



The Complete Guide to Anxiety & Effective Therapy – My approach



Pondering Elephants - Juliette Cockell

Skype/Zoom and In Clinic Appointments

Contact details – web sessions <https://www.ponderingelephants.com/contact-me/>

If you suffer from Anxiety you are not alone, 19% of adults in the UK suffer from it and these are only the ones being counted! (Statistics)

About Me

I am the founder of Pondering Elephants™, a therapy practice where I help clients overcome a variety of problems.

I trained with the internationally acclaimed Quest Institute. The teaching here is second to none and the training not only taught me concepts of hypnotherapy but how to be flexible and understand the reasoning behind why it can be so effective. This in depth studying allows me to create therapy to fit the client. I received a Diploma in Cognitive Hypnotherapy (DipCHyp) and am a certified NLP Master Practitioner.

I have used Cognitive Hypnotherapy to stop smoking, banish phobias, deal with depression, anxiety, grief and more recently to help me cut back on alcohol, whilst maintaining a great social life. Having had success in solving my own personal problems and having had great feedback from my client base, I am keen to share some of what I have learnt to help other people become 'go getters' and to find a way forward from what might seem a dead end in their life.

Introduction

In this information pack I discuss anxiety, how it may present itself, I talk about a few common diagnoses and labels that are given to explain the symptoms of different types of anxiety and provide you with some useful links to references & resources.

My primary aim is to help you find solutions to controlling your anxiety, I will give you some self-help techniques you can put in to practice right away.

I seek to cut through the minefield of Therapies available and to provide a simplified explanation of the Therapy concepts I find most useful, giving you an understanding of key ideas behind their approach and in what ways I find them to be helpful. If you like detail there's a lot to get your teeth into, but **if you like a short synopsis, there is a contents page to help you jump to the section you are interested in and I have highlighted the key parts in this colour.**

I hope also to give you a taster of some techniques I use as a Cognitive Hypnotherapist and the concepts behind what I do. Because this is what works best for me, I am happy to share some of my secrets so should you select this as the therapy of your choice you have some information to help you on your way.

I really hope you find the information both informative and helpful

Juliette Cockell

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So are you 'doing' Anxiety?

The important thing to remember, is that although Anxiety can seem life debilitating and frightening it can be transient and is one of the easiest mental health problems to treat. I like clients to believe that they may have 'done' Anxiety in the past and may still be 'doing' it now because if you are 'doing' anxiety we can work with this. If you can 'do' anxiousness it stands to reason that you can 'undo' it, so it's better to see it as something you don't have to put up with. There is help out there and a lot can be done.

Is it Genetic?

Many people believe they have a predisposition for anxiety, they may perceive it as running in the family yet there seems no way of proving that anxiety is genetic for an individual, or even generally in the population. If you search for evidence of this you will find study's that suggest it is and study's that say it isn't. Bruce Lipton, a Cellular Biologist on his Youtube video (The Biology of Belief) explains why he believes you cannot be a victim of your genes because when you remove the nucleus (containing the genes) from a cell, the cell continues to function as normal. Cells are however effected by your environment. If you have felt a victim of your genes, please believe there are ways you can treat anxiety, I hope this document will help you find a way forward.

Causes of Anxiety

There are as many causes of anxiety as humans on the planet, because often anxiety stems from incidents that have happened to you in your life and the meaning you subconsciously drew from them. You may have been influenced by people around you, e.g. if you have a socially fearful parent, or they were scared of spiders you may learn this behavior as 'normal' from an early age. Common causes of anxiety are included in the list below but they are by no means exhaustive:

- Poor work/ life balance
- Bullying
- Illness/chronic pain
- Disability
- Exams
- Unconfidence & limiting beliefs
- Diet, weight gain and weight loss
- Exhaustion/Stress
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Medication and side effects

- Money problems
- Housing problems
- Relationships
- Phobias and fears
- Grief

So what are the symptoms of anxiety?

There are so many symptoms of anxiety and I am sure that many are unique to the individual however if you are looking for a confirmation that there are others like you with similar symptoms here are a few.

