

Starting a Practice on a Shoestring

WHY HYPNOSIS IS THE IDEAL INTERVENTION

by Linda Otto, C.Ht.



For many years I have been asked a group of repetitive questions aimed at getting started in a hypnotherapy practice. There are many good, qualified hypnotherapy instructors available that provide an excellent foundation in hypnosis training. However, far too often new and beginning students only get the adequate training essential to providing good therapeutic work, but that is where the training ends. To ensure a successful career in hypnosis, there are many areas needing to be addressed other than the initial hypnosis training. It is my sincere desires to provide some valuable information to the recently certified and beginning therapist with the hopes of helping a new career get off the ground.

Advertise, Advertise, Advertise

First and foremost the general public needs to be aware of the services that you are offering. While newspaper, yellow pages, and professional brochures are a sure fire way to generate new clients, advertising in this capacity is not always cost effective to the beginner, and quite frankly is not the only way for you to generate new clients.

A personal computer can be your best friend when first starting out in this field. There are many software programs available on the market today for a nominal fee that you can use to create professional looking business cards, brochures, flyers, and stationary. Capitalize on the creative ingenuity of the software makers. Unless you have personal experience in graphic designing or have worked in the marketing field previously, this is a sure fire way to create professional looking pieces at a nominal fee. If you don't have a personal computer, I'm certain that we all know someone who does and could possibly assist you in this venture.

Essential information to be included in your "stationary" is your name, the name of your business, the services you provide, your address, telephone number and office hours. All too often I have personally encountered business cards of professional looking quality, to find that there is no address or telephone number as to where the advertiser can be reached. This not only decreases your chances of being contacted for your services. It inadvertently sends a signal to the recipient that you either do not have an office where they can contact you or that there is something to "hide". People are generally skeptical where hypnosis is concerned anyway. You don't want to

give them any further illusion that hypnosis is something "shady" or "underhanded". Be sure to include all pertinent information in your advertising.

Once you have created professional stationary depicting your services, the next step is to place them in areas where the general public will find them in conjunction with other related services. By that I mean, place your brochures and business cards in areas such as other alternative therapy offices, massage centers, chiropractic offices, health food stores, pharmacies, medical buildings and such. This will zero in on people who would more likely be open to the services you provide. It also serves as a referral of sorts, as to where they got the card in the first place. Obtaining a brochure or business card from one of these facilities gives a more professional appearance than if the advertising material were found in a public telephone booth or local tavern! So avoid areas that are not conducive to the services you are providing. You will get a better percentage response per advertising dollar if your cards are placed in appropriate areas.

Free Advertising

There is no better way of getting FREE advertisements than to offer your services to give free lectures or demonstrations on the benefits of hypnosis. Some of the advertisement I received over the years while giving free lectures or demonstrations couldn't be bought at any price! Contact your local community health center or college and offer to give a free lecture or demonstration. Another resource is organizations that meet monthly, like men's lodges and women's clubs. How about the local chapter of the YWCA, YMCA, civic centers or adult learning facilities? They are always looking for new and interesting speakers and/or items of interest. If you're not too familiar with addressing a general audience, start with a small group and work your way up to a larger group as your experience grows! You will be pleasantly surprised at how many referrals you get for the minimal amount of time it takes for you to offer your services to these groups. This involves a minimal amount of your time and no money. Do this and watch your business grow!

Once you have established a free demo or lecture, don't forget to bring free 'handouts' for the attendees. This is something tangible that they can carry home with them, and use as a reference in the future, should they or any of their family or friends ever be in need of your services.

You are the best advertisement

They say the best form of advertising is the example one sets. You are a walking, talking advertisement for your services. Set a good example to others for the services you wish to provide. Talking to a perspective client or contact about obtaining your services for a stop smoking session with a cigarette in your hand is hardly worth the effort of the words expelled! Everywhere you go, everything you say or any action that is taken, on your behalf is being carefully scrutinized by onlookers. Even if no words or comments are spoken, be certain that you are leaving a lasting visual impression upon the watchful eyes of your contact.

There is a time and place for selling your services. When making new contacts for perspective clients, do so in a professional environment. Trying to ascertain perspective clients in the local bar is hardly my idea of professionalism. Especially when you've had a few drinks yourself. Try to avoid these circumstances at all cost. You will lose the respect and admiration of others and possibly forfeit any new business due to the atmosphere of where the conversation took place. Now, I'm not saying that you can't make contacts at a local bar or community event, what I am proposing is that you wait to talk about professional matters in a professional environment. Give them your card and ask for them to contact you at a later time.

Use your resources

As your initial training in hypnotherapy comes to an end, be sure to take advantage of all of the resources that are made available to you. Certainly as you leave the comforting nest of your qualified instructor, they have given you an ample amount of contacts, reading material and resources. By all means use them. There are many hypnosis organizations that offer excellent benefits to their members. Be sure to join. Professional memberships can be a valuable tool for contacts. Some organizations offer a professional referral directory. The nominal cost of initially joining, is one of the best investments you can make. They may offer mentoring programs, referral directories, annual conventions, mini workshops and lectures throughout the year, a quarterly publication, professional practitioner insurance, networking with other like-minded individuals, and other wonderful services too numerous to mention. Additionally, the advertising that is offered to members is one of national or international proportion. This is by far one of the best investments for your dollar.

In addition to the quality diverse education that is offered, by attending the annual conferences, you will come away feeling refreshed and invigorated. You will have the opportunity to network with other professionals in the business. Some that may become your friends for a lifetime. Networking with other professionals can also provide another valuable resource for new clients. Professional referrals from other therapists are a common occurrence in this field. And the best way to start is to attend the annual conventions and make those connections.

Office sharing is an affordable alternative to the beginning therapist. This is not only a viable choice in terms of financial expenditures, but if the office is shared with another health care professional, the traffic generated from others will give you additional exposure at no additional expense. I'm certain that there are many alternative health facilities in the area that have an ample amount of space unoccupied and would welcome the idea of office sharing and lowering their monthly expenditures. A prime location to search for an office-sharing partner is your local health and fitness centers, a chiropractic center, massage center or another alternative therapy office. Most established businesses already have essential office furnishings in place. Paying a nominal fee to rent a room from an established facility for therapeutic hypnotherapy will save you a

lot of money in initial office set-up costs. The prime location for initiating a new office for hypnotherapy is in or around a professional building or professional medical office. It will give your business the look of professionalism in the health care field simply by association.

While there are many additional ideas and helpful suggestions that are aimed at getting you started in hypnosis, I hope that some of the suggestions mentioned in this article will serve as a foundation or beginning for you. By all means, take advantage of every opportunity available to you. Network. Let people know about the training you've just received. Be open and receptive to new ideas and options. And by doing so, I am certain that you will be well on your way to establishing a flourishing, profitable and steady hypnotherapy practice.

Linda Otto, C.Ht., has been actively involved in the field of hypnosis since 1989. Linda is the Secretary for the International Medical and Dental Hypnotherapy Association. Moreover, she is executive coordinator of and personal assistant to Robert Otto Seminars and Workshops. Her involvement in the business has enabled her to travel extensively throughout the country to promote public awareness on the benefits of hypnosis. She is the author/producer of For Women Only, an audio program designed exclusively for women's wellness as well as Foreplay, an audio program designed to increase sexual stimulation through the use of imagination, relaxation, and guided imagery. She is a member of the National Board of Hypnotherapy and Hypnotic Anesthesiology and a lifetime member of the North Coast Hypnosis Society. She is also the recipient of the 1997 Friendship Award by the International Hypnosis Hall of Fame.