

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Powerful Achievement of Hypnosis

Recently a hypnotherapist received a call from the wife of a friend he had not seen for more than two years. He knew that the friend had been treated surgically for cancer of the kidney, but he had heard that the operation had proved successful and all was well. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

The wife asked the hypnotherapist if he would see the husband and try to relieve the intense pain being suffered. The therapist requested medical authority to enter into the case and was advised that the situation was terminal, and that everything possible had been done--any help in pain relief was more than welcome. The prognosis was for about six months of life.

The situation was such that the patient could not visit the office, so the hypnotherapist offered to make a house call. He had some concern about the hypnotizability of the patient, since hypnosis usually requires an ability to focus attention as directed by the hypnotherapist in the fixation phase of the induction. It was possible that the sheer intensity of the pain was so great that diversion of attention from it would be difficult or impossible.

Anticipating that repeat visits would be difficult in view of the medical and family situations, the therapist made a tape dealing with relaxation, rest and pain reduction, taking it with him on the call. On arriving he learned that he was ill-prepared to face the situation confronting him. His friend was in bed, face contorted with agony, with a tube in the arm connected to a button that released morphine on demand. The morphine provided minimal relief.

The Power Of The Mind

The hypnotherapist called the family into the room, together with the patient, to acquaint them with the plan and procedures. After the family was informed, members left and the therapist talked for some time with the patient, discussing hypnosis, the powers of the mind and pain. An induction was then begun, and while it was slow going at the beginning, the patient did slip into hypnotic trance and responded very well once relaxation was achieved. He was programmed for alleviation of pain, control of emotions, abilities to take nourishment and response to treatment. He was given a special cue to use for pain relief when discomfort became particularly intense. He was given the tape and advised it paralleled the hypnotic session and would provide similar relief when used. On awakening the patient commented that he had not rested so well in months.

In six weeks the patient died. At the funeral services the wife told the hypnotherapist the final six weeks had been bearable for both the patient and the family due to the tape. She commented that when pain became intense the patient would ask for the tape, and when it was begun the time required to move from deep pain to total relaxation was approximately thirty seconds.

It was evident that the expectation of relief more than the content of the tape was the effective element. Such is the power of the mind.

Applications and Techniques

Hypnotherapeutic methods for achieving pain relief are numerous. Effectiveness can vary and the choice may depend on the condition and personality of the patient. Suggestions may be direct or indirect, interspersal, or may utilize anesthesia, guided imagery, hypnoanalysis or other procedures.

As is so important in hypnosis, attitude is a major factor. It is important that the patient accept that relief is possible. Constant pain needs to be approached on a different basis than interim pain. Constant pain is not to be relinquished completely even for a few minutes, since it is identified with the life force. The patient likes to feel it is there, however reduced, even during periods of sleep.

Physical pain is seldom constant. The therapist will determine if the patient has experienced periods, however briefly, which were free of pain. If the patient claims the pain is constant, it is more likely to be psychological in origin and may indicate a constant pain syndrome. Treatment will likely involve the establishment of rapport with empathy and appreciation of the value of pain. Hypnotic regression to the cause of the problem can lead to understanding and relief.

A reasonable hypnotherapist usually will not work with physical pain without being in communication with an appropriate physician, for the simple reason that pain is more of a symptom than a condition. Pain indicates that something is wrong, somewhere, and that is true whether the pain is physical or mental. It would be the height of folly to treat a migraine headache only to have it turn out to have been a brain cancer.



It is important to remember that some patients value their pains highly, just as a hypochondriac can be said to "enjoy poor health". Through hypnosis patients frequently can be shown that they can control their pains, and being able to do so they also can diminish pain to tolerable levels or turn it off completely at will.

Seemingly endless periods of tests which prove inconclusive, often accompanied by conflicting diagnoses, can instill levels of fear which may be dealt with through hypnotherapy. Guilt, anger or other emotional problems enter into the picture when accidents are involved as source conditions.

Negative attitudes must be dealt with, and again the capability of hypnosis to modify trends of thought becomes important. In difficult cases the power to cope can be programmed into the patient's mind, possibly together with cues to make the process more or less automatic.

In dealing with pain situations, teaching the patient the use of self-hypnosis techniques can be highly beneficial, reinforcing the programming that has been done in the case.

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This brochure is presented for the information of the general public, to discuss the applications of hypnosis available for dealing with such matters as habit control, stress, excessive eating, smoking, fears, motivation, self-confidence, concentration, learning enhancement, attitude modification, pain management, insomnia, goal-setting, relationships and other areas which lead to unhappiness, dysfunction or difficulty in achieving personal goals.

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