Symptoms can be numerous, physical and psychological

- Hot sweats
- A rise in blood pressure
- Headaches
- Skin disorder
- Rapid, irregular breathing
- Feeling judged by others
- Insomnia
- Memory Loss/brain fog
- Panic-attacks and fear of panic attacks
- Over/under-eating
- Feeling Depressed
- Panic attack
- Flushing
- Feeling Sick
- Muscle tension
- Chest Pain, irregular heart beat
- Pins and needles
- Constant negative thinking and self-berating
- Lack of concentration
- Dizziness
- Over-thinking
- Feeling on edge
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Feeling numb

Anxiety Diagnoses

Whilst I don't use diagnostic labels to identify a client (e.g. I don't believe you can be a depressive, just that you might be able to 'do' depression). I appreciate that some people do value them. Some people use them to explain to others what they are experiencing, others use a diagnosis to identify with a group of fellow sufferers. A label can be used universally across Medical Professionals to help communicate a generalised concept of a problem. However, often the mind interprets labels and diagnoses as fact and immovable. As a therapist, therefore, I often look at whether a diagnosis is helping a client move forward and if it isn't, reframe it so they can.

I have included some links for quick and free diagnoses questionnaires. This is because some people feel they are necessary as other therapies such as CBT use them as a bench mark. However within my practice I tend not to use them as clients may either feel there is nowhere to go if they do not fit a specific label or feel hemmed in by the labels the questionnaires give them. However if you are able to take them without living your life by them they may prove useful to track progress before and after therapy. But please be mindful that **the diagnoses is moveable and only indicative of how you might be feeling or behaving at the moment you take them.**

Diagnosis you may have come across are as follows:

OCD Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

You may be given a diagnoses of OCD if you suffer from unwanted thoughts, compulsions, urges or desires that can often seem persistent. You may partake in repeated behavior patterns that seem irrational.

- Free OCD test <https://www.ponderingelephants.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Pondering-Elephants-OCD-Quiz.pdf>

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

As it says on the tin, this is generalised anxiety and covers a broad spectrum of symptoms and causes, some may be specific to you. If you have experienced feeling fearful or anxious for some time but have no obvious cause it is likely that this could represent the type of anxiety you are experiencing. Hypnotherapy can be very effective with this as it helps treats the unconscious thoughts that may be working in the background.

- Free Anxiety GAD 7 test <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/anxiety-test/>

Panic Disorder

If you suffer from Panic Attacks and you can't fathom what triggers them, this may lead to a fear of further attacks. Not knowing the trigger means that a person suffering from this disorder finds it difficult to avoid situations that might lead to an attack, but try they often still do, which leads to an excessive curtailment in their quality of life. The fear of having a panic attack may also trigger an attack, causing clients to perceive an endless viscous circle within their problem.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

This often occurs after a traumatic event and can lead to people feeling like they are reliving the event, often time and time again. Flashbacks and nightmares are not uncommon. In conjunction with Cognitive Hypnotherapy I have found that many clients experiencing PTSD have felt EFT distraction and calming tapping techniques were incredibly useful with this disorder. This involves tapping on the same acupressure points used in acupuncture. There are some that see this as a pseudo-science and others that see it as empirically evidenced (www.eftuniverse.com, n.d.) As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist, I have found that this does seem to have a positive effect and so it is another tool I use on occasion.

[Free Post-Traumatic Stress disorder test \(link\)](#)

Phobias

Everyone else's phobia seems funny except for yours, having suffered from Arachnophobia (fear of spiders) I can testify to that. I have fully experienced the intensity of the feelings of fear, for a creature that was of absolutely no threat to me. I would hyperventilate, scream, swear, shake and shudder, avoid rooms for weeks. Fortunately I now love spiders as they show me the progress I have made in my own therapy. **Feelings associated with phobias are intense and usually related to specific circumstances, creatures or things.**

Panic Attacks

Panic attacks feel like you are being hijacked by your emotions, your subconscious leads you to react fearfully to specific situations and circumstances, sometimes you may have an idea of the cause and sometimes it can seem to come from no-where. Your body's usual reaction to stress can be exaggerated and it can come across in a rapid wave of sensation. **Physical symptoms such as heart palpitations, chest pain, feeling faint, hyperventilating, feeling numb are not uncommon.** Some people whilst experiencing a panic attack literally feel like they are going to die. Feeling this extent of fear in a public place, leads many people to feel they are being judged by people who do not understand their problem. This in turn may lead to social anxiety.

