

Hypnosis for Dementia

Really—hypnosis for dementia? That’s the usual response I get when people first learn I’ve been using hypnosis for people with dementia and Alzheimer’s disease since 1997.

In 2007, a lengthy study conducted in the U.K. by Simon Duff, PhD and Daniel Nightingale, PhD, found that people living with dementia who received hypnosis therapy showed an improvement in concentration, memory and socialization compared to two other treatment groups. Relaxation, motivation and daily living activities also improved with the use of hypnosis. And what really impressed me, is the improvements continued in a follow-up study twenty-one months after the hypnosis sessions concluded.

In this study, three groups were followed for nine months. One group received traditional dementia treatment, the second group received talk therapy and the third group had hypnosis therapy. In all areas, the people who received hypnosis showed the most and longest lasting improvement.

According to Duff and Nightingale, “The data from this study supports previous work indicating that individuals with dementia can be hypnotized. Furthermore, it adds to the increasing body of empirical data demonstrating the important contribution hypnosis can make in improving the quality of life (QOL) of individuals with dementia. Importantly, although it may seem obvious, it is crucial to differentiate between improving the psychosocial QOL of persons with dementia and impacting upon the process of dementia. ... This implies that there is a subjective, cognitive component to the common behavioral changes associated with dementia that impact QOL in addition to those changes produced by the biological process of dementia. We suggest that it is through this subjective component that hypnosis impacts QOL, which leads to the prediction that it should be possible to both differentiate and plan interventions for the objective, biological effects of dementia and the subjective, psychological effects independently.”¹

The most common anecdotal feedback I receive is that after our hypnosis session, people with dementia are calmer, happier, experience improved sleep and are better able to perform activities of daily living.

I find that even people with late-stage, severe Alzheimer’s can benefit from hypnosis. They, too, are calmer and have better-quality sleep after our hypnosis session.

Roger Moore

Over the years, I have made it a point to include the partner, family member and caregiver in the hypnosis sessions for people with dementia. There are many benefits for doing this, but the two primary reasons are: 1) so that they can continue to demonstrate and encourage the client to use the hypnosis tools and play the hypnosis recordings that I provide. And 2) partners and family members are often stressed, exhausted and frustrated, and hypnosis can also be immensely beneficial for the health and wellness of the support team.

As with any medical hypnosis, this is an integrative therapy used in support of ongoing traditional therapies.

¹ Duff, Simon PhD; Nightingale, Daniel PhD, Alternative Approaches to Supporting Individuals With Dementia. *Alzheimer's Care Today*: October 2007 - Volume 8 - Issue 4 - p 321–331

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