**Hypnosis and the Law**

As more and more people turn to alternative methods of healing, there has been a greater demand for hypnotherapists. Therefore, whether you are just starting your practice or have been in practice for many years, there are a handful of common pitfalls hypnotherapists should avoid. I have listed the top three guidelines here.

1. **Client Disclosure:** Be clear with your client that you are not a physician, psychologist, nor are you practicing medicine. This can be easily done with a simple disclosure form. The American Council of Hypnotist Examiners (ACHE) states in California, “Therapists who are not licensed in the healing arts are required to have new clients read and sign a disclosure form.” The client receives a duplicate copy and the therapist is required to keep the signed copy for three years. One thing that the ACHE recommends is that the disclosure must include a statement that the therapist is not a licensed physician. Additionally, the ACHE recommends that the therapist must describe the theory upon which the services are based, the nature of the services, and therapist's education, training, and experience. To order the Client Disclosure form, please visit www.SDHypnosisTraining.com.
2. **Words to Avoid Using as a Hypnotherapist**: Presumably, a hypnotherapist’s main goal in his or her practice is to help people in their journey for mind and body wellness. However, the use of certain words can be very tricky because those words denote medical and psychological treatment. In other words, they could be used in the practice of medicine. To be on the safe side, avoid using words such as “heal,” “diagnose,” “treat,” “cure,” or “prescribe.” Additionally, avoid words that imply a medical diagnosis such as “depression," "anxiety," "compulsive," and “phobia." As an alternative to using these words, a hypnotherapist may use words such as “relaxation,” “pain management,” and “self-improvement.”
3. **Client Notes:** It is recommended that every hypnotherapist keep some record on each client. There are no set guidelines as to how this should be; thus, hypnotherapists are free to keep records in whatever format he or she feels is best. The National Guild of Hypnotists (NGH) recommends to follow the SOAP form of record keeping. SOAP is an acronym for Subjective, Objective, Appraisal (or assessment), and Plan. NGH states that “SOAP notes are an easy format to use to describe your client contacts and we recommend it. SOAP notes are common in most health care environments, and having your records in this form will give them a professional appearance.”

As a final note, hypnotherapists are essential for those seeking alternative methods of wellness. They offer something that traditional medicine and psychology may not be able to. As a hypnotherapist, you can make a difference in someone’s life as long as you follow a few simple rules.

Tara Natarajan, Esq., CCH.

Legal Counsel to MIOH