Many people may not realise that panic attacks can also come at night, this can lead to problems of insomnia. If the subconscious is processing anxious thoughts while you sleep it can see any change in your body as a reason to trigger a fight, flight or freeze response, waking you up to cope with imminent danger. This can be really frightening for those who experience this as they can awake in this high state of anxiety and feel unable to go back to sleep or to understand what has caused the attack.

Panic attacks usually come on very quickly and last about ten minutes or so, but some can last up to an hour, this is usually due to repeated attacks. It's different for each individual as is their frequency. Some people experience symptoms several times a week, some monthly and others only when a set of circumstances occur.

Many people with Anxiety suffer in silence using coping strategies which require less effort to provide short-term alleviation of their problems, whether it be from drug, alcohol abuse, throwing themselves into their work or feeding an addiction. (Ovenden, 2018)

Personally I still enjoy my local pub on a Friday night, but I have now quit smoking and have a laugh most times alcohol free. I still can't believe I can say that! I am certainly not holier than thou and can therefore fully appreciate how these props seem fun and enjoyable in the short term, however 'Party Pooper Alert'

unfortunately they don't address the root cause of anxiety and depression. Drugs and alcohol can dull the brain's ability to rationalize when an anxiety causing situation arises and often the very thing that is used to relax us ends up doing more harm than good, but I guess deep down you really knew that, didn't you?

Learning from the Past & the subconscious

Anxiety arrives when the body's subconscious recognises what it perceives as a fear, it looks for a past event it deems similar and reacts in a way it believes was helpful in the past. So if as a child you were made to stand up in class and was made an 'example of', this could manifest as a fear of 'giving presentations' in later life. In therapy, therefore it may be useful to re-frame the meaning of a past event to something more positive, particularly if it is being used by the subconscious as a spring board for current unhelpful behavior and limiting beliefs. Often with the use of hypnosis past events can pop up that are connected but were unseen by the client as being of importance. This can be really helpful with anxiety attacks when the trigger is unrecognised.

Although the subconscious has the best of intentions at heart it can make mistakes in its understanding, it responds to emotion and initiates a fight, flight or freeze response, and literally switches off the rational mind by diverting blood away from the brain and into the extremities. This makes the person ready to freeze, run or fight but it also prevents them from being able to think straight. After all if you took time to contemplate what to do if a tiger was running at you, you may well not survive the encounter.

Unfortunately the subconscious responds to emotions and does not know the cause, so a fear of being judged may seem just like a tiger running at you as far as it is concerned. This is what causes what appears to be outwardly bizarre reactions when we feel anxious.

Under the influence of drugs or alcohol this is a double whammy for the logical brain facing a challenging situation. Though drugs and alcohol can help a person initially unwind, (many including alcohol being depressants and having a sedative effect,) they can also increase anxiety within just a few hours of consumption. Dealing with blood-drain simultaneously to dealing with the processing of a substance, the rational mind has little hope of being able to steer away from an anxious situation. The memory may also be effected, causing an internal dialogue to keep ruminating looking for solutions, whilst forgetting the ones it already found, causing burn out and a feeling of hopelessness.

(Centers.Org, n.d.)

Ways to help self-manage anxiety and panic attacks

Change your behavior - in bite size chunks

Trying to avoid what causes an attack, is the biggest indication that the problem is being allowed to grow. This may seem the hardest thing to face but breaking out of this cycle is really important – so how do you do this? The subconscious does not like big changes and so examining 'what would be a big but achievable challenge' for you now, is what you can work on. If it causes you butterfly's but you think you can just about do it, that's the challenge to go for – When you have chosen a challenge tell someone you trust what this thing is – write it down in this format and give it to them.

'I am going to.....because I said I would'

There is a far greater success rate relating to promises you have written down and given to someone – use that fear of being judged to work for you.

Now do that thing and you might find that in doing something you once believed you would never do, begins to shift your concept of what you are capable of. Keep adding to these things, try growing them a little in the escalation of fear if you can, but try not to choose anything that you will definitely not do. If you don't do the thing you promised – no worries chunk down to something more manageable and keep that promise for a later date.

