

# **Key Aspects of Treating Depression with Hypnosis: The Merits of Experiential Processes for Managing Mood**

with

**Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.**

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## **Description**

The rate of depression is rising at a rate even faster than experts had predicted. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is now the single greatest cause of human suffering and disability around the world. That epidemiological observation alone tells us how serious and pervasive the problem of depression has become. This unprecedented and still continuing rapid growth rate, as well as the recognition of the many associated social and technological changes giving rise to it, provide increasing evidence that biology is less a factor in depression's spread while social forces must be recognized as the greater factor.

How a clinician thinks about the nature of depression and answers fundamental questions - such as what causes depression - naturally determine what treatment approach he or she is most likely to take. Regardless of one's preferred orientation, however, depression experts agree that treatment needs to be multi-dimensional and active, a vital principle that serves as a foundation for hypnotic and strategic interventions now shared by modern cognitive-behavioral approaches.

Science is confirming what we have probably always known in our hearts: *We are built to be in positive, meaningful relationships with others in order to feel good.* Yet, today, our most powerful relationships, our families and our communities of which they are a part, are suffering in unprecedented ways. How are people to cope with the uncertainties of modern life? How are people to form meaningful relationships if they don't have either the skills or opportunities to do so? What are the implications of being unable to distinguish "real news" from "fake news" when trying to make good, life-enhancing decisions? For most people,

depression does *not* strike “out of the blue.” By the time depression arises, the risk factors had already been in place for *years*. Therapists can recognize and address these risk factors not only in treatment, but in strategies of prevention.

In this two-day presentation, we will explore the substantial evidence that depression is much more a social than medical problem and consider the implications of that recognition for effective intervention. Furthermore, the more we learn about the neuroscience of depression, especially neuroplasticity, the more important well-designed experiential learning processes, especially hypnosis, become in treatment. Despite the popularity of antidepressants as the most common form of treatment in America today, there are things that no amount of medication can do, including building the skills necessary to function well as individuals and as a family. What these skills are and how to help build them through hypnotically-based interventions is the focus of this clinical training. Designing and delivering experiential processes, particularly skill-building homework assignments and focusing strategies, specific to treating depression will be explored in depth.

The workshop will include didactic presentation, practical skill-building exercises utilizing hypnosis, and discussion. The training will also include a highly instructive video demonstration of a treatment session using hypnosis with a man suffering co-morbid depression and PTSD stemming from an extensive history of physical abuse. The commentary and analysis of this session brings into sharp focus many of the key points that will be made throughout the program. Finally, we will consider the issue of prevention and what psychotherapists can do to help stem the rising tide of depression.

**In this two-day training program, Dr. Yapko will discuss:**

- Why depression isn't fated by brain chemistry, genes, diet, or personal weakness
- How one factor - expectancy - influences every phase of treatment
- Advances in the interpersonal model: Depression *is* contagious
- How our feelings can misguide us when making decisions, leading to poor decisions that make depression worse
- The importance of experiential learning in treatment, especially well-designed hypnosis sessions
- The single factor which most influences how you gauge whether your relationship with someone is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, worthwhile or a waste of time – and how your awareness of it can ease major suffering
- The dynamics of employing good task assignments to catalyze progress
- The role of focusing strategies such as hypnosis in fostering emotional self-regulation skills
- How global thinking affects one's outlook and level of life skills
- Therapists as agents of reality: Errors in attributions
- Ambiguity as a major risk factor: Being clear about uncertainty
- Defining appropriate social targets of treatment <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- Illusions of helplessness and control <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- Hypnosis: Your focus shapes your experience, for better or worse <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- The importance of building automaticity into treatment
- Dynamics of delivering strategic hypnotic interventions, including metaphor <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> • Decision-making and stress generation

**Learning Objectives:** At the conclusion of the workshop, attendees will be able to:

- Describe the epidemiology of depression and relate the rising rates to social factors.
- Identify key cognitive and interpersonal patterns that cause and maintain depression.
- Develop specific active intervention strategies, especially hypnosis and task assignments, for <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>facilitating recovery.
- Understand the interface between individual and marital and family interventions in treating depression.
- Design structured homework assignments to build the multi-dimensional skills needed to recover and also reduce the risk of relapse.

