

## HYPNOTHERAPY - A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

Hellmut Karle and Jennifer Boys

Free Association Books, London, 1999 (originally published 1987)

I have been asked repeatedly by my clients doing psychotherapy with me, if I could hypnotise them at some stage of the process. I have always declined believing that psychotherapy of the self should be done quite consciously rather than slipping into imaginative projections. But after being asked to read and review this book by a professional colleague I have had reason to re-think my stance, and not only to re-think it, but to also try to consider integrating it into my own gestalt work when necessary. I have found this book an excellent tool to help me along to integrate another discipline into my own gestalt repertoire to the ultimate good of my clients seeking solutions to various life dramas. As Karle and Boys state in the Introduction "hypnotherapy is not a system of therapy but a technique or procedure by means of which therapy is delivered" and this sentence convinced me that hypnosis - as laid out in their book - could be used therapeutically within the framework of the theory and practice of gestalt therapy and subsumed within my own current practice as a therapist. In fact Karle and Boys in the later chapters stress the need for hypnotherapy to be placed into a psychotherapeutic context as a safeguard for the client who opens up repressed emotions and needs to work them. They set it into an analytic psychoanalysis but allow enough leeway for it to be adapted to any psychotherapy or discipline.

This book cannot be looked on as any kind of attempt to survey and summarize the academic field of clinical hypnotherapy, nor is it seemingly intended to give an account of the history of hypnosis in clinical use. What is intended is to provide health care professionals with explicit, consciously designed and applied ways of employing the natural capabilities of their clients and patients for the constructive and therapeutic application of mental processes, cognitive, affective, conative, and above all imaginative, in the service of mental and physical health.

Karle and Boys begin by describing the main features and basic techniques of hypnosis and the foundations of treatment and then make explicit the assumptions on which they claim hypnotherapy is based. Part IV provides an overview of the analytic psychotherapy model, and the uncovering techniques and treatment strategies are examined in depth and compared.

Parts II and III explain the techniques and treatment strategies as applied to adults and children, aims and skills and how these are practised from the first through to subsequent sessions. A convincing argument in favour of these strategies is made, but an important omission is the failure to look more closely at working with resistant clients, and whether hypnotherapy is

appropriate in such cases. With its emphasis on shorter-term work, and less focus on psychotherapeutic aspects, how effectively can hypnotherapy address, for example, those deep-rooted insecurities which, albeit unconsciously, could threaten the therapeutic relationship from developing and hence the process of change ?

In the chapter "Dissociation, multiple personality and ego state therapy" too little attention is given to the formative and normative aspects of supervision. For instance, would the hypnotherapy approach be careful enough when working through an inexperienced supervisee whose personal blocks are serious enough to affect their work with very vulnerable clients?

The basic structure of the model is opened up and expanded in the chapters "Induction" and "Deepening". Experienced therapists of different models could adapt much of the imagery and imagistic projections suggested here, particularly the use of "the private place", and the "ego-strengthening" which I found integrates well into the humanistic model.

This book's great strength is its ability to integrate previously disparate disciplines within a coherent structure that is also easy to read. Thus two modes of therapy - psycho- and hypno- are synthesised, as are the writings of phenomenological and existential practitioners like Freud and Gellner. Moreover the existential "deepening" provides as good a structure for the book as it does for therapy. The "deepening" is an important theoretical novelty and I believe it can be applied to traditional psychotherapy as readily as it can to hypnotherapy. I would recommend this book more as a "how-to-do-therapy" book than for exhaustive theoretical analysis, but that is just what it is intended to be and exactly what is needed.

I have two main criticisms of the book. Firstly is my concern that hypnotherapy (highlighted in the chapter of clinical case examples dealing with multiple personality disorders and the cases dealing with addictions where the speed and focus of the hypnotherapist's interventions leave the client little time to reflect) is that it fails to allow the client to stay with and explore the painful emotions of the past. Or allows any more time for in depth handling of the wounds that have been opened up Or allows any holding of the clients while they deal with their emotions. In my experience, this is vital if they are to use therapy to work through loss and be in a place to look to the future and to take on emotionally, not just cognitively, the tools to help change.

My second criticism of the book is that it ultimately falls between two audiences: it is not written directly for psychotherapists, and the untrained user is warned not to use it without a therapeutic training of some sort. The conclusion is a decidedly deadly one whereby we are informed that it is encouraging for the clients to leave feeling good about themselves. This would seem to be an

invitation to confluence with the client whereby the therapist is confirmed at the expense of the client. Confluence normally confirms the presenting problems but never moves it onto change.