Hypnotherapy as an Effective Technique for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Hi, and welcome to 'Victim2Victor' podcast. My name is Anu and I am your host and in today's podcast, I will be discussing the amazing benefits of Hypnotherapy and how deep hypnosis work can really help you to heal.

Hypnotherapy is useful in helping us to cope with pain, stress, anxiety, and trauma though it is important to note that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is considered being the first line of treatment for these conditions since it can be challenging for some to enter into a hypnotic state completely. Any traumatic event can cause us to disconnect from our sense of safety, which is required when entering into a hypnotic or a deep trance state. Hypnotherapy can help us to cope with trauma and allow us to learn how to regain control of our lives.

It aims to access our unconscious mind and change the negative thoughts that are holding us back. By using the power of suggestion, hypnotherapy can promote positive change. The recommendations used will depend on the symptoms and what clients want to change. Hypnotherapists usually tailor their techniques to help us as individuals to manage our symptoms, recognize the potential triggers, and then help us to improve how we react to them.

Using hypnotherapy can help us to become more receptive to suggestions and more able to change certain behaviors. It can also help change perceptions and sensations—especially when treating painful memories.

What is Hypnosis?

Hypnosis usually involves a person experiencing deep relaxation with their attention narrowed down and focused on appropriate suggestions for change and is generally facilitated by a hypnotist. During the hypnosis, breathing becomes slower and deeper, and pulse and metabolic rates drop. Similar changes occur in nervous pathways and hormonal systems, reducing the feelings of pain and anxiety and overcoming bad symptoms like nausea or indigestion.

Hypnosis is a common state of mind which everyone experiences at some stage in their life; here are some examples:

- While driving a vehicle, if you have missed your turn because you were contemplating a specific thought, this is an example of 'road-hypnosis.'

- When you reach your destination without even actively thinking about the journey, perhaps you were over-occupied by thoughts about something else; this is hypnosis.

- If you are watching television or reading a book and someone is talking to you, but you haven't heard a word that they say, you were experiencing a state of hypnosis.

Many people consider hypnosis as a state of a deep sleep, but in reality, it is a different state of mind. It is like a trance-like situation, but when in it, the person experiencing this feels more mindful and can concentrate on the hypnotist's voice. It suppresses the conscious mind and empowers the subconscious mind. When in the hypnotic state, the person is in a better position to accept ideas, beliefs, and lifestyle changes suggested by a therapist.

Hypnotherapy empowers individuals to make the right decisions and to bring constructive changes into their lives. Hypnotherapy is a type of psychotherapy that promotes positive development and healing processes. It is meant to reprogram the thinking behavior of the mind, enabling the person to get rid of illogical anxieties, phobias, pessimistic thoughts, and repressed emotions.

How does it work?

Hypnosis changes our state of consciousness by turning off the analytical left side of our brain and making the non-analytical right side of the brain more alert. It prohibits the conscious control of the mind and awakens the subconscious mind, bringing about long-lasting positive changes in behavior and the physical state.

For instance, a person who intentionally wants to get rid of fear related to a particular situation may do everything possible but fail to achieve the objective, unless their subconscious mind retains the anxiety associated with the situation. Betterment in such cases is only possible by reprogramming the subconscious mind so that the deep-rooted fears and negative thoughts can be discarded or changed.

Parts of the Human Mind

Conscious Mind

The Conscious Mind has four parts – rational, analytical, willpower, and temporary memory.

Though the conscious mind is the weakest part of our brain, we spend most of our time under its control. It is the logical and analytical part of the reason designed to think and judge different situations.

Our ability to rationalize is what makes humans unique, and this ability keeps us sane. Rational thinking may not be correct in all situations; for example, a victim of abuse may rationalize the abuse by saying, "It was my fault," but in reality, it is never the fault of the victim, but the responsibility of the abuser. The rational parts of our mind come up with some reasoning to keep us satisfied. The analytical mind identifies the issues and suggests ways to overcome them.

Willpower belongs to our conscious mind. You must have tried using willpower to get rid of an old habit, but willpower only has momentary effects. Willpower provides us with instant bursts of energy to help in a particular situation, but then it goes away, and we are back to the initial state of mind. Willpower can't bring permanent internal changes. The change will be permanent once our deeper or subconscious mind triggers it.

The fourth part of our conscious mind is our 'temporary memory,' which is very limited. It is the memory we all need to perform daily life activities such as memorizing our home address and our friends' names, etc. Scientific studies have shown that our conscious mind can hold a minimal amount of information at one time, and so is much weaker than our subconscious mind.