If you make changes in your behavior, this can lead to sending your brain new messages about your capabilities. Also a change in behavior may help you negate a trigger, for example, when people are anxious they often get a dry mouth. When you get a dry mouth this in turn may alert your body that you are anxious, therefore always have a bottle of water with you and drink regularly to avoid this happening.

(For an explanation of why a change in behavior works refer to the section on Neurological Levels page 14)

Journaling

Keep a journal by your bed, write down any negative thoughts so your mind does not have to ruminate on this whilst sleeping. Write down any triggers you noticed.

If you like bedside reading I recommend reading 'the obstacle is the way' by Ryan Holiday and other self-help books that leave you with positive thoughts to ruminate on.

Practice turning your negative thoughts into cartoon characters, welcome them in, honor them and try detaching yourself from them by talking to them as if they were someone else.

E.g. Mr Palpitation might be red and hot, picture cooling him down and saying to him,

'Hi there it's you again Mr Palpitation, welcome come and sit down on this block of ice'

Yes I know you now think I have lost the plot completely but try it, no one else need know! This process helps you remember which reoccurring worries are troubling you whilst keeping emotions at arm's length. You may like to draw pictures of your mind monsters in your journal which may further help you see them as outside of yourself. For further information on this I recommend 'The sleep book by Dr Guy Meadows – founder of the Sleep School.

Write down any successes in coping with your anxiety, or take pictures on your phone for reminders of things you did that you knew were a stretch.

Journal three gifts – Make a commitment to write three gifts in your journal every night. These are things of beauty, things that made you happy in the day. This will start priming your mind to look for things in your environment that trigger relaxation and happiness, our brains can only hold a certain amount of information so fill it up with as many positives as you can to expel the negatives.

Practice Relaxation

Relaxation and meditation is easy isn't it? After all what's hard about lying down and doing nothing. Well doing nothing is one thing but thinking about nothing is quite another. Learning to think about nothing takes time and effort, it is like building a muscle, get practiced at this and eventually you will learn to switch it on when you need it. Try and recognise thoughts as things you can chuck away, or characterise. I can't express how useful this has been in my life but it takes commitment and practice.

Breathing

Use the 7/11 breathing technique and practice this daily for five minutes along with your relaxation practice so that you can use it when you need it. Often the old breathing in a paper bag routine for anxiety makes people feel more self-conscious. It's a simple technique just breathe in for the count of 7 and out for a count of 11. Breathe from your stomach or diaphragm and if you can through your nose. This works because when we breathe in we get energised and when we breathe out we relax, that's why many people in an anxious state often tend to hyperventilate ramping up the energy to flee the scene or stand up and fight. Counting the breaths also allows the mind to focus on something else. Changing our behavior away from flight, fight or freeze can also allow blood to return to the brain and enable rational thinking to return. Altogether a simple but great technique.

Change your focus

I have heard that some people find focusing in on the detail of something useful, like a relaxing picture or something in nature. However a wide focus has also been found to be useful in the eradication of pain. If you cut your knee and someone is stitching it, your focus would zoom in on to your knee, your subconscious does this in protection- asking you to pay attention to it. **Widening and using your peripheral vision dissipates the concentration in a particular area**, it may feel counter intuitive but it is worth experimenting with. Finding out what works for you will also give you something else to think about.

Project love

If you are feeling anxious around people, look at all of them and project a feeling of love to them, irrespective of their thoughts and judgements they are fragile humans too. Often when you do this people will notice a light in your eyes and it is harder to feel judged when you are their feeling their protector.

Using Music/radio

I have found when my mind races its useful to have the radio on. Also having a play list of relaxing, happy music is enjoyable to put together and a great instant on the move go to, should an anxious situation occur.

(In Therapy, I have other techniques that require demonstration which can be used to help reduce anxiety)

Eat well

I do not profess to be a dietician, however I have found the following tips to be useful.

Excessive sugar, caffeine, alcohol – can cause rushes that can feel like the onset of anxiousness and in turn instigate a flight, fight or freeze response.

