

Frankie says ... Relax

At first thought using hypnotherapy to deal with work life balance issues may seem a strange concept but in reality it has proved to be one of our most useful – and popular – tools.

In fact the only problem I have found with hypnotherapy is the lack of understanding and the misconceptions that surround it. To some hypnosis is akin to the dark arts and worthy of inclusion in a Harry Potter novel. For others it is about witnessing embarrassing incidents during stage shows.

The truth however is that hypnotherapy is widely used in many branches of medicine and dentistry today. It is not about mind control nor can anyone be forced to do or say anything against his or her character while under hypnosis. You cannot stay asleep forever (in fact you are not asleep at all – just deeply relaxed), and after a hypnotherapy session you will certainly not start impersonating Elvis at the drop of a hat (unless you were an Elvis impersonator to begin with).

To understand why it is so effective we need to examine what is meant by poor work life balance. At the Work Life Balance Centre we take this to mean people lacking the physical, mental or emotional resources to live their lives the way they most desire. This tends to be because most of their energy is being taken up by work (or sometimes pulled between family and work). It is not necessarily about the length of the working day, although long hours can be a symptom, but rather about its intensity. When people are out of balance they often feel overwhelmed by what they have to do. They can experience being pulled from one task to another without making headway. There are feelings of not being able to get on top of things, or even to be able to keep up. Personal, family and social lives are sacrificed for work, and a job that used to be a source of joy feels difficult, time consuming and exhausting. They often describe this as feeling out of control.

It is hardly surprising therefore that people whose lives are out of balance tend to suffer from a range of physical and psychological problems. Our research (www.24-7survey.co.uk) shows us that when people become stressed out they can feel irritable, lose their self-confidence, find it hard to relax, and tend to sleep badly. They become more prone to a number of illnesses with a stress trigger like IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), eczema, migraine and many others. In fact the 24-7 survey tells us that two of the fastest growing problems in the workforce right now are anxiety and depression. Thankfully hypnotherapy works well on all of these conditions helping people overcome problems that have dogged them for years – sometimes for many decades.

When working with clients suffering from stress related conditions hypnotherapy offers deep levels of relaxation and calm for people who have been tense for so long they have forgotten what it feels like to be relaxed. With illnesses such as IBS it has been found to have long lasting benefits without the side effects that can be associated with some other treatments such as conventional medicine, and I have seen for myself how it can work within just a few sessions on this often difficult to treat syndrome.

There is another reason hypnotherapy is such an effective and important part of our work, and that is because it supports the stance we take on the root causes of poor life balance.

At the Centre our approach to improving people's life balance is to help them regain control over their lives. We believe that this needs to begin with the thought process and deep-seated beliefs of the person concerned.

Ultimately our behaviours are the result of the choices we make, we pick one course of action over another - even if we do this subconsciously because it is a habit. We may decide to always be the last to leave, never turn off the work mobile phone, work on weekends and so on. In turn these choices stem from the beliefs, thoughts and drives that make up the type of person we are. Therefore to successfully change the harmful behaviour, we must begin with the first link in the chain – the beliefs and drives.

Hypnotherapy is an excellent tool in this process because it allows us to by-pass much of the “baggage” or negative thinking that goes along with these beliefs. It speeds up the process of change. Under hypnosis the hurdles of bad habits and destructive thinking are more easily overcome. There is less self-sabotage, fewer instances of “but I can't” thinking. It is possible to get to the heart of the matter much more quickly and easily.

When people feel out of control, or become depressed or anxious, their thinking is often characterised by unhelpful, and sometimes destructive, self-talk. They berate themselves and give themselves an incredibly hard

time. In my experience hypnotherapy has a remarkable success rate in tackling both the ill health symptoms that we see and the damaging thinking beneath that could otherwise remain invisible. It is a highly effective part of the road to recovery, all the more so because people find it an enjoyable experience as well as a successful one. In combination with our other tools and techniques it helps supplant these old destructive and unhelpful tendencies with new more sustaining thoughts and behaviours. It helps lay the foundations for lasting and positive change by establishing a different set of beliefs and self talk - that encourage and build up an individual rather than berate and tear down.

Of course it is not the only approach that we take. In fact much of the work that is done under hypnosis can be done outside it. We have many other tools we can use to help people identify unhelpful drives and beliefs, change them into something more sustaining in line with the life they want to live, and develop new behaviours that allow them to deal with their working life in a healthier, happier and more productive manner – but as said previously hypnotherapy is quicker, and the relaxation elements is a real plus in these hectic and pressured times.

At the Centre we do not just use hypnotherapy for work life balance issues. As part of the life coaching and therapy services we offer, it helps in with issues like phobias, pain relief (including during childbirth), dealing with painful memories or trauma, overcoming shyness and many others.

And it is highly cost effective. We ensure that clients have a personalised CD dedicated to their issue, that they can then go on to use for as long as they wish. While there are a few instances where hypnotherapy is not the best way forward (for those on high levels of some antidepressants for example) we have found that the vast majority of people, including those who are highly sceptical initially, find it an enjoyable and effective part of regaining control over their lives. The only magical thing about hypnotherapy is the results it achieves. So give it a try.

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