

HYPNOSIS: REVIEW & NEW NOTES on SUGGESTIONS

by Dr. Leora Kuttner – Brunnen: August 2015

Hypnosis is “essentially a refined way of communicating with a patient who is in a state of (absorbed) concentration” [Hammond, C; 1990] ie. a trance with eyes open or closed.

Hypnosis occurs within a relationship. As such it is a co-creation and not something you **do** to the patient. Therefore the child’s buy-in, willingness to trust you and respond to the experience is crucial to the developments of a successful hypnotic experience.

As a result: **All hypnosis is self-hypnosis.**

Hypnotic Suggestion – How to Use and Develop using Suggestions & Metaphors

The power of Hypnosis, beyond mindfulness, is in the therapeutic use of suggestions. These are deliberate carefully worded invitations to begin experiencing the desired outcome. Opening the doors of possibility and enabling change to happen in the needed direction.

- Suggestions can be direct, indirect, interspersed in a conversation, “seeded” into a story, or presented metaphorically to illustrate a point, develop confidence, access inner resources, provoke a memory or suggest a solution that hadn’t been considered.
- Suggestions can be directed towards any aspect of therapeutic care such as the child’s behavior, emotions, physiological sensations and processes, thinking, attitude, as well as imagery and interpersonal relationships
- Suggestions need to **emphasize imagination rather than will**, as imagination will always win out. Introduce with:
‘Let’s pretend that...’ or ‘Imagine that when X happens you then say/do Y...’
Make the ideas congruent with the aims or hopes of your patient creating a motivational context in which suggestions will be accepted.
- Use permissive language “If you like...” “Perhaps you could...” “Allow yourself to..” (Refer to the material from our previous workshop).
- Suggestions get **stronger with repetition**. Repeat in different ways at different times in the experience: such as using imagery/metaphor at one time, directly another and then as a post-hypnotic suggestion. The suggestion gains acceptance with repetition, i.e. at least 3-4 times.
- **Allow your patient time to develop a response**, and to engage emotionally or cognitively with the suggestion. Observe what his/her uptake is. It takes time for changes

to present. Remain positive, **expecting the result** and maintaining your confidence and conviction that there will be a positive outcome.

- Avoid absolute suggestions, instead suggest **degrees of change** e.g. the pain will **start to ease, bit by bit**; You'll find that slipping asleep **becomes more and even more automatic**, as you trust your body with increasing confidence.

- **Use words that suggest process and progress:**

- Do you begin to notice some tingling? Or shift in the sensation in your back?
- Soon you'll become more aware that the pressure is starting to lessen
- Use of the word **'yet'** "I am not better" ...reply "Yet!"

- Hypnosis is a co-operative experience, so actively involve your patient

- Check with your patient what s/he is seeing/ experiencing/ noticing?
- Use the patient's own words, preferences, interests to create the best 'fit'
- Invite non-verbal feedback, 'nod your head' finger signal for yes/no
- Track your patients progress, "Would that be OK if..?"

- Allow your suggestion to evolve with the development of the hypnotic experience, feedback from your patient and your observations. Remember it's a co-creation and work in progress.

Remember the power of using informal suggestion with children

You can always deliver suggestions as part of your informal conversation with your patient, rather than in a trance state. Informal suggestions can also be 'seeded' and interspersed throughout a discussion to by-pass the patient's defences or to minimize resistance.

For example to a child with enuresis: **"Now that you know your brain is boss of your bladder, you can have more and more dry beds...You simply remind your bladder to stay tight tight, through the night night"**

Your Brain is Boss of your Body is a Metaphor

Definition: The comparison of one thing to another without the use of like or as: "The road was a ribbon of moonlight."

Metaphors are used to set up a positive expectancy and provide motivation within a storied context. We all know that Stories are very powerful as vehicle to deliver new messages. Stories are a great way to deliver **Metaphoric message:** e.g.

- Nelson Mandela "Courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it – 27 years in Prison and became Prime Minister –use for bullying
 - Alexander Fleming discovery of Penicillin: paying attention to little changes –not taking things for granted.
 - Cake in the oven "I'm not a messy person" See Article by Dr. L. Kuttner
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