Unfortunately these are all those comfort foods many of us crave to feed our emotions. To avoid obsessive over-eating go shopping after you have eaten or internet shop. When you eat focus on the following:

Do I feel

1. Absolutely starving – like I would collapse if I don't eat something straight away
2. **Hungry – Tummy rumbling, feel on empty but not starving**
3. Do I feel neutral, neither hungry or full
4. **Do I feel satisfied, I have eaten just enough**
5. Do I feel uncomfortably full
6. Do I feel ill – (usually like you might feel after Xmas dinner)

Aim to start recognising these feelings and to eat when you are on a 2. If you eat at no 2 than you should not experience 1. Which only happens if you have left it too long. Stop eating when you are experiencing number 4. If you think you are still hungry after eating, leave it 20mins before you eat again and drink some water (visit this video by Deedpack Chopra who discusses a variation of this (Deepak Chopra)) avoid over filling yourself.

Use a small plate and leave food on your plate so that your subconscious gets used to not obsessing about waste. Put your knife and fork down between each mouthful, get your hands used to doing this and this will eventually seem natural and help your mind to really process what you have eaten and give you a longer experience of eating.

Think of your treats as puddings and allow yourself up to 3 a day with your meals, Chances are after you have eaten they won't seem quite so attractive but if you still want them go ahead. If you can half them and save some for the next meal do, but if not just enjoy it. I tend not to bulk buy puddings for the week so I have to make an effort on the day to get them if I want them. I have them alongside well thought out recipes that are healthy and that I enjoy.

Think of this as an exercise in enhancing your self-regulations skills not as giving anything up. Building self-regulation skills can give you confidence to make other changes in your life and is a growth mindset

If you are not hungry skip a meal, (unless this happens regularly and then you should seek further advice from your GP). Do not skip a meal if you are hungry as this may exacerbate anxiety, however if you always eat when you are hungry, skipping a meal, I think is fine because you are not firing on empty.

With diets often the moment you stop them your subconscious recognises a time of famine is over and makes you seek all the foods you had stopped, storing up energy for the next time you decide to diet. Often people who lose weight through a diet put it all back on and some, because they have made too big a change over too short a time. Try not being so strict on yourself. Reassure your subconscious that you promise you will provide your body with food when you are hungry and then you can eat what you enjoy. Again bite size changes may help you make better more sustainable changes in the long run.

If you break this pattern reassure yourself that an occasional step back is normal and often necessary to give you the momentum you need to propelle you forward. This is not a diet, just a way of minimizing impulsive,

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emotional eating. There is no need to tell yourself off if things go by the wayside, so long as you get back on track and don't binge eat after each slip up.

Journal dietary achievements so you can recognise progress in your self-regulation skills. **List good recipes** you have enjoyed so you can remember them.

Experiment and find non-alcoholic drinks that you like, but not poor substitutes, if they are going to replace alcohol they will need to be good. My favorites are non-alcoholic lager and Robinsons crushed lime and mint cordial (not too high in sugar compared to others) with sparkling water and a sprig of fresh mint. I also like a Bloody Mary without the vodka, but find what works best for you. **If stopping alcohol altogether to too far a stretch, try replacing the odd drink or alternate drinks, remember one step at a time is good.**

Keep some caffeine free alternatives to tea and coffee.

Although, I am not a Dietitian, I have had success helping clients with impulsive eating. The above recommendations are based on some simple changes I have found useful.

Get some blue sky thinking

Within colour therapy the colour blue is associated with 'thinking' and 'creativity'. A good walk, run or picnic under a blue sky may help. I find swimming helps me manage negative thoughts. Physical exercise may also dissipate your reserves of energy and give you space to think rationally.

Get Therapy

Talking can be great for getting things off your chest, but I would advise doing this with a Therapist of your choice. As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist, I believe that just talking with friends who do not share the same experience of anxiety may lead to pouring hot oil on the problem, this is because when a memory is recalled it becomes changeable, adding 'poor you' comments can make the problem bigger when it is filed away. I call this ability for your memories to be altered your 'Memoragination' and if you have every experienced two people having different recollections of the same event, that's what's going on.

