

Hypnotic Realities: The Mind and Cancer

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People with cancer have a variety of psychological and medical needs that may be addressed through hypnosis.

- *Cancer and chronic illness may certainly have a negative impact on self-esteem and feelings of confidence
- *to control symptoms provides the person with a sense of master and counters feelings of helplessness and powerlessness
- *side effects of anticipatory nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and loss of appetite may be successfully addressed through hypnotic suggestion
- *anxiety and fear are also targeted treatment areas

We must strike a balance in using hypnosis with cancer patients, remaining optimistic, offering hope and treatment options that we believe may provide beneficial, and yet we must not make exaggerated claims that imply that hypnosis is a cure for cancer

At a minimum, hypnotic techniques will offer many of our patients' symptomatic relief from nausea, vomiting, pain, suffering, depression, and loss of self-worth-thus providing a higher quality of life during the time we are together. Hypnosis also provides an alternative for assisting terminal patients to come to grips with their own impending death.

The role of suggestion in wellness and health care is prominent in effect but hidden amongst our language and interactions. Using hypnosis does not require that one conduct a formal induction but rather than its use be integrated into the interaction.

Specific Examples:

- I. Controlling Chemotherapy Side Effects
 - a. Several advantages
 - i. Makes the experience less stressful
 - ii. Requires no equipment
 - iii. Does not produce aversive side effects
 - iv. Gives a personal sense of master and control
 - v. Reduces stress and anxiety through general relaxation
 - b. Suggestions
 - i. Lake metaphor
- II. Support and Ego-strengthening
 - i. Must be able to relate to suggestions from the context of their previous experience
- III. Hypnotic Death Rehearsal
 - i. Helps in defusing anxiety and correcting misconceptions regarding the death experience and the effect of death upon the patient and the patient's family