

# Preparing Clients for Successful Regression Therapy

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## CLIENT PRECONCEPTIONS

We, as professionals in the field of hypnotherapy, are well acquainted with the terms and tools of our profession. Due to our comfort level based on our knowledge of hypnosis and hypnotherapy it is easy for many of us to overlook how others outside of our profession may perceive those things that we relate to as normal daily activity. Think about those times when you may have contacted technical support for a computer problem or discussed a problem with your auto mechanic, accountant, or plumber. If those areas are outside of your scope of knowledge, you may very well have felt uneasy about allowing that person to direct you in making a decision. It is important for us to be aware that both the concepts of regression and hypnosis can conjure up entirely different pictures for the layman than they do for those within our profession.

To illustrate how differently those outside of our practice view hypnosis/hypnotherapy, most of us need only look to those who enter our doors each day. Virtually every one of us (in active practice) have at least one person each week who thinks that they will be mystically "under our power" during their session. Where hypnosis is concerned, the general public knows only what they see in the movies (Count Dracula), and in stage shows (people acting foolishly). Is it any wonder that many prospective clients are apprehensive about hypnotherapy and regression therapy. In virtually every instance on TV and in the movies, people discover horrible and frightening things when regressed. We know that this is not true, but it sells for the entertainment industry. The fact remains, however, that the theatre image is often our client's only point of reference and perception.

Regardless of the therapy that will follow, it has always been my view that the intake, consultation, and pre-talk are the most important factors in achieving success with a client. The pre-talk in particular, is the time that you will either create a rapport with your client or lose effectiveness with him or her. The pre-talk is your opportunity to create understanding that will open the door to a successful session(s).

## PREPARATION

I will assume, this being a hypnotherapy publication, that my readers are already familiar with the components of a pre-talk. During my pre-talk with a new client, I create rapport in the following ways (I will make this brief so as not to deviate from the main topic.).

A. I start by getting to know about them personally. People generally like to talk about themselves, and I encourage that. I ask them if they have any questions or concerns and I address those concerns.

B. I take the opportunity to educate them about hypnosis and hypnotherapy. I stress that people experience hypnosis in various ways, and for that reason, I let them know that they can't do it wrong. This helps them to gain confidence. When regression therapy is indicated, I use this time also to explain what regression is and is not, and how it will be of benefit. I will elaborate on that shortly.

C. I entertain them. I play some hypnosis, visualization, and imagination "games" to lighten the atmosphere and put the new client at ease. As well, I use that opportunity to assure them that they have the complete ability to be an excellent subject. I give them confidence and create expectation. [Note: By this time, in most cases, I have already induced hypnosis via subtle "hypno-games" without ever mentioning the word. By the time we get to the actual session. they are "super-prepared".]

### **EDUCATING THE CLIENT ABOUT REGRESSION**

Assuming that you have successfully relieved all of your client's concerns about hypnosis in general, you can now move on to creating a positive outlook about regression therapy. The fear that is most often present is the fear of the unknown. The fear that they may confront something uncomfortable or even frightening during regression. After all. That's what usually happens on TV.

I usually begin by explaining that the therapies that I utilize fall into three main categories: direct suggestion, indirect suggestion, and regression. I explain that when regression therapy is indicated, it can be a very powerful tool to facilitate wonderful and positive change. I ask. You want to accomplish your goal, don't you? Of course they answer "Yes".

I then help the client to have a positive and exciting outlook about regression. I ease any concerns that they may be feeling by saying something to the following effect.

**Example** - Today (first visit), we may not even get so far as pursue your actual therapy. Instead, we'll start by helping you to become more comfortable with the process involved in hypnotherapy. It will also be an opportunity for you to see how really wonderful hypnosis is. Also, you'll be pleasantly surprised to how very powerful your mind actually is. Today will be sort of a "test drive". You're going to love this.

I continue to explain to the client: In the movies, people undergoing regression generally find out that their mother was from Venus or their father was an evil Troll. right. We all know that this isn't true. This is entertainment, not real life. The fact is, it is the exception to the rule when people discover something terrible during regression. There is an interesting reason that most problems are a result of circumstances that are not so big. Would you like to hear how that happens (client: Yes).

