which I can set the stage for learning.

In experiencing these moments of calm contemplation, I am preparing myself – both consciously and unconsciously – for the challenge of learning, and I will find myself challenged by the task.

As I expose myself to the materials being reviewed, my attention will be focused on that material – and other stimuli will remain on the periphery of my awareness, not distracting, not requiring my attention just now.

My attitude toward the challenge of learning will be that of openness to the material reviewed – and, in being open, I will be aware of any detail or any aspect that doesn't quite fit, or that doesn't make sense, and I will seek to understand.

And – in understanding – I will remember.

Also, there in the depth of my mind, will be the ever-present awareness of my developing expectation of passing this course this time and, with awareness of any reservation, there will be a renewal of my commitment to pass this time.”

Test-taking

It is not uncommon for a student to know the material being tested, yet not be able to competently perform when taking a test on that material. It is as though thoughts and fears of failure interfere with recall, thereby facilitating failure on the test. Given that we are able to consciously attend to only one thought at a time, the possibility of such interference is easily understood; distracting thoughts, fears and conscious struggling to remember preclude communication of the material from memory to consciousness. The question is what to do about it. The answer lies in altering the conditioning imposed by earlier experience, in which the individual learned the unfortunate, limiting patterns of thought.

Just as in so many other issues, the use of hypnosis as an analytical tool is a highly efficient way to alter conditioning. The therapist should guide the individual to use age-regression, Subliminal Therapy, or another analytic hypnotic technique. If Subliminal Therapy is employed, guide the patient to achieve insight, followed by understanding, reframing or re-decision (see Chapter 12). Then follow by asking Centrum to educate the involved unconscious parts about the present life situation, as well as current needs and values, thereby persuading those parts to the position held consciously.

This comprehensive volume is certain to become an invaluable textbook in the burgeoning field of clinical hypnosis. In it Dr. Yager covers everything there is to know about how to translate theory into practice across the range of clinical settings. His clear and thoughtful perspective will inform those who are new to the field and expand the understanding of those who have more experience. The level of depth and detail is unparalleled, providing readers with a full education on the subject.

Divided into five parts, the book begins with a discussion of what hypnosis is (and isn't) and introduces the "concept", the "language", the "phenomena", the "tools", and "hypermnesia." In part two, the discussion turns to clinical considerations, addressing approaches to using hypnosis, the roles it can play in psychotherapy and some potential dangers and risks that may arise with its use. Part three looks at specific procedures, delineating the principles of trance induction, highlighting the particulars of hypnosis and sleep, and focusing on Dr. Yager's pioneering discoveries regarding subliminal therapy. Part four is devoted to Applications of Hypnosis - from test taking to ocular correction - providing a wide view of the power and possibility of hypnosis as one of the most efficacious treatment options available for an extraordinary range of challenges. The final section consists of a variety of additional relevant topics.

The book closes with a useful glossary of terms and extensive reference list, plus a bibliography for further investigation into various unique applications.

Read from cover to cover or in small doses, *Foundations of Clinical Hypnosis* is a must-have resource whether you are just beginning to consider incorporating hypnosis into your clinical work or you are anxious to expand the parameters of your effectiveness and creativity in the field.

"A refreshingly new approach to hypnosis based on his many years of teaching and clinical experience. This is a comprehensive book and a valuable resource for the beginning clinician or seasoned professional. It is a blend of theory and practice covering most clinical problems and providing a complete bibliography for further investigation. This volume will become a valuable resource in a hypnosis library as well as a basic text in the field."

William C. Wester, II, EdD, Professor Emeritus, Athenaeum of Ohio
and Past President of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis.

"Dr Yager's book is a great testimony to his many years of clinical experience. He covers a great deal of ground without it ever feeling like it is old ground, and his descriptions of analytic procedures - especially subliminal therapy - will be of particular use to practitioners. Whether as a foundation for clinical use of hypnotherapy, or a springboard for further learning, this book will give something to every reader."

Trevor Silvester, therapist, author, and trainer

Edwin K. Yager, PhD, is a Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, UCSD School of Medicine and a Staff Psychologist for the UCSD Medical Group. He is certified as a Consultant in Hypnosis by the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and is Past-President, Fellow and current Board Member of the San Diego Society of Clinical Hypnosis. Dr. Yager currently maintains a private practice in San Diego, California.

Hypnosis/Clinical Hypnosis/Psychotherapy



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www.crownhouse.co.uk - www.chpus.com

ISBN 978-184590122-6



9 781845 901226