T1
Integrating Hypnosis in a Relational Context
(Carolyn Daitch, PhD)
Integrating Hypnosis in a Relational Context

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Faculty Disclosure

• I am the author of several texts from which my teaching content may be derived and for which I receive financial remuneration. These products will not be sold or promoted during this program.

Challenge of Relationship Therapy

• Create a safe space for both clients
• Facilitate affect regulation
• Help clients survive the power struggle
Overview of the Workshop

- Hypnosis and Imago Relationship Therapy
- Affect regulation
- Enhancing attunement
- Enhancing differentiation

Triggers in Relationships

- If you interact with people, challenges are a given

Emotional Triggers in Relationships

- Abandoned
- Feeling Betrayed
- Feeling Controlled
- Feeling Criticized
- Feeling Judged
- Feeling Misunderstood
- Feeling a Lack of Empathy
- Resentment
How Hypnosis Can Help in Relationship Therapy

- Interrupts the destructive, automatic psycho-biologically based reactions
- Increases relaxation response, which leads to internal safety. Safety helps with ownership of negative qualities without shame
- Enhances self-soothing, thereby diminishing escalation of conflict

How Hypnosis Can Help (con’t.)

- Increases shift from reactive to reflective behavior
- Provides inward focus

Hypnosis and Relationships

- Conditions response patterns that can be activated in the future
- Facilitates maintenance and transfer of the skills learned in treatment by visualizing oneself engaging in a desired response
**Principles of Imago Relationship Therapy**

- Marriage is a developmental process that re-expresses in adult form the respective developmental processes and primary relationships of the partners.
- All wounding originally occurs in relationships and consequently all healing optimally occurs in relationships.

**Historical Basis of Conflict**

- Adult relationships retrigger unresolved wounding from childhood.
- Results in unconsciously projecting onto others the characteristics of our earlier caretakers.
- Leads to emotional flooding and over-reactions and conflict.

**Developmental Arrests**

Therapy must focus on repairing the developmental arrests in each partner.
Couples Dialogue

- The Couples Dialogue helps couples experience sufficient safety to promote healing.
- Utilizing the Couples Dialogue, partners learn to safely connect to each other with increased empathy for each other’s pain.

The Couples Dialogue

- The Couples Dialogue promotes communication and safety. It consists of mirroring, validation and empathy.
  - Mirroring: The accurate reflecting back of the content of a message from a partner.
  - Validation: Affirms for the other that his/her experience, feelings and perceptions are true for him/her.
  - Empathy: At the core of Imago Therapy is the intention that couples learn to connect to each other’s pain with empathy and without judgment.

Hypnotic Phenomena and Strategies Applicable

- Age progression
- Age regression
- Ego states
- Behavioral rehearsal
- Post hypnotic suggestions
**Age Progression**

- **Purpose:** Visualizing oneself in the future, after the desired changes have been made.
- **Utilize the hypnotic phenomena of age progression to help couples project into the future to a time when goals are achieved.**
- **“Example: “From the perspective of time, notice all the ways that your relationship has changed, because of the work you did in therapy with your partner.”**

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**Age Progression**

- **Envision your personal ideal relationship**
- **Try on the feelings as if the goals are realized**

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**Age Regression**

- **Purpose:** Age regression provides the clients with an opportunity to go back in time to retrieve overlooked resources and memories.
- **Couples in difficulty can have amnesia for their earlier sense of connection and joy with each other.**
- **Age regression can also enhance awareness of the unconscious motivations that have influenced the choice of partner and continue to affect the quality of the relationship.**
Age Regression

- Goal: development and maintenance of positive affect
- Access happy memories

Age Regression

- Discover the emotional ages of the individual in conflict
- Accessing childhood wounds and frustrations
- Parent Child Dialogue

Parent Child Dialogue

- “I am your mother/father. What is it like living with me?”
- “What is your worst frustration and deepest hurt with me?”
- “What do you need from me?”
Partner stays in age regressed child state
**Parts of Self/Ego State**

- Empathy for the Child
- Demonstration

**Ego States: Lost Self**

- Identify lost or disowned parts of self
- Experience full aliveness by trying on these parts