Friends and family sympathise out of love and although it's reassuring to have people who care, and always great to know you are loved, talking to friends is not the same as talking to a therapist who can reframe the meaning of these memories. Trained Cognitive Hypnotherapists can enable you to get thoughts off your chest in a safe environment. Fundamentally it is important that you choose the therapist right for you, talk to them about reframing problems and see if they can do this, you may need more than a sympathetic ear. Have a chat with your prospective therapist first to get a feel as to whether you may be able to relax in their company.

Be aware of disempowering language

Our Language is highly metaphorical and littered with descriptions that can subconsciously effect the way we feel about experiences we have in the outside world. We are bombarded with it daily without realizing. For an example of what I mean I recommend reading the following two paragraphs and assessing which sounds more severe to you?

Paragraph 1)

'Panic **attacks hijack** your emotions, your subconscious **makes** you react fearfully to specific situations and circumstances, sometimes you may have an idea of the **trigger** and sometimes it can seem to come from no-where. A **normal** reaction to stress can be exaggerated and it can come across in a rapid wave of sensation.'

Paragraph 2)

'**Heightened** stress episodes may feel like a sudden **rising** of emotions, your subconscious **tells** you to respond fearfully to specific situations and circumstances. Sometimes you may have an idea of what started the episode and sometimes it can **seem** to come from no-where. Your body's **usual** lower level of stress may be heightened in a rapid wave of sensation '

The first paragraph is littered with language that heightens the emotion behind the words. The words '**attacks**', '**hijacked**', '**makes**' may leave the subconscious to feel disempowered, these are words that take power away. The word '**normal**' in this context indicates a comparison to other people, not very useful for people who fear being judged.

The second paragraph uses different words and phrases to get across the same message, the words '**Heightened**', '**rising**', indicates a movement. If a movement happens in one direction it is plausible to the subconscious that it can move in another. If something '**tells**' you something rather than '**makes**' you, you have the opportunity to decide. The word '**seem**' lets you know there are other options out there and using the phrase **your body's usual** lower level, negates a comparison with other people.

As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist I have advanced skills in recognising language patterns, but above is basic level observation you might like to use yourself.

Of course highly emotive language is unavoidable in the big wide world and it does not seem usual to speak in less powerful terms, this is because we all love a metaphor, and colourful language helps the reader to enjoy the process of reading and is more memorable. The trick is to recognise it for what it is and don't let it disempower you. *When you are talking to others about your problem notice the language you use and see if you can change it to help yourself.*

Anxious about therapy?

For those who feel therapy can help, the mind field of which therapy to choose is enough to cause most people suffering from stress and anxiety more of the same. *I therefore aim to outline some of the therapies out there, the ones that I find useful, if not wholly but in part and to explain the theory behind their processes.*

Many therapies have long waiting lists, some websites recommend them, and others do not. Even CBT in which the NHS has invested resources, has had its effectiveness over the long term questioned. (Bulletin). Many therapies referred to by the NHS have to jump through so many hoops in order to gain funding, this hoop jumping may restrict the effectiveness of the therapy. For example in proving the effectiveness of CBT one patient may have several therapists, helping the NHS collate statistics about the effectiveness of CBT. However, in doing this, the therapeutic alliance between the client and the therapist may be lost. Hopefully in therapy

patterns of behavior, emotions and thoughts are recognized by the therapist which point to the use of a particular therapy. Private practice has the freedom to use new therapies as they appear relevant.

We are all so different and our minds so complex that in my experience the best therapy needs to be dynamic, not held back by onerous regulation, constantly self-reflective and consistently on the search for what's new out there. Therapy needs to be relevant to what is experienced in the world in the here and now. So long as the principle 'first do no harm' is clearly followed I am always happy to discover new therapies that are safe, plausible and appear to work. This also helps Therapists to find connections across therapeutic practice which can help procure understandings of why things work. This in turn may lead to the formation of new therapeutic methods.

The subconscious responds to things it believes are plausible, so use therapies that make sense to you, for me I like techniques that have an explanation as to 'why' they work, to me this makes more sense. Other people are prepared to try anything and see if it works and for them and it often does. Speak to your therapist and ask questions to get a feel for what they offer and whether it is in line with what you want and feel will work for you.

