

Choosing a Hypnotherapist: How to Find and Choose a Hypnotherapist That's Right for You

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This article provides important information which you can use to make an informed decision on choosing a hypnotherapist. A general overview of standard hypnotherapy practices will be included in the article. Also presented will be a chronological account of the steps involved with finding and choosing a hypnotherapist so that you will know what to expect.

As in any field or profession, there are both good hypnotherapists and bad hypnotherapists in practice. The information contained within this article will help you to readily distinguish between the two.

PART I. ANSWERS TO FOUR COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT HYPNOSIS & HYPNOTHERAPY

A. What does the office of a hypnotherapist look like?

In my experience at several hypnotherapy practices I have found time and again that many people do not know what to expect on their first visit to a hypnotherapist. To one extreme people associate a hypnotherapist's office with images of candles, burning incense, crystal balls and other strange paraphernalia. To the other extreme are clients who expect to find themselves in a sterile laboratory-type environment with a

hypnotherapist wearing some type of lab coat. In actuality, hypnotherapy offices are generally very ordinary and professional.

The majority of established hypnotherapy practices look very much like any other professional service office. You will likely find there is a small waiting room with a receptionist desk, comfortable chairs, ordinary magazines such as Time or Newsweek to read, and the room will most likely be decorated in warm tones and neutral colors. Also common are hypnotherapists who practice out of their homes and those that make house calls. This works well for some clients, and for others it is a bit uncomfortable. In a few cities it is possible to find a mobile hypnotherapy service conducted out of a specially outfitted motor home (RV). Although unconventional, when done right this type of mobile office involves zero commute time for the client and highly convenient lunch hour sessions are made possible.

It is always a good idea when seeking out a hypnotherapist to ask where their practice is held. The most extreme case I recall is that of a client who shared her unsettling experience of arriving at a late evening appointment she had set with a hypnotherapist. Having expected to arrive at an office building, she was somewhat taken back to find that the address was that of the therapist's home. Upon introducing herself, she was then led around the side of the house to a very small, wooden outbuilding located in back of the property. To get out of the situation she told the therapist she had "accidentally" left her purse in the car and asked that he wait as she went to go get it. This unfortunate incident is certainly an exception, but it obviously does happen. Use your judgement and listen to your intuition. If you arrive at an appointment to find yourself in a setting or environment that makes you uncomfortable, don't feel obligated to stay. There are many reputable and professional hypnotherapists available.

B. During sessions will I be sitting in a chair or lying down on a sofa?

Although on the surface the issue of whether sessions are conducted with the client sitting in a chair or laying down on a sofa may seem insignificant, finding out how sessions are conducted should be addressed early on. It is good practice for the hypnotherapist to cover this during the initial consultation [discussed in section V]. It is also good practice for the therapist to show you the room where sessions are held during the consultation as well. The answer to whether or not you will be sitting in a chair or asked to lie down in a sofa during sessions depends on the therapist. Some therapists prefer their client to sit in a comfortable chair or recliner, while other therapists are accustomed to having their clients lie down on a sofa. Neither arrangement is inherently better than the other. In general, most hypnotherapists conduct their sessions with the client sitting in a comfortable chair or recliner, while some require the client to lie down on a sofa.

The primary advantage of lying down on a sofa is that it is easier to relax physically in order to enter into the experience more deeply. On the other hand, lying down on a sofa can also be perceived by oneself as being in a vulnerable position. This seems to be a

more important concern during the first several sessions for female clients who are working with a male therapist.

The advantage of sitting in a comfortable chair or recliner involves the client being able to experience the physiological effects of hypnosis more noticeably. This many times helps to validate the experience of hypnosis for people during the first two or three sessions.

Ideally, you will be given the choice about whether to sit or lie down for the sessions. In my own practice clients were given the choice at the start of each session by means of using a recliner. It was explained that they could remain seated as they were, they could extend the leg rest if they wanted to, or they could recline all the way back and thus essentially lie down during the session. The importance here is that a good therapist will seek to respect the physical boundaries of the client and conduct the sessions accordingly to ensure that the client is comfortable. If you feel you would be more comfortable with a particular arrangement, it is certainly appropriate to ask the therapist over the telephone or during the consultation which method he or she uses.

C. Will I be unconscious during a session, and if so will I unknowingly reveal personal secrets I'd rather not share with anyone?