**Accessing the Wise Self**

- Recall a specific instance in which you felt wise, compassionate, disciplined, and mature
- Create an intention to act with awareness of your own and others’ needs
Behavioral Rehearsal

- Envision self validating the partner in times of conflict
- Demonstration with couple

Psychoed. on Validation

- Partners can validate one another even in the absence of an understanding of the reasoning behind the other partner’s perspective
- Engaging in validation is crucial when a lack of understanding, strong disagreement, or both arise
- The act of validation does not require or imply agreement with the partner’s perspective
- The act of validation acknowledges the innate value of the other’s perspective, as well as the validity of the other partner’s emotions

I'm sorry we fought.
I hate it when you're wrong.
Would You Rather Be Right?

- Once you have the specific example in mind, put your own opinion on hold for a minute... and shift your focus to trying to understand your partner's perspective.
- "Your opinion makes sense, because, when I look at it from your point of view ... [pause]... etc."

Obstacles

- Re-opening of old wounds that occur in painful interactions
- Reactivity to the partner when this occurs

Where Does Affect Dysregulation Come Into Play?
Affect Dysregulation

Problems with affect regulation are at the core of most relationship conflicts.

The Harm of Affect Dysregulation

- When partners are unable to modulate their emotions (regulate their affect), loss of connection and inability to resolve conflict with positive affect occurs.
- Then, prognosis for the relationship is poor.

Dynamics of an Unsuccessful Case

Trigger: Client felt criticized
- Criticism led to flooding
- Pre-frontal cortex shut down
- Client was unable to respond from adult ego-state

End Result: Client was unable to experience attuned connection with partner.
Thrown Off The *Love Boat*

“*We’ve been here for years — We were thrown off ‘Love Boat’ for fighting.*”

The STOP Solution

✧ Scan
✧ Time-Out
✧ Overcome the Surge of Emotion
✧ Put the Tools into Practice

STOP: SCAN

✧ Scan for somatic, cognitive and emotional cues that are precursors of affect dysregulation
✧ Reframe these cues as opportunities to practice self-regulation
STOP: Time-Out

♦ Take a time-out when one is emotionally flooded in order to calm and center self

♦ Build a regimented habit of diffusing tension

STOP: Overcoming the Initial Surge of Flooding

♦ Induction techniques used to focus attention and calm:
  ♦ Eye roll
  ♦ Tight fist
  ♦ Breathing

Sequence of Interventions

Must master the first three self-soothing skills before learning the final part of the STOP Solution
STOP: Putting the Tools into Practice

- Mindfulness with Detached Observation
- Okay Signal (anchor)
- Dialing Down Reactivity
- Autogenics
- Empathic Self (ego states)
- Remembering Success (age regression)

Mindfulness

- Completely engaged in the present moment
- A state where you are not thinking, reflecting, judging, or deciding

Directions for Mindfulness

- Observe thoughts, feelings or sensations
- Name the thoughts, feelings or sensations, e.g., "there's the frustration"
- Take an attitude of curiosity about your experience, e.g., "as I observe how frustrated I am, I notice my jaw clenching"
- Remind yourself that thoughts, feelings or sensations come and go
Objective: Co-existing Affective States

- Tolerate the juxtaposition of two opposing feelings or thoughts
- Learn that there is always more than one feeling available

Alternating Hands: Demo

Parts of Self: Individual Demo

Mitigate emotional reactivity by accessing and empowering mature parts of self
Attitude

“Whenever you’re in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude.”

(William James)

Illusion of Fairness

If you get too caught up in the idea of fairness—that each of you has to assume a perfectly equal share—you will end up stewing with resentment.

