

Chapter 3.10 Hypnosis Used to Help Overcome Emotional Numbness and the Inability to Cry

This chapter describes the use of hypnosis. During hypnosis some of the conscious logical left-brain processes were by-passed with easier access to unconscious and right brain resources. Billy was able to achieve deep relaxation while feeling safe and enjoying positive happy memories of times before he met Dahmer.

Dahmer had beaten him harder when he cried, so he learned not to cry. He wanted to be able to cry, but he couldn't. Therapy for this involved the use of hypnosis.

Several years ago I had another client who had "learned" not to cry. She had suffered terrible sexual and physical abuse as a child. She had been in therapy for twenty years when I saw her. I said, "Well, what can I do?" She said that she had never cried and wanted to be able to do that. I induced a hypnotic trance, and suggested arm levitation. The suggestion is made that the arm will lift on its own without the client deciding to lift the arm. I suggested that when her hand reached her eye that the dam would break. She did not cry. I repeated the arm levitation with the other arm with no better results. Then I said that the dam would break when her two hands touched each other. Then she made a cry I have never heard before or since and never want to hear again. She then was able to cry.

When I mentioned hypnosis to Billy, he was leery of it and expressed concern about losing control. One day I began a hypnotic induction. It just felt like the right thing to do; I had not planned it ahead. Since he was afraid of losing control, I was careful to give him permission to ignore any of my suggestions. As part of the hypnotic induction, I timed my breathing with his, and on expiration I would lower my tone of voice and would suggest relaxation. I added "or not" at the end of any suggestion, which gave him the option of whether or not to follow the suggestion. For example, I said, "Your eyes may be more comfortable closed or not". One goal of hypnosis is for the person to have more access to resources that are largely subconscious. A degree of confusion is sometimes useful, so I said, "You don't know all that you know that you know, and it is all right not to know all that you know that you know, as long as you know that when you need to know it, you will know it." Because Billy needed more access to positive memories, I spent a lot of time suggesting that he remember and reexperience delightful, joyous, wonderful memories from his childhood.

He achieved a deep level of trance. I suggested arm levitation and when his hand touched his cheek, I suggested that the dam would break or not. He did not cry except for a fraction of a second. When he came out of the trance, he said, "You snuck that one in on me". He said that at one point he had tried to open his eyes, but could not. I asked him how long it seemed and he said, "five minutes".

It had been an hour. The relaxation achieved in the trance helped him to question some of his fixed beliefs such as “I can never relax,” and “I have to be on guard all the time.” With time he was able to cry and feel sadness. See Chapter 3.8 on creating an alternate past for more details.

After the first hypnotic suggestion, hypnosis was used a few more times with Bill. He liked the relaxation. During one particular session of hypnosis, I decided to approach the internal conflicts he had by stressing the options that he had, so I told him that his unconscious mind and his conscious mind could get together and agree on the following:

When to be alert	When to relax
When to be on guard	When to just enjoy the situation
When to hide emotions	When to cry
When to be numb	When to feel
When to tense muscles	When to loosen muscles
When to choke	When to swallow
When to throw up ideas, images and thoughts	When to digest ideas, images and thoughts
When to feel heavy	When to feel light and buoyant
When to dam up tears	When to let tears flow
When to hide thoughts	When to speak out
When to feel ashamed	When to feel proud
When to feel guilty	When to value and appreciate his standards
When to hold back	When to let up
When to be suspicious	When to trust
When to reject all	When to accept some parts
When to freeze	When to melt
When to turn to stone	When to blossom

After he came out of the trance, he said he was not as relaxed this time. While he was saying this, he kept moving his hand up and down above his thigh. I responded that I thought I had asked a lot of his unconscious mind, and that was probably why he was not as relaxed.

After several procedures, particularly creating an alternate past, I asked him to feel how having had that resource in the past would have made a difference and then asked him to see how it would make a difference in his future. When I did this, I would begin to breathe at the same rate as he was breathing and use the same tone of voice and rhythm that I used during hypnotic induction. He frequently went into a trance at the end of sessions.