The fear of being unconscious and revealing deep, dark secrets to another person while in hypnosis is the greatest fear and source of confusion people tend to have about hypnosis. In reality, hypnosis is not a state of unconsciousness. You do not lose control. You do not reveal anything about yourself you would not normally share with another person. In fact, during a hypnosis session you are most likely to remain aware of everything taking place around you; such as, noises from outside, the sound of a distant telephone ringing, an airplane flying by overhead. You remain in complete control. Although very relaxed, you know and are aware that you can immediately open your eyes and jump up if you had to (i.e. if there was a fire or earthquake).

The misconception of hypnosis being a form of mind control derives from how it is portrayed in film and in stage hypnotist shows. In stage hypnosis it appears the subjects completely surrender control of their faculties over to the hypnotist. This isn't the case. Like watching a good magic show, it appears real when performed by a skilled entertainer, but what you see isn't what is actually taking place. Subjects are aware of what's going on, and they are willing to go along with it- to a point. If asked to do something against their moral, religious or ethical standards of conduct the subject would awaken on their own, or else would simply not carry out the command.

Because of the expectations held by most people about hypnosis, many first time hypnotherapy clients end the first session wondering if they were "under" or not. A good hypnotherapist will help you evaluate your experience of hypnosis after the session. After about the third session clients are able to readily distinguish between hypnosis and

waking consciousness. In addition to this, clients are often very surprised to find that they were aware of everything that took place during the session upon awakening. This is normal and is to be expected.

D. I know I have a strong will, what happens if you can't put me under hypnosis?

If you can fall asleep at night (be it naturally or with the help of sleeping pills) you can experience hypnosis. The idea that you are being put “under” implies you are being asked to surrender control of yourself over to another person. If this were the case in hypnosis, very few people would opt for hypnotherapy. Fortunately, this isn't the case. Hypnosis serves to help you enter a natural, relaxed state of physical, emotional and mental balance. Recalling a time when you felt very relaxed, at ease, and at peace with yourself will give you a good idea as to what the experience of hypnosis is like. An example would be being on the beach watching a beautiful sunset and feeling as though all your apparent needs, wants, and desires have been satisfied in that moment.

Hypnotherapists are accustomed to hearing potential clients express doubts of being able to enter hypnosis because the client is analytical in nature, or has a highly active mind. Surprisingly, these clients generally tend to be the very ones that are the easiest to work with using hypnosis. It appears as though hypnosis serves to provide some much needed time for them to simply unwind and mentally relax.

The concern of an experienced hypnotherapist isn't whether or not you can experience hypnosis; rather, it's what to do once you are there. If you have any doubts, fears or concerns about hypnosis be sure to discuss these with the hypnotherapist(s) you are deciding on working with.

PART II. HOW TO FIND A HYPNOTHERAPIST

A. The Yellow Pages, Referrals, & the ACHE:

Most people seeking hypnotherapy use the Yellow Pages directory to locate a hypnotherapist. In larger cities you may find a listing titled “Hypnotherapy”. Most likely the listing will simply be called “Hypnosis”. This is a good place to start. To refine your search, it is a good idea to seek out a referral from a third party source. Friends, co-workers, and relatives may be able to provide a good referral. You can also contact the American Council of Hypnotist Examiners located in Glendale, CA (discussed below) to help locate a practitioner in your area.

B. Local Print Advertising:

Another good source for leads are local tabloid publications (the free monthly newspapers found in retail stores). Any city of size will usually have one, if not several, publications

geared toward healing and the mind. Many hypnotherapists rely on self-help/care publications to market their practice because it is considerably more affordable than Yellow Page advertising, it allows greater advertising flexibility, and more information can be presented in the ads.

C. Independently Owned Bookstores:

Local independent bookstores can be a good source of leads as well. Bulletin boards may have business cards or flyers of local hypnotherapists displayed. You can also talk to the store manager and ask if they know of any good hypnotherapists in the area that specialize in the area you are interested in working on.

D. Hypnotherapy Schools & Institutes:

Another option is to contact a post-secondary school in your area that specializes in teaching hypnotherapy. They can provide you with names and phone numbers of former graduates practicing in your area. The instructor of the school will likely hold a private hypnotherapy practice as well.