Wise Self

♦ When you are flooded with emotion, the wise self is usually dormant

♦ When you are triggered in relationships, you need to access the wise part of self
  ♦ Grounded, mature and wise
**Anchor**

- Establish an “anchor” with an OK signal
- Signal to him or herself that everything is fine or “OK” in the moment

**Anchor**

- Center the belly, focus the mind
  - Placing finger between the eyebrows: creates an association using the frontal brain and connecting to the logical command and control center
  - Hand on the belly: creates feeling of containment and an association with being centered and strong

**Tier 4: Rehearsal and Transfer**

The rehearsal of the practice sessions is an essential feature part of Tier 4 and is a ritualized component of the session
Challenges of Transfer and Maintenance of Skills

- Skills mastered in the therapeutic setting often do not transfer into the home

- Long-lasting changes of interpersonal patterns in couples are hard to effect

(Jacobson and Addis, 1993)

Increasing Transfer

- Rehearse new behaviors in the session
- Rehearse the practice sessions in a relaxed state
- Establish anchors
- Post-hypnotic suggestion for practice
Rehearsal in Fantasy: Screen Technique

- Visualize situations that might elicit an over-reaction when unable to take a time-out
- Visualize applying a tool
- Reinforce self-efficacy
- Promise to use the tool
- Age progression

When Triggered

- Prepare for the inevitability of being triggered
- Reframe reactivity as opportunities to practice

Obstacles: The Power Struggle

“You and I are one and I am the one.”

(Harville Hendrix)
Partner as Healer Versus Self-Healer

- “We need to answer the call to become each other’s healers.”
  (Hendrix, H. & Hendrix, H.L.)

- “We need to put on our own oxygen masks.”
  (Daitch, C.)

The Harm of Conflict

It is not the conflict itself that has a destructive effect on relationships, but rather the:
- loss of connection and attunement
- inability to resolve the conflict with positive affect (and re-establish attunement) that is injurious

Attunement

- Attunement is fundamental in our experience of relationship
- Attunement results in emotional intimacy: when we find an emotional resonance with one another
Attunement/Resonant States

- “Resonant states feel good as we feel ‘felt’ by another, no longer alone but in connection.”
- “Resonant states are the heart of empathic relationships, as we sense a clear image of our mind in the mind of another.”

(Siegel, p. 290, 2007)

Affect Regulation

- Affect regulation diminishes the expectation of fusion
- Hypnosis lessens unhealthy dependence on the partner

Flooding & Attunement

- When flooding occurs, the brain is incapable of experiencing attuned connection
- The midbrain becomes hyperactive, and does not maintain the communication with the forebrain that is necessary for attunement to occur
Exercise: Colors of Logic & Emotion

Goals:
- Enhance understanding of brain-based communication barriers
- Understand self and your partner without judgment but, instead, with openness, kindness, curiosity and even receptivity
- Honor and even appreciate differences
- Allow connection to emerge from the disconnect

Exercise: Colors of Logic & Emotion

Reactions vs. Intentional Responses
- Reactions:
  - rash, intense responses to your partner
  - affect dysregulation dictates actions and words
- Intentional responses:
  - not governed by a tidal wave of unrestrained emotion
  - both the emotional and cognitive systems are online and communicating fluently with one another
  - emotionally grounded and neurologically balanced state
The Benefits of Intentionally Responding vs. Reacting

- Interpersonal communication can flow freely
- Attunement can be felt

The Fallout of Reaction-based Communication

- Anger, frustration, disappointment, and sadness (to name a few emotions) escalate
- Emotional flooding occurs for both partners (but the flooding is not just anxiety-based)

The Forms of Reaction-based Communication

Partners’ reactions typically take one or some combination of three modes:
- the appeal
- the attack
- the retreat
The Appeal
Speaking the language of reason:
The non-anxious partner attempts to connect and problem-solve by offering a rational analysis of the situation

The Attack
Reacting emotionally:
Failed attempts to calm anxiety with reason
→ anger, disappointment, frustration, rage

The Fallout:
♦ For the anxious partner:
  ♦ Continuing to feel misunderstood and unmet
  ♦ Feeling belittled, judged or criticized for struggling with anxiety and failing to get it under control
♦ For both partners:
  ♦ Increased sense of isolation and hurt
The Retreat
Sensing defeat & seeking isolation:
◆ marked by a lack of interaction
◆ the isolation and loss of connection experienced by both partners can be just as devastating as the more active conflict of the attack

Faulty Expectations
◆ The expectation that the non-anxious partner could and should talk the anxious partner down gets relationships in hot water
◆ Deprives the anxious partner of the opportunity to develop self-soothing and self-validation skills, and to realize one’s own strengths and abilities

