



PHA Guidance Note - 002

Use of Touch by Practicing Hypnotherapist

This Guidance Note is provided to Practitioner members of PHA Inc. This does not constitute PHA Policy. Each member should be aware of this Guidance and based upon own/individual circumstances, determine whether or not this guidance is applicable to their individual practice of hypnotherapy

Introduction

There is no doubt that, during hypnotherapy sessions some practitioners favour the use of touch to assist in the induction process, emphasise certain suggestions or instructions to the sub-conscious mind or to act as anchoring points for suggestions given. Touch can also be used by hypnotherapists as an adjunct to post hypnotic suggestion.

While touch can effectively be used to assist in treatment, there is no mandatory requirement to employ touch and therefore it is the sole choice or preference of each practitioner as to whether touch is employed in the hypnotherapeutic environment. This Guidance Note is offered to members as information or considerations to be incorporated into individual practices as necessary. This does not constitute PHA Policy, but is tendered as advice only. This Guidance Note refers specifically to hypnotherapy treatments and does not consider other modalities such as EFT etc.

Above all, it must be kept in mind that any form of touch could be interpreted or later claimed by an individual that touch was not authorised and constituted a form of assault. There are ways to minimise and ensure that any claims are well defended though.

Client/Hypnotherapist Relationship

Practitioners must remain cognisant of the fact that, between the hypnotherapist and the client, there does exist a relationship and that there are certain 'power' dynamics associated with this relationship. The client engages the services of the hypnotherapist to address or treat a specific issue and does so because the client respects the hypnotherapists qualifications and abilities, trusts the hypnotherapist and is reliant on the advice and treatment that the hypnotherapist provides. Many client will not question the advice, direction or practices of the hypnotherapist even though they may feel uncomfortable or even disagree with the hypnotherapist's directions or statements. Consequently, practicing hypnotherapists should not assume in any situation or circumstance that if the client says nothing then the client agrees. Professional judgement must be exercised in all circumstances and situations.

Hypnotherapist Responsibility

Professional practice entails accepting professional responsibility. This statement is self evident however it is worth noting that, as a part of this professional responsibility, the practicing hypnotherapist should at all times remain aware of and responsive to the individual circumstances, experiences, preferences, cultural differences and behaviours of the client. By doing so, this will ensure that the hypnotherapist treat each client as an individual, focus attention on the client's requirements and provide the best possible treatment to achieve results.

Permission to Touch

The hypnotherapist should never assume authority to touch a client at any stage. Of course, handshakes at the time of meeting are not included in this statement. When discussing touch within this Guidance Note, touch during the conduct of the hypnotherapeutic session, ie. After induction of hypnotic trance is the focus.

Prior to the induction of trance, the hypnotherapist should take every and all opportunity to provide the client with a comprehensive briefing on touch, why touch may be used and what touch will entail. It is also suggested that the hypnotherapist obtain the client's explicit permission for touch as briefed and that a Consent Form, if used, include reference to, and authority given for, touch. It should be noted that the client has the absolute right to remove authority to touch at any stage, even if authority has been given earlier on.

During this briefing, the hypnotherapist should watch closely and analyse carefully the client's responses, attitude and body language to assess the actual level of comfort with being touched. As stated earlier on, not all clients will challenge a professional hypnotherapist's statements or intentions. If it is noted throughout the briefing that there appears to be some signs of discomfort or reluctance to touch being shown by the client; then it is best to modify behaviours accordingly and avoid all forms of touch. Similarly, throughout the session and if touch has been explicitly authorised by the client, the hypnotherapist should remain alert to and cognisant of the client's reaction to touch and modify treatment accordingly should the client demonstrate nervousness or discomfort.

Areas of Touch

As a general rule and from a societal perspective, there are some 'safe' areas of touch that are accepted by the majority of people. These are hands, arms and shoulders. Within the clinical environment, these areas could be expanded to the locations demonstrated in Figure 1. Alternatively, areas of the body that should be considered avoidance zones are captured in Figure 2.

Figure 1 – Safe Zones

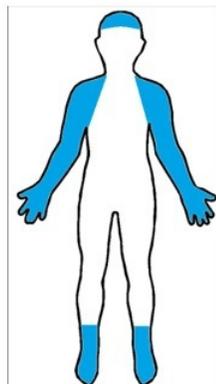


Figure 2 – Avoidance Zones