E. Local Health Fairs and Expos:

If health fairs or expos are held in your city there is a good chance you will find several hypnotherapists set up at the show with information booths or tables. This is a good way to meet several local hypnotherapists and informally talk about what they offer. Attending such a show can be highly informative and educational. You may find that there will be a short seminar on hypnosis and hypnotherapy being presented by a local hypnotherapist. Visiting the different booths provides an excellent way to have your questions answered by several different hypnotherapists.

F. Internet Searches:

Using the Internet to find a local hypnotherapist can work well depending on where you live. Your search can include the name of your town along with the words “hypnosis” and/or “hypnotherapy”. You can also search for leads in directories which list Alternative Care Practitioners. Unfortunately, most listings you acquire online will be incomplete. Therefore, it is advisable to use the Internet in conjunction with one or more of the methods mentioned above.

Visiting the home pages of local hypnotherapists can be an easy and highly effective way to scope out practitioners in your area to see what is available. Therapists with home pages will likely include their Internet address in their print ads.

PART III.

DECIDING BETWEEN A GROUP OR INDEPENDENT HYPNOTHERAPY PRACTICE

In larger cities you will find one or more group hypnotherapy practices in addition to the independent practices which are operated by a single therapist. Neither form of practice is necessarily better than the other. An advantage of a group practice is that it is generally easier to find and receive specialized treatment. Hypnotherapists in a group practice enjoy the opportunity of specializing in particular areas and issues. In most cases you will be referred to the hypnotherapist within the practice that specializes in the area you are seeking therapy for. By their smaller nature, independent practices tend to provide more personalized service to their clients. Independent therapists enjoy complete flexibility and discretion in making decisions.

A potential drawback to going with a group practice could be that it follows standard operating procedures at the expense of therapist/client flexibility. If you inquire at a group practice check to be sure that you will be seeing the same therapist throughout the course of therapy. If clients are expected to see whomever is on call when sessions are scheduled, consider going elsewhere. This arrangement indicates that the practice sees hypnosis as an end to the means. Hypnosis is being sold, rather than rightfully being considered a tool or method which is to serve as a means to an end. Furthermore, the relationship that develops between the therapist and client over the course of therapy, although short, is too important to be traded for matters of convenience.

PART IV.

THE PHONE CALL:

A. Standard Practices:

Once you have a list of several hypnotherapists in your area, the next step is to make a phone call. If you are calling an independent practice conducted by a single person don't be surprised if you reach a voice mail system. Most independent practices operate by appointment only. If you reach voice mail, or an answering machine, it means the hypnotherapist is currently seeing a client or is out of the office. If calling during business hours, your call should be returned within two hours.

B. Be Clear on What You Want:

Before calling, it will help for you to take some time to become very clear on what it is you want. Take a few moments to think about what your purpose and objectives are for seeking hypnotherapy. If you are calling in regards to losing weight, how much do you wish to lose? What is your optimum weight range? Are there specific reasons? If in addition to weight loss you would also like to enhance your relationship with your body, it will help to know this in advance before making a phone call. You can ask if the hypnotherapist, in addition to having experience with weight loss, also works in the areas

of body image, awareness and relationship. If you are clear on your intention and you know what it is you want, you assure yourself the best chance of getting it.

C. Use the Initial Phone Call for Screening Purposes:

The primary purpose of the phone call is to determine whether or not it makes sense to schedule an initial consultation. Although some hypnotherapists provide their initial consultation over the phone, most likely you will be invited to schedule an appointment to come in and meet the therapist in person to discuss therapy options. The standard length of a consultation is between thirty minutes to an hour.

Use the initial phone call to your advantage. Ask questions! If the person you are calling seems reluctant to answer your questions, or you feel you are being rushed, consider calling someone else. Know that your call is important and deserves proper attention.

