Hypnotic Regression
An Emotion-Based Process for Treating Trauma

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Research

- Hypnosis significantly reduces the reexperiencing of trauma and pain in burn patients (Shakibaei, et al., 2008)
- Ego State Therapy (emphasizing repeated hypnotically activated abreactive “reliving” of the trauma and ego strengthening) was found to be an effective treatment for PTSD (Christensen, et al., 2013).
- CBT plus hypnosis significantly improved reexperiencing symptoms (Bryant, et al. 2005)
- Hypnosis is a useful adjunct treatment for PTSD (Lynn, 2007).
- Successful case studies (for example Smith, 2004; Horley, 2013; Poon, 2007)
Emotion is the Power of Change

- Emotion, not information, drives behavior
- The goal is to create a fundamental emotional shift in meaning so the client feels different

Relaxation and Emotional Change

- Cognitive processing (frontal lobe) decreases as you relax
- Working at a relaxed level allows more direct access to emotions
- Emotional processing (limbic system) is always functioning

- Hypnosis
- Guided Imagery (Cognitive Behavior Therapy)
- Directed Mindfulness Meditation
- Functional Relaxation
Introducing the Concept

Would you agree you have more wisdom, emotional strength, life experience now than in the past?

So there are things that happened in the past – problems, traumas – you handled as well as you could at the time, but if you could you would do it differently now?

So there were emotions associated with those events – and sometimes those emotions are triggered into the present?

But they don’t belong here, because that is not who you are now.

We have to go back, engage the problematic emotions, and rehandle those experiences using today’s emotional strength.

“Hold your course. We must follow them back. Repair whatever damage they’ve done.”

Solution Focused

Not Causes! Not Insight!
Memory and False Memory

"Many people believe that memory works like a recording device. Memory works a bit more like a Wikipedia page: You can go in there and change it, but so can other people."
—Elizabeth Loftus, 2013

Set Expectations

- Describe the process
- Acknowledge that it is difficult
- Most people feel emotionally washed out afterward
- This will pass and you will be fine
- The next week will be a time of very positive emotional change

Hypnotizability has been described as the fundamental capacity to experience dissociation in a structured setting.
- Traumatic memories are not fixed or indelible but can change over time.
- Activation of the ventral anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) represents a normal brain response to traumatic stimuli that serves to inhibit feelings of fearfulness when there is no true threat.
- Failure of activation in this area and/or decreased blood flow in the adjacent subcallosal gyrus may lead to increased fearfulness that is not appropriate for the context, facilitating exaggerated emotional and behavioral responses (hyperarousal).
- Traumatic recall induction of emotion specifically activated the ACC.

(Vermetten & Bremner, 2004)
Insight is not necessary for change. The unconscious is regarded as a vast storehouse of learning and as a context—in itself—for change. Such a view is a revolutionary different conception of the nature and scope of the unconscious. In contrast to the traditional psychodynamic notion of the unconscious as a place full of negative forces, impulses, and ideas which are so unacceptable that they must be repressed from conscious awareness, Erickson had a positive view of the unconscious. Rather than distrusting the hostile, aggressive, or sexual impulses of the unconscious, Erickson encouraged individuals to trust the unconscious as a positive force which held more wisdom than the conscious mind.

(Fieldsman, 1985)

Engage Strong Emotion: Abreaction

You Have to be Ready

“Steady! Steady! You are soldiers of Gondor! No matter what comes through that gate you will stand your ground!”
Engage the Ericksonian Unconscious

- Older wiser you

She has more wisdom, life experience, emotional strength. She can do anything, say anything, take any action which will be helpful for you.

Dissociation as a resource
- Crystal vial
- Treasure box
- Affect Bridge or Regression to Cause - R2C
References & Bibliography