Faulty Expectations
◆ Sets the couple up to endlessly enact various combinations of the attack, the appeal and the retreat
◆ Places responsibility for de-escalation of anxiety on the non-anxious partner (when this is beyond the non-anxious partner’s control)
◆ Creates and maintains an over-dependent bond
Over-dependent Bonds & the Continuum of Dependency

Fusion
- One partner’s self-direction is subordinated to the other’s ineffective self-regulation
- Fusion is fueled by anxiety and is a multi-generational process.
  (David Schnarch)

The Ideal: Healthy Interdependence

Exists in the sentiment: “I have the innate ability to live a rewarding and fulfilling life, and my life is wonderfully enhanced by my partnership with you.”
Finding a Healthy Medium...

Interdependence

The partnership greatly enhances one’s sense of well-being, satisfaction and security without diminishing one’s sense of self/autonomy.

Shifting to Healthy Interdependence

- Self-regulation tools/techniques
- Self-validation and self-soothing
  (Daitch, pp.113-114, 2012)
- Embracing role flexibility
Goals for Couples

- Impulse control
- Self-soothing
- Positive affect
- Emotional connection

Bad Habits of Unsuccessful Marriages Evident in Case

- Harsh start-ups to conversations
- Vicious counter-attacks
- Retelling past war crimes

Psychoeducation
Psychoeducation

- Affective flooding
  - tripartite brain
  - understanding the midbrain gone rogue

- Anxiety-based ruptures in attunement
  - Appeal, Attack, Retreat
  - lack of brain-to-brain attunement

- Bringing it all together:
  - Exercise: Colors of Logic and Emotion

Self-Statements for Impulse Control

- I choose to stay calm
- I breathe through my anger (irritation, impulse, etc.)
- I release judgment of myself/my partner
- I cultivate compassion

Promoting Empathic Responses with Parts of Self

- Interact from adult parts of self
Elicit Healthy Ego States

Call upon “strong self” as an internal resource when partners are in conflict, mitigating the part of self that identifies more strongly with ego states that are more easily triggered.

Age Progression

- Visualize new behaviors and more effective styles of interacting
- “Try on” the feeling of satisfaction once changes have been made
- Recognize the effort that is necessary for change

Shifting into Healthy Interdependence
On a wall in a ladies’ room:
“My husband follows me everywhere”

Written just below:
“I do not!”

The Wise Relationship
Redefining the rules of engagement:
Shifting your attitudes and actions so they support what you value: a healthy, solid relationship
Attitudes

- Acknowledging and demonstrating agency in one’s own affect regulation
- Finding satisfaction in the “not perfect but good enough”
- Letting go of the illusion of fairness
- Letting go of the need to be right

Replacing Old Response Patterns with Intentional Behaviors

Experience the trigger in session; use cue for calming; practice responding from a calm, centered place (with and/or without partner present in session)

Enhancing Empathy with Parts of Self

- Demonstration & Practice
Summary

♦ Affect regulation cannot happen through insight alone

♦ Specific tools are useful to develop new patterns

♦ Tools must be practiced repeatedly (in and out of the office)

Take-Away Points

♦ Start with the body to diffuse the physiological stress response

♦ Emphasize the importance of time-outs

♦ Individualize treatment

♦ You need a lot of tools to fill up a therapeutic tool box

♦ Practice makes permanent (Daitch, 2010)

Principle 1: Time Out

♦ Take a time-out to interrupt overreactions

♦ Self-soothe to extinguish over reactivity
Rehearsal, Maintenance and Transfer

Practice:

♦ Rehearse self-care interventions

♦ Use hypnotherapeutic interventions to encourage transfer of this “therapeutic” learning

Principle 2: Creating Connection

♦ Attunement is possible once affect has been regulated

♦ Once self-regulation has been achieved, healing strategies that promote attuned connection can be mastered

Principle 3: Transfer

♦ Behavioral rehearsal of new responses

♦ Prepare for integrating the tools in one’s life

♦ Practice
Q & A

Resources


Resources


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