

1) We hear it is possible to treat depression with Hypnotherapy. Is this true and if so, how popular is it in South Africa as a treatment?

Firstly it is important to mention that most Hypnotherapy is a non-medical modality, therefore a certified Hypnotherapist will not interfere with medical treatment and will usually refer clients to medical doctors should this seem advisable.

Many clients approach us while they are in medical care and usually report that while medication seems to "take the edge off" they would rather solve the underlying problem and live without medication. Many, if not most of these clients have had psychotherapy or similar treatments in addition to medication. Hypnotherapy clients are always advised that any changes to medical treatment should only take place under the direct supervision of their medical professional.

Depression is a complex issue that does not develop overnight. Although there is a considerable emotional component to depression, there are also extensive physiological implications such as brain chemistry and hormonal activity as well. Hypnotherapy provides an excellent means of preventative therapy for those who are prone to depression and when used in conjunction with conventional medicine, can help speed recovery and prevent reoccurrence.

With Hypnosis we can enable the client to determine the underlying issues which are responsible for the onset of depressive episodes and empower them to work through them. Often one also has to work on the "by products" or symptoms of depression for example low self esteem and self worth, sleeping or eating problems or addictions. When the client understands how he spiralled into the depression and finds a door out of the hopelessness or utter sadness he can take responsibility again for his emotional state and effect the necessary change within or in his environment.

2) Is it a case of Hypnotizing people to believe they are happy? How exactly does it work?

One would need to define happiness. Happiness means different states or circumstances to different people. To be unhappy often means that the person feels removed from the possibility to have certain circumstances. Meanwhile happiness is a decision to be happy. Otherwise, especially in many of our cultures and modern lifestyles happiness will elude us when we attach it to a certain outcome. Once that has been achieved, contentment might set in only to be replaced by the next goal or circumstance to which we attach a happy state. It is important to become still and connect to our feelings of happiness, which we had in the past. In a state of hypnosis these "memories" become very, very real, to a point where the body will react. When we learn to connect to the empowering state within us, we often can "simulate" this feeling and take charge of our life.

2) Have you had many successful cases, where a depressed person has been "cured" of their disease?

Successful treatment of depression with any modality is often dependant on how soon intervention begins and to what degree the condition has progressed at this point. I have not produced any statistics, but I encourage all my clients to stay in contact with me to monitor their reaction. While some have an immediate "shift", others need to realize and work with more than one emotional or lifestyle aspect. I can say with confidence that everyone feels a certain degree of upliftment after a session.

4) How many sessions of hypnotherapy are needed to treat a depressed person?

Whilst Hypnotherapy is considerably faster than many other forms of psychotherapy, a lot depends on trust. Trust between the client and the therapist and trust that the client has within himself. Personally I like my clients to fully understand the process so that no apprehension is left when we start using hypnosis. Also the duration of sessions vary from therapist to therapist. At the South African Institute of Hypnotism we teach Client- Centered Hypnotherapy which also means that the therapist will develop a therapy plan or strategy with the client. The outcome of the first session usually determines where to go from there.

5) Does hypnotherapy work on everyone?

Is there any modality that will work equally on everyone? It will however work with virtually every person who has a desire to work through their problems and who is prepared to develop sufficient trust in their therapist. Hypnosis is a perfectly natural state that all of us experience at least twice every day, just before going to sleep and again just prior to awakening. Only a very small percentage of people are unable to be hypnotized in a therapy environment.

6) Would you suggest that people battling with depression who haven't found help with conventional medication try hypnotherapy?

Absolutely. There are no negative effects with Hypnotherapy.

7) How much does it cost?

This varies from therapist to therapist and depends on the duration of the session and other aspects. Probably more important than the cost of a session is the level of the therapists qualification and competency. A qualified and certified Hypnotherapist has invested time and money in professional training and is encouraged to continue training in order to maintain proficiency.