Some places you call may answer your questions with, "I'll be happy to discuss that with you during the consultation. When can you come in?" This is certainly an acceptable response to questions that require a detailed explanation and which deserve proper attention; such as, "How does hypnosis work?", or "How can hypnotherapy help me with...?". Use the phone call to get the logistics out of the way. Screening questions to ask include:

- 1.) Are you seeing new clients at this time?
- 2.) Have you experience in working with people in the area of (____)?
- 3.) When are sessions held? Do you offer weekend or evening sessions, and if so do you charge extra? How available are you?
- 4.) How long is your average session? (hypnotherapy sessions can be anywhere between 30 minutes to over 2 hours long depending on the therapist)
- 5.) What are your credentials? Are you certified by the APA or ACHE? How long have you been in practice?
- 6.) What forms of hypnotherapy do you practice? (i.e. suggestion, regression, visualization, guided imagery, psychoimmunology, holistic, energy work, etc.)
- 7.) Are session conducted in a chair, recliner or sofa?
- 8.) Where are you located? Where is your practice held?
- 9.) If pertinent, ask if they accept insurance and which types are accepted.

10.) Do you charge session by session, or by the program?

11.) Do you offer a free initial consultation? And if so, when is your next opening?

Obtain Basic Rate Information: You should also inquire about rates to get a general idea as to what the therapist charges. Standard rates are anywhere between \$60 to \$150 per session. Rates vary due to geographic location and the experience of the therapist. It is also important to know that session length does not determine the effectiveness of hypnotherapy. A thirty minute session conducted by a highly skilled hypnotherapist will be more effective than a two hour session using less effective methods.

It is best to reserve rate details for the initial consultation. This is strongly encouraged. Use the phone call to obtain basic rate information. For example if one therapist charges \$60 per hour, yet sessions are two hours long, then obviously the therapist charging \$95 per session offers a more affordable service. In fact, you should not be charged by the hour at all. Standard practice for hypnotherapists is to charge either by the session or by the program.

You will find that some hypnotherapists offer program incentives and payment plans. Some operate using a sliding scale fee in which rates are determined by what you, the client, can rightfully afford. By leaving rate details for the consultation you are affording greater flexibility for the therapist to work out a mutually beneficial plan for payment. If you base your decision to schedule a consultation strictly on rates you end up severely limiting your options. Reputable hypnotherapists tend to be quite flexible when it comes to rates. Their primary focus and concern is kept at the level of whether or not they can help you. If she or he feels they can help you, payment for services is kept a secondary issue. In other words, you will not be denied service simply on the basis of money.

Dealing with sales pressure: Near the end of the call you will most likely have a good idea if you'd like to meet with the therapist or not. You should not be made to feel obligated to schedule a consultation simply because you spoke to the person on the phone for 15 minutes. Unfortunately, some hypnotherapists have a tendency to over sell the consultation and unknowingly pressure callers to come in.

If you feel you are being overly pressured to schedule a consultation, simply decline the offer. Be assertive if necessary. Tell them, "I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me, *and* I will think about it." If they inappropriately continue asking you questions, tell them you need to go and hang up if necessary. If asked if it's alright to call you back in a few days, simply say, "I don't think that's necessary, I'll call you back when I'm ready".

Obviously, it is uncommon and highly inappropriate for the person to call you back after you've made it clear you prefer them not to. In this instance, if you were to receive a call

back (because you initially left a message on their answering machine), remain assertive and simply repeat your position, “I’ve already made it clear that I would call you if I were interested, *and* I need to go.”

Assuming things check out: Assuming the answers to your questions check out, the next step is to schedule an initial consultation. Ideally, the hypnotherapist will be able to schedule your consultation on the day that you call. No more than 3 days should be allowed to pass between your call and the initial consultation. This reflects good practice. Reputable therapists know and respect that the time that passes between the phone call and the initial consultation is extremely important and fragile. It should be kept as short as possible. There exists a window of opportunity for the client during this time. If it is drawn out too long the client may lose his/her motivation for creating positive change and healing in their life. Don’t be surprised if the therapist seems somewhat insistent that you come in for a consultation sooner than you had originally planned. Motivation deserves respect; when it arrives, follow through on it. A good therapist will encourage you to come in as soon as possible. As a potential client you should not be told you will need to wait a week or more for an initial consultation.

How much time you should allow for the initial consultation: Even if you are told the consultation will be thirty minutes, it is still a good idea to give yourself an hour and a half- especially if you have a lot of questions or concerns regarding hypnosis. Most consultations are between thirty minutes to an hour long. Also, be aware that in some circumstances you may even be invited to receive your first session immediately following the consultation (assuming everything has worked out and you’ve decided to go with the person).

Most hypnotherapists are well aware of the importance of getting started with treatment as soon as possible- especially in regards to sensitive issues. During the phone call if you strongly feel you have found the hypnotherapist you’d like to work with, ask if they can schedule your consultation for time which allows them to see you for your first session immediately following the consultation if you do, in fact, decide to sign up.