## Schedule

(Please consider this schedule as a flexible one, allowing for questions and discussion as we go along)

### June 6

- 08:30-10:30 Biology and Psychology on a Collision Course  
Overselling Medications: What Psychotherapy Can Do Better  
Evolving an Active Treatment Framework  
Epidemiology as an Informant  
The Social Side of Depression: Depression *is* Contagious
- 10:30-10:45 Break
- 10:30-11:45 Why Use Hypnosis in Treating Depression?  
Patterns of Depression as Targets of Treatment  
Pattern Interruption in Hypnosis  
**Group hypnosis:** Redefining the Self
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch break
- 1:00- 2:45 Hypnosis as a Context for Experiential Learning  
**Video Demonstration:** *The Case of Mike: Building Resources*  
Analysis and Discussion of the Session
- 2:45 -3:00 Break
- 3:00-4:15 Ambiguity as a Depressive Risk Factor  
**Hypnosis Practice Session:** Hypnotically Tolerating Ambiguity  
Debriefing the Session
- 4:15- 4:30 Q & A; Closure
- 4:30 Adjourn

## June 7

- 9:00-10:30 Attributional Styles and Perception: Meaning and Mood  
Global Cognitive Style and Lack of Discrimination Skills  
**Video Clips:** The “How” Question and Identifying Experiential Deficits
- 10:30-10:45 Break
- 10:45-12:00 The Discriminating Therapist: The Stress Generation Model of Depression and Enhancing Decision Making Processes  
**Hypnosis Practice Session:** Enhancing Decision Making Hypnotically
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch Break
- 1:00 – 2:45 Perceptions of Controllability: Illusions of Helplessness and Control  
**Group Exercise:** Assessing Controllability  
Negative Expectancy and Apathy as Targets
- 2:45 -3:00 Break
- 3:00-4:15 **Hypnosis Practice Session:** Hypnotically Building Expectancy  
Debriefing the Session  
Learning to Think Preventively  
Summary
- 4:15-4:30 Q & A, Closure
- 4:30 Adjourn

## **A BIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF MICHAEL D. YAPKO, Ph.D.**

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and marriage and family therapist residing in Fallbrook, California. He is internationally recognized for his work in advancing clinical hypnosis and outcome-focused psychotherapy, routinely teaching to professional audiences all over the world. To date, he has been invited to present his ideas and methods to colleagues in more than 30 countries across six continents, and all over the United States. His workshops are well known for being practical as well as enjoyable.

Dr. Yapko has had a special interest for over four decades in the intricacies of brief therapy, and the clinical applications of hypnosis and directive methods, especially in the strategic treatment of depression. He is the author of 15 books and editor of three others, as well as numerous book chapters and articles on the subjects of hypnosis and the use of strategic psychotherapies. These include his widely used classic text, *Trancework: An Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis* (5th edition), the award-winning books *Treating Depression With Hypnosis: Integrating Cognitive-Behavioral and Strategic Approaches* (2001), *Hypnosis and Treating Depression: Applications in Clinical Practice* (2006), and *Mindfulness and Hypnosis: The Power of Suggestion to Transform Experience* (2012). He has also produced many CD and DVD programs. His works have been translated into nine languages. More information about Dr. Yapko's teaching schedule and publications can be found on his website: [www.yapko.com](http://www.yapko.com).

Dr. Yapko is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, a member of the International Society of Hypnosis, and a Fellow of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. He is a recipient of the American Psychological Association's Division 30 Award for *Distinguished Contributions to Professional Hypnosis* (2012), the *Pierre Janet Award for Clinical Excellence* from the International Society of Hypnosis (2003), a lifetime achievement award honoring his many contributions to the field of hypnosis, and *The Milton H. Erickson Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Psychotherapy* (2007).