

## Clinical Hypnosis – What You Need To Know

Lil Niddrie, Denplan Trainer looks at the benefits of hypnosis, how it can help calm nervous patients, remove phobias and addictions and also as a method of pain relief.

Science is yet to fully comprehend how the human mind works and there are still many unanswered questions regarding hypnosis and hypnotherapy. However, it's widely accepted that hypnosis involves being in a trance state, making the mind extremely susceptible to suggestion.

Over the years, this state of suggestibility has unfortunately led to a large number of misconceptions and fears regarding hypnosis. The fact is, however, that the main aim of hypnotherapy is not to manipulate, but to give people the tools they require to take back control of their behaviour, feelings and emotions. The following information is designed to give you all the information you need to know on the benefits of hypnotherapy and how using it effectively can help you attract and retain patients.

### **How does hypnotherapy work?**

The predominant school of thought is that hypnosis a way to access a person's subconscious mind directly<sup>1</sup>. You're usually only aware of the thought processes in your conscious mind, but your subconscious is always working to complete tasks such as storing memories and learning new things. Therefore, it's our subconscious mind which is largely responsible for what we do and how we feel.

The aim of hypnosis is to relax and subdue the conscious mind. In this state you're still aware of what's happening, but the inhibitive nature of the conscious mind is bypassed. Without the conscious mind the subject is more open to suggestions offered by the hypnotherapist.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bstfoundation.co.uk/clinical-hypnosis.php](http://www.bstfoundation.co.uk/clinical-hypnosis.php)

For example, if a patient physically shakes with fear whenever he visits the dentist, the hypnotherapist could encourage him to imagine that he's in the practice feeling calm and relaxed with no signs of shaking. His subconscious has now created and registered an alternative experience to the fear, which can be called upon when he next visits the dentist.

### **Who can be hypnotised?**

It's believed that the majority of the population can be hypnotised, but only if the patient is willing and the hypnotherapist doesn't suggest anything which makes them feel uncomfortable. However, if a patient suffers from poor concentration, or is under the influence of drugs, they may find it difficult to achieve a hypnotic state or focus on the goal they wish to achieve.<sup>2</sup>

Under hypnosis a patient will experience feelings of relaxation, comfort and wellbeing in their body, while their mind becomes alert and focused on a goal. After waking from hypnosis, the patient may experience an emotional high for up to two weeks, experiencing feelings of calmness, more energy and increased confidence.

### **Hypnotherapy in practice**

The dental practice is ideally placed to offer hypnosis as it already has the privacy of the surgery and the comfort of the dental chair. The most common use for hypnosis within the practice is to help patients relax, bringing relief to nervous patients as well as making the treatment session easier for the nurse or the dentist.

Hypnosis can also be used for more clinical benefits such as the control of fainting, bleeding, salivation, gagging and sickness. Similarly, it can also be used to encourage patients to quit smoking or alcohol, build confidence and even reduce repeated behaviours such as Bruxism and TMJ<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Brief Strategic Therapy Foundation Course ([www.bstfoundation.co.uk](http://www.bstfoundation.co.uk))

<sup>3</sup> Hartland's Medical and Dental Hypnosis Third Edition by David Waxman 1989

## **Ethics**

It's extremely rare that hypnosis has adverse effects, but it's important to always take a medical and psychiatric history before treating a patient, to identify the behaviour the client wishes to change. The questions you ask will vary depending on what you're treating.

Many conditions should be checked by a doctor prior to hypnosis and patients with mental illness should not be treated as it's possible for them to go into remission. Furthermore, a depressed person may become more depressed if you were to use suggestions such as "growing heavy" and "going deeper", as these are feelings already associated with depression.

Alcohol and illegal drugs can also cause an altered state of consciousness, so in these instances patients should not be treated. In addition, some medications may not respond well to hypnosis, so if in doubt you should seek advice from the patient's doctor<sup>4</sup>.

## **Training**

If you decide that training as a hypnotherapist is something you'd like to undertake, you firstly need to identify how far you wish to use hypnosis - do you want to just help patients relax or a more comprehensive knowledge? Some payment plan providers offer tailor-made training days, which are specific to your practices needs and can incorporate modules focused on Clinical Hypnosis. Some of these courses can also count towards verifiable CPD when undertaken in accordance with GDC requirements.

If you would rather refer your patients to an external hypnotherapist, it's vital that you look at information from professional organisations, most of which publish lists of their members, and look for therapists who deal with the types of problems you will refer to them. You should also check their qualifications, their charges, and whether they have indemnity insurance.

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<sup>4</sup> This is typically referring to strong prescription medication or drugs which cause drowsiness or hyperactivity. We would encourage anyone who is taking medication to consult their GP before undertaking hypnotherapy.

It's important that your patients feel safe, so once you've shortlisted some potential therapists, arrange to meet them at their practice to ensure their consultation room is calm and professional and make certain that they take time to explain things properly to patients and adhere to strict confidentiality agreements.

It's clear that hypnosis can be an effective tool within your practice - enhancing a patient's experience of dentistry, reducing fears and motivating patients towards better oral health. It can also differentiate your practice from the competition, attracting new patients and retaining existing ones, to ensure you thrive long into the future.

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**About the Author:**

**Lil Niddrie – Denplan Trainer:** Since joining Denplan in 1993, Lil has worked in many areas of the company to support dental practices. She now combines her knowledge and experience to deliver a wide range of training. Lil is a qualified practitioner of hypnotherapy, Emotional Freedom Technique and Neuro-Linguistic Programming.