PART V. THE INITIAL CONSULTATION

A. Initial Consultation Overview:

In the field of hypnotherapy it is standard practice for therapists to offer a free initial consultation. A private consultation held at the therapist’s office is preferred. Some therapists only offer a telephone consultation. Phone consultations save time and in some cases can be highly effective. However, the experience and value of meeting with the therapist in person should not be dismissed or overlooked. If a hypnotherapist charges for a consultation, you are strongly advised to look elsewhere.

The importance of the initial consultation cannot be overstated. Reputable hypnotherapists understand that the consultation is equally important to the client, as it is to themselves. An experienced hypnotherapist will know during the course of the consultation if they can honestly help you or not. In most cases they can. If the therapist feels they cannot adequately serve as you, they will most likely refer you to another hypnotherapist with whom they know has more expertise in the area you are seeking assistance with. This type of working relationship between different hypnotherapists within the same city is not uncommon.

A good hypnotherapist understands that their reputation is extremely important if their practice is to be successful. By its very nature, hypnotherapy is a short-term therapeutic intervention. Client turnover is very high compared to traditional counseling and therapy practices. Whereas ten to twelve sessions is considered substantial in hypnotherapy, traditional forms of counseling can involve years of sessions with the same therapist. Clientele is built up over many years by the hypnotherapist establishing a high success rate (hypnotherapists with 80% success rates are not too uncommon). Referrals generated from past clients who've experienced successful results are a very important part of the hypnotherapy practice. As a result, reputable hypnotherapists are selective and will generally only accept clients whom they feel they can truly help.

B. What You Can Expect at the Initial Consultation:

Upon arriving at the office you will likely be asked to fill out a client intake form. The form covers basic client information. The form may also ask that you list any known psychological or medical disorders, current medications, previous uses of counseling or hypnotherapy, etc. The policy should be that the intake form remains strictly confidential. The form should indicate this. If not then you should ask the therapist exactly how the form will be used. Or simply opt to leave some parts of the form blank for private discussion during the consultation.

Some practices may administer a written questionnaire designed to measure suggestibility prior to meeting with the therapist. Some tests are short, while others are unnecessarily long. You will likely only encounter this at practices which rely solely upon the use of suggestion as the means of therapy.

Once the consultation begins, many important topics will (should) be discussed. The basic elements of a professional hypnotherapy consultation are presented below. You can use the key points as a guide to assess the quality of the consultation you receive in order to make an informed decision on choosing a particular hypnotherapist. If certain points are not presented, then go ahead and bring them up yourself.

1.) The hypnotherapist will openly share with you her/his credentials, background and experience in the field.

If the therapist does not bring this up, then ask about it. There are very loose standards in the field. Most state laws require very little formal training. You need to be aware that some hypnotherapists have merely attended a weekend seminar in order to meet minimum state law requirements for practicing hypnotherapy.

Some counselors and psychotherapists with many years of formal training in psychology offer hypnotherapy services as a part of their practice. The APA requires licensed therapists to receive a minimum of 50 hours classroom training in hypnotherapy if the service is to be offered. The combined approach is preferred in cases requiring in depth intervention (i.e. psychological disorders). The service you receive will most likely consist of both counseling and hypnotherapy.

Hypnotherapists certified by the American Council of Hypnotist Examiners (ACHE) have received a minimum of 200 hours training and are required to receive 30 hours of classroom training every two years. The designations CHT (Certified Hypnotherapist) and CCHT (Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist) indicate the hypnotherapist is certified by the ACHE. Hypnotherapists certified by the ACHE are not licensed to practice psychotherapy and therefore may not address known psychological disorders without written permission. In order to work with an ACHE certified hypnotherapist on a specific disorder, be it psychological or medical, you will need to obtain a written referral from a licensed therapist or doctor. The hypnotherapist you see can advise you on this matter. She or he will most likely have a network of therapists and doctors whom you can readily visit to obtain a written referral in order for therapy to commence.

2.) The hypnotherapist will talk to you about hypnosis and how hypnotherapy works.

