

Hypnotherapy: Enhanced Healing for the Mind and Body

by Terry Bienkowski, Hypnotherapist



It begins with a suggestion and ends with a life change.

Hypnotherapy is a method to replace unwanted, fixed ideas, beliefs and destructive habits with positive ones. It is a process whereby the client (who is in control at all times), is relaxed, allowing him to tap into his subconscious mind and replace it

with positive suggestions.

The subconscious is merely a computer, storing information from the beginning of one's childhood. It has no emotions or feelings. And, it only has two movements, away from pain and towards pleasure, towards reward and away from punishment.

An example of this would be when someone goes on a diet. The individual will eventually feel deprived, and since this is not pleasurable, it will get him or her to do whatever possible to stop from dieting. Through the use of hypnosis, the dieter can convince the strongest part of her mind, the subconscious, that it is now much more pleasurable to eat healthy and to exercise.

The mental state achieved during hypnotherapy is a state that people are in naturally 10 minutes out of every 90. It is the same state that individuals are in when they meditate, pray, watch a sunset or anything else relaxing. They are consciously aware of everything that is being said and are in complete control at all times.

Hypnotherapy is a very powerful tool for people wanting to lose weight, quit smoking, enhance confidence, release phobias/fears, or improve memory and sleep. It is used by many hospitals for pain control, women in labor and to enhance healing.

Terry Bienkowski C.H., a local hypnotherapist has been practicing hypnotherapy for over 25 years now. She is also an instructor of hypnotherapy and has certified hundreds of students around the country. She has worked with The University of Chicago Hospital teaching the social workers and nursing staff how to work with their patients in the oncology department.

One of the areas that Terry has worked extensively in is clients with cancer. She is quick to point out, however, that they must be under medical supervision, and she does not hesitate to send a client to a physician or therapist for issues related to physical or mental health.

According to Bienkowski, cancer doctors at Sloan-Kettering in New York and M.D. Anderson in Houston routinely urge patients to use meditation and guided imagery, (which is hypnosis). A 10-year study by David Spiegel, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University, found that breast cancer patients who took part in support groups and practiced self-hypnosis to ease discomfort from surgery and chemotherapy survived twice as long, on average, as patients who did not.

It is clear that patients can undergo chemotherapy without usual nausea if they are first hypnotized. Also, chronic pain patients who failed to obtain relief with conventional

approaches learned to control their pain through hypnotic techniques.

Physicians have used Bienkowski's guided imagery tapes for their patients before, during and after surgery. Bienkowski also has audio cassette tapes for women who have had breast cancer, called "Into the Heart of Breast Cancer." They include an explanation of how the mind and body work together and how guided imagery works.

There are also stories of seven local women who have had breast cancer and the healing modalities that they used. The last tape includes two guided imagery tapes: one to release the fears around getting breast cancer, as well as other fears that a patient may have, and the other to help enhance healing on all levels. Bienkowski believes that all diseases, habits, and so on, have a mental and emotional component as well as the physical, and she always deals with all three when working with a client.

Bienkowski also works with children. "They are very easy to work with," she says, "because they don't have all the programming that we have had over the years and they use their imagination very well."

Some of the areas Bienkowski works with in children are bedwetting, enhancing grades and memory, and self-esteem. She has recently recorded two guided imagery tapes for children: one to help enhance their sense of self-esteem and one for sleeping-related problems, be it nightmares, taking a trip, or sleeping in a new place.

Bienkowski is in the process now of putting together a program with Becky Grace, an registered nurse in Traverse City, to go to Michigan Hospitals and teach the nursing staff how to set up a six-week program to help women with their pregnancy, both during and after. She has worked with many gynecologists in the area with women in labor.

To understand how hypnotherapy works, Bienkowski gives an example of why New Year's resolutions rarely work. She explained that the conscious part of someone's mind that is actually making the resolution is only 12 percent of the mind. The other 88 percent is the subconscious, which is nagging someone to go back to what is comfortable, even if it is not good for her, moving away from pain and towards pleasure.

So a person who is trying to quit smoking, for example, feels like a failure. He or she must once again, convince the subconscious that it's much more pleasurable to change to a new way of thinking and acting. The mind works with repetition, Bienkowski says. This is why she records the guided imagery part of each session, and clients take that recording home and listen to it for 30 days. It makes sense and seems to be a much easier way to change a habit.

Those interested in taking a class, in having Bienkowski speak to an organization or work group, or in scheduling a private session in Grand Haven or Grand Rapids, should call (616) 844-4416. More information may be found at Bienkowski's web site, www.GoldHeartProductions.com.