[Note to my fellow practitioners: Therapists must be knowledgeable in generating suggestions that are not leading or prejudicial. This will help to facilitate a positive and productive session.]

**Here is an example** - I have two children. There are times when one or the other will come to me with tears in their eyes because another child may have said something that hurt their feelings. The first instinct of most adults is to address the problem by telling the child not to let it bother him or her because "it is not really a big deal". As an adult, we know from life experience that in the bigger picture, that specific problem is probably not a big deal. To the child, however, it is a very big deal at that moment.

As we grow older we become more resilient to the things that once hurt us as a child. We layer over our most basic emotions with coatings of logic and rational thought. The child however is still in us. The point is that instances that can facilitate problems later in life are often small things that seemed big to us (the child) at that time.

I often use as an example with my clients a woman who came to me with serious self-esteem problems. She had unsuccessfully sought to resolve her problems with psychologists, psychiatrists, and through other forms of counseling. When I suggested regression therapy, she balked. She was afraid of what she would uncover. She was certain that something terrible had happened during her childhood. After relieving her fears I did her session. After inducing hypnosis, I asked her to go back in time to the moment that was most significant to her, that precipitated her feeling that she was less than she would like to be. After regressing my client the conversation went something like this (I will edit the conversation keeping to the most relevant items).

**PH:** Where are you Jane (not her real name), inside or out?

**Client:** Inside.

**PH:** Are you alone or are you with someone?

**Client:** With someone.

**PH:** Who are you with?

**Client:** My mother.

**PH:** I'm curious, would you tell me what is going on?

**Client:** My mother is yelling at me. She's calling me stupid and telling me I can't do anything right.

**PH:** My word. Why is she so upset with you? Will you please tell me?

**Client:** I'm setting the table and making a big mess.

**PH:** How old are you?

**Client:** Two.

I then use this example to illustrate to my current client that I was able to help this previous client by simply re-framing the incident that was the catalyst for her low self esteem. I explain that I simply suggested that she (the little girl) had nothing to feel guilty about, that in fact she could be proud that she was trying to help despite the fact that her mother reacted inappropriately to her efforts (perhaps just having a bad day). This started a domino effect that caused wonderful and positive changes to take place regarding her self image and within her entire life.

I use this example (and others like it) to alleviate fears by showing clients that our problems do not always come from terrible and traumatic circumstances as we would

interpret that by adult standards. They are usually from something that was significant to the inner child and that would not seem so terrible to the adult. But we as hypnotherapists know that what the mind perceives to be real is real to the mind and to that child, the event was significant at the time. Therefore, in regression, it is not the norm to uncover a past encounter with a fiend or space monster. It is more likely to find something that was significant and disturbing to the child.

[Note: The examples in this article are directed to adult clients. The approach is somewhat different when preparing younger people for regression therapy.]

### **FURTHER PREP**

Before beginning a session, I ask clients to tell me about some life experiences that they hold especially fond memories of. After getting this information, I ask them if they would like to re-experience some of those moments. I might say something like:

Do you want to see something really neat? (Client: yes).

How would you like to have that same wonderful feeling again that you had when (insert client's experience)? This is really going to be fun. You'd like that wouldn't you? (Client: yes).

Watch how easy this is . . . then I begin by regressing them through what I call practice trips. When these practice trips are completed I have a wonderfully prepared and willing client. From this point forward the actual regression session is smooth, easy, and more effective.

### **RESULTS**

It may seem like a lot of work to go through. Actually this whole process doesn't take long if you know where you are going with it ahead of time. In the end, I find that taking this little bit of additional time at the beginning actually saves time over the long run and provides better results. Remember too, this only needs to be done on the first session. By systematically creating rapport and a trust, alleviating fear, creating an atmosphere of fun and anticipation, and by allowing the person to practice regression in a non-threatening way, you will drastically improve your success rate. You will gain a loyal and grateful client who will sing your praises, and as we all know - word of mouth is the best advertisement.

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