This part of the consultation can help you decide if hypnotherapy is right for you. More accurately, it will help you assess which *type* of hypnotherapy the therapist practices (refer to the articles titled “Is Hypnotherapy Right for You?”, and “What is Hypnotherapy?” for further information). The amount of time and detail spent on this in the consultation will likely be determined by how much you want to know. Some people need a thorough explanation, while others aren’t as concerned about the details.

3) Sufficient time is given for you to ask questions, and to openly talk about your experience and where you're at with your reason for being there.

The therapist will ask open ended questions and encourage you to share as much, or as little, as you are comfortable with sharing. You should feel that you have been heard and that the therapist has listened attentively to your thoughts and concerns. You should also be invited to ask any questions you may have. The therapist should then explain to you how hypnotherapy can personally help you.

4) A custom program, or outline of suggested therapy with clear objectives, is presented.

Toward the end of the consultation, the hypnotherapist should make it very clear what the therapy objectives are and should give you a clear range as to the number of sessions most likely needed to reach those objectives. In other words, if the therapist is unwilling to commit to a clearly stated therapy plan and leaves the number of sessions vague or unanswered by saying, "We'll just have to see how it goes. It could take one session or ten, we just don't know till we get started", then it is advisable for you to look elsewhere. By the end of the consultation, an experienced hypnotherapist will have a very clear idea as to the number of sessions it will take for you to experience positive results.

As a client you have the right to know the maximum number of sessions it will take to reach your objectives using hypnotherapy. Because it is impossible to know the exact number of sessions beforehand that will be needed, you will ideally be given a range; such as, "It will take six sessions plus or minus two for hypnotherapy to be effective." You should also be made clear on what happens in the event that several more sessions are required. Some hypnotherapists will provide additional sessions above the amount stated at a substantial discount (perhaps at no charge) in order for the work to be completed. The goal here is for you to know, very clearly, what you are committing to.

5.) A final review of session logistics.

By the end of the consultation you should know how long the sessions generally last, how frequent and often you will go, and you should know the approximate number sessions that will be required for therapy to be successful. Therapist availability and when sessions are available should be made clear.

6.) Session fees are clearly stated and explained.

It is the job of the hypnotherapist to be very clear and direct on what they charge. Payment methods and payment plans (if available) should be clearly explained. The two most common practices within hypnotherapy for charging for the service include:

- a.) The client pays by the session as they go.
- b.) The client is asked to commit to a custom program in which payment for services is to be paid up front.

Although it may seem that method “a” (pay as you go) is the preferred choice, from a therapeutic standpoint it isn’t nearly as effective as method “b” (paying up front for services). The reason for this is that method “b” locks in a commitment which can have the overall effect of maintaining motivation and commitment, thereby serving to help make treatment more effective. Paying by the session as you go is less committal. The likelihood of not seeing the entire therapy process through from beginning to end increases as a result. The notion that, “I’ll give it a whirl, if it doesn’t work out I just won’t go back...” is one that serves neither you nor the therapist. You could simply end up wasting your time and money as a result of quitting half way through by not being committed.

In most instances it is recommended for you to opt for a hypnotherapy program (“b”) instead of an open ended arrangement whereby you pay as you go. If paying the full amount up front is not a viable option, most therapists should be willing to devise a payment plan which allows you to pay as you go, but has you commit to an actual hypnotherapy program throughout the process.

For example: you pay for two sessions prior to starting your program. There is a specified range of sessions your program is to cover (6 sessions, plus or minus 2). Upon arriving for sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5 you submit payment equivalent to the fee of one session. Session 6 has been prepaid at the start of the program. In the event that sessions 7 and 8 are deemed necessary to bring the work through to completion, you pay a substantially reduced fee (perhaps no fee at all). If it turns out only 4 sessions are required, then session 4 has been prepaid, after which the program ends.

7.) Insurance.

Some health insurance companies may cover hypnotherapy services. Practices vary depending on the insurance company you are with so you will need to check your policy, or contact your insurance agent. In some cases having a doctor prescribe hypnosis for stress reduction or weight loss will suffice. Some hypnotherapists accept insurance, and some do not. Because hypnotherapy is usually not covered by health insurance the added overhead involved with accepting insurance many times does not justify carrying it in light of needing to increase fees to meet the added expense.