Subconscious Mind

The Subconscious Mind is the most influential part of our mind. It controls and assists you in achieving your objectives. It is the part of the brain that functions the most during hypnosis and the part that is related to all of our imaginations. Imaginations give an insight into our perception of the world, and naturally, everyone has a different perception. Perception is a kind of personal truth that a person believes and may not be the actual reality.

Our permanent memory is also associated with our subconscious mind. The input we receive from our five senses is permanently stored in our subconscious mind. Every event that occurred in our life left an impression on us. Based on the information, we develop our opinions and behaviors that, in turn, defines our personality. We think, act, and feel about every event that occurs in our lives in light of the long-term memories which are stored in the subconscious mind.

Our permanent memory is like a computer's hard disk, it is a very organized structure of information, and it works by association. For example, while you are driving a car hearing an old song, feelings associated with the music may come back to you, and you may start to think about some associated memory or person linked to that memory.

As we sometimes need to reprogram our computers, the same is the case with our subconscious mind, as this also requires reprogramming.

Behaviors, emotions, and opinions also reside inside the subconscious mind. Hypnosis helps you to become aware of your thoughts or feelings that are associated with your problems. When you let this happen, you embark on a journey that ends in a permanently changed state.

Our Autonomic Nervous System is programmed to function without requiring conscious thinking. These processes include breathing, eating, heart beating, and blood circulation, which are all activities that we perform without even giving them a thought. Our subconscious mind signals us in various situations. It takes appropriate decisions accordingly, such as when we are tired or hungry or injured in an accident.

Hypnotherapists use many techniques during the session, including 'inductions,' and these can have slow or fast outcomes, and they can be applied directly or indirectly. Once the patient enters into a hypnotic state, the therapist uses a 'deepener' which assists in intensifying the state of hypnosis, allowing the patient to settle and to become familiarized with the process.

Hypnotic Suggestions

Throughout the hypnotherapy process, the hypnotherapist often uses direct or indirect suggestions to induce change.

Direct suggestions are more authoritative and unequivocal, such as "let go of that tension… now…" These types of recommendations are appropriate for people who like a direct approach. Indirect language can also be used when a softer expression is required, such as "I wonder whether your left shoulder is relaxing now… or would you like to think about…"

Indirect hypnotherapy suggestions are useful when the client prefers to be part of a collaborative process or if the client doesn't like to be instructed to do something. Many therapists would employ both direct and indirect suggestion techniques during their sessions. The primary factor that helps during this decision is analyzing the client's 'locus of control.'

'Locus of control' is a psychological concept that is about a personality feature defined on a scale and states to which extent a person believes they have control over their life. The scale may have values like 'internal,' 'balanced,' and 'external.'

A person who has the value 'external' thinks that they are controlled by their fate and feel that they have little or no control over their life. Such a person does not take responsibility for their health or wellbeing. On the other hand, a person who is very 'internal' firmly believes that the duties of events are on their side. Still, in reality, some of those events are totally outside of their control.

For a balanced therapy session, it is beneficial if the client's locus of control is more 'balanced' rather than 'internal' or 'external' because such a person accepts appropriate responsibility for the process and has a positive interaction with the therapist. 'Locus of control' can be managed using 'ego-strengthening.'

Ego-strengthening enhances and balances the client's 'locus of control.' It also has positive benefits for self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of self. It empowers clients and enhances their resilience. It facilitates therapeutic processes that can bring about more effective and permanent positive changes. Ego-strengthening strategies can be either direct or metaphorical.

Metaphors

'Metaphorical' techniques are one of the aspects of the 'Ericksonian Hypnotherapy' method, which is considered extremely effective. We use metaphors in our spoken languages, such as 'her memory of the event was foggy' or 'All the world's a stage.' We are also acquainted with metaphorical stories. As a child, we were told stories, and those stories had a long-lasting impression on our thoughts, even without our consent.

To summarize, hypnotherapy affects each client and their issues differently. So, a hypnotherapy approach might require a single session or several sessions to obtain the desired results. Furthermore, as the therapy process is carried out, more issues may arise, which the client may not have been consciously mindful of. This is why a professional hypnotherapist would evaluate the client's overall objectives and establish goals for that session at the very beginning of the session.

While this our episode comes to an end, you may want to check out my book 'Victim2Victor', now available on audio, where I have shared my journey of evolving through self-help and a determination to cast off my damaging past. My goal is to reach out to fellow survivors of abuse and provide hope and motivation in their lives. I hope that I can help victors transform their lives and achieve amelioration in the process of discovering their true self.

I also have a 12-week self-development plan that is FREE and aims to guide you on your journey to recovery. You can find the link in the description below.

Please like this podcast and tag or share it with someone you know who is going through a similar situation and may need help. I will be back with another podcast soon. Until then, take care and stay empowered.