Fortunately, this is changing as the cost advantage and the effectiveness of alternative care are realized by more and more insurance companies. Even in cases where insurance does cover hypnotherapy, some clients still decide to cover the cost themselves in order to ensure their privacy. This can be an important consideration to you if you are not exactly sure how your personal information is being shared within the insurance industry.

If the hypnotherapist you are seeing accepts your insurance they will provide you with the specific details you will need to make certain the service is covered.

8.) Making the decision.

Near the end of the consultation you will be asked whether or not you are interested in signing up for the service. As with selling the initial consultation, some therapists tend to over sell at this point. Part of it comes from the therapist knowing that they can truly help you out. Being abundantly clear to them, but perhaps not to you, you may feel you are being pressured into signing up for a program or session. When you are asked to make a decision, maintain a clear perspective. By all means respect your feelings and intuition.

If you feel you need time to think it over, then allow yourself that time. Simply tell the therapist you will think about it for a few days and you will call them back after you've made your decision. You do not need to explain yourself or feel you need to justify your reasoning. If, after the consultation, you decide not to sign up, be courteous and call the therapist back anyway to let them know of your decision.

This works the other way as well. If you feel motivated and excited about the prospect of working with the hypnotherapist, respect this and act on it if you feel it to be in your best interest. Keep in mind that stepping into the unknown and making a positive life change can be uncomfortable and oftentimes takes courage.

9.) Receive a written agreement form.

If you decide to sign up for a hypnotherapy program you should be given a written agreement form signed by both the therapist and yourself. The agreement form should state the title of the program you have signed up for, the primary objective(s) of therapy, and the number of sessions to be included. The fee structure and payment schedule should be clearly outlined. Any special considerations should be noted as well; such as: "In the event additional sessions are required, a (50%) discount is to automatically granted for up to 5 additional sessions."

If the therapist has a refund policy it should be clearly stated on the agreement form. Standard practice is that hypnotherapists do not to give refunds. This is in line with the accustomed standards followed by most psychotherapists and medical doctors.

PART VI.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Considerations in working with a male or female hypnotherapist:

Having received sessions by both male and female hypnotherapists I have not noticed any appreciable differences to suggest choosing a hypnotherapist on the basis of gender. In most instances the therapist's background, training and experience (what she or he brings to the process) will influence the course of therapy more so than gender. Obviously, certain cases do lend themselves to choosing a therapist with gender being an important, if not necessary, consideration.

The only recommendation on this matter is not to exclude working with a hypnotherapist strictly on the basis of gender, unless you are clearly aware of your reasons for doing so. As in all healing professions, there are excellent female and male hypnotherapists out there. In other words, try not to allow for stereotypes to unconsciously influence your decision. Allow yourself the freedom to choose based on who will ultimately be able to help you out the most.

B. Endnote:

The field of hypnotherapy is made up of practitioners from all walks of life. Backgrounds vary tremendously, perhaps more so than in most professions. They run the gamete from art to business, from nursing to education. Many, if not most, of those that practice hypnotherapy do so out of a strong desire to help others. This seems to be a common thread shared among the majority of hypnotherapists. To say that their heart and soul is in the work would not be an overstatement about most hypnotherapists. For many hypnotherapists the work is oftentimes more of a calling than it is a means to financial success, social recognition, and approval.

Due to the misconceived nature of hypnosis, those practicing hypnotherapy learn early on how to take the jokes, puns, and media putdowns aimed at their profession in stride. Hypnotherapists sometimes find that helps to be artfully vague when asked, "So what do you do for a living?". The misunderstandings are all a part of it. Yet just because hypnosis is not clearly understood, this does not mean that those that practice hypnotherapy are somehow different than ordinary folk. They just understand what it's about more clearly and they readily see the powerful applications hypnosis has in the areas of healing and helping others.

Unfortunately, there does exist a small minority of people out there marketing themselves as hypnotherapists who do not follow the moral and ethical standards practiced, and taken very seriously, by reputable hypnotherapists. As such, similar groups of people are to be found in every field and profession. It is important to know that a large number of reputable hypnotherapists are actively involved in getting legislation passed which would

raise the training and educational standards necessary for someone to practice hypnotherapy. Until that time comes, prospective clients looking for a hypnotherapist will need to take special care in choosing a hypnotherapist.

The purpose of this article has been to share pertinent information to prospective hypnotherapy clients to ensure that an informed decision is made with respect to choosing a hypnotherapist.

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