Many Therapists out of the referral system of the NHS are governed by other bodies such as the Complimentary and Natural Health Care Council (CNHC), of which Cognitive Hypnotherapists are one, this allows a client assurance that qualifications have been obtained, Practitioners are adequately supervised, follow a strict code of ethics and are committed to Career Professional Development. **When choosing a good therapist, It is advisable to always check what regulation bodies a Practitioner is a member of.** Most regulatory bodies will have their own directories for locating a therapist in your area.

As individuals which therapy works for one may not suit another. Search online 'therapy reviews' and it soon becomes clear that some people swear by 'this' and others by 'that' and the confusion doesn't stop there, you may well go to therapy to find a fix to your problem only to find that the therapy on offer seems to require a lifetime commitment to paid sessions. Who wants and can afford that? If you have to keep going for therapy, it begs the question is it really working?

With Cognitive Hypnotherapy, I can give you techniques you can take home with you, that way if further issues come to light, you can choose to work on your own or come back to see me – My primary aim is to hand you the tools so that you don't need therapy.

If you are interested in Cognitive Hypnotherapy this is an evidence based approach. The Mental Health Review Journal published research on the effectiveness of this therapy

Stating that,

'using 118 cases measuring the effectiveness of Cognitive Hypnotherapy for the treatment of depression and anxiety, 71% considered themselves recovered after an average of 4 sessions. This compared to an average of 42% for other approaches using the same measures (like CBT).' (Menht)

Useful Therapies - A breakdown of Therapies I find to be useful

Gestalt Therapy – Focuses on the here and now and although recognises that we identify ourselves through a web of relationships with others, does not focus on dwelling on the past or anxiously worrying about future events. Gestalt Therapists may observe why a particular memory arises at a particular time and what relationship this has to the here and now. Within Cognitive Hypnotherapy I use practical Gestalt techniques to help reframe past events that the subconscious uses to make unhelpful choices. (Latner, 2000)

Cognitive theory

Is based on the idea that thoughts determine actions and are the cornerstone to personality building and the situations people ultimately find themselves in. In opposition to this, **Behavioural Theorists** believe that the physical environment is instrumental to behavior. Some Psychologists have merged these two concepts into **Cognitive-Behavioural Theory**.

Neurological Levels

Within Cognitive Hypnotherapy I see an interrelation between these concepts and take it a step further. The first step refers to the model of Neurological Levels described by Robert Dilts based on the work of Gregory Bateson pg172-173 (Silvester) below Fig 1. Fig 2. demonstrates other movements, and I have witnessed how effective it can be making a change at one level, to instigate a change to the rest. (Silvester)

Let me explain

Fig 1. Neurological Levels Model

Environment → Behaviour → capabilities, → beliefs → identity

This model (Fig 1.) demonstrates how a stimulus in our **environment** causes us to react and instigates a **behavior**. We then assess how good that response was and make a judgment about our **capability** to deal with similar situations. The more similar situations we encounter, the more ingrained our belief becomes in our capability to deal with them. Ultimately this may lead to an impression we have of our **identity** and sometimes the manifestation of limiting beliefs about the type of people we think we 'are'.

Fig 2. Neurological Levels Model – Not a one way street

Environment ↔ Behaviour ↔ capabilities, ↔ beliefs ↔ identity

However, as noted previously this is not a one way street, e.g. if I encourage a client to do something differently in a situation e.g. alter their **behaviour**, this may affect how others see them and then alter the **environment** they find themselves in. If for instance a person gives in to bullies, suddenly stops and refuses to be bullied (**a change in behavior**), this may alter how people in their **environment** perceive and ultimately respond to them, this in turn may make the once victim, feel more **capable** and have a stronger **belief** in themselves, thus altering their **identity**.

(NB this is just a scenario to explain how one change in a neurological level may alter another one)

The main idea behind cognitive theory is that an individual becomes what he 'thinks' and so their identity can be remolded through bringing thoughts to light. A way to bring these thoughts to light is through the use of meditation. Similarly Cognitive Hypnotherapy uses relaxation and the promotion of a trance state, which for all intense and purposes is a form of meditation, to help the logical mind step out of the way and let thoughts and emotions that may be hidden unconsciously, come to light if they are relevant to the problem being addressed.

'Mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety have been shown to be responsive to cognitive forms of therapy. Some experts agree that cognitive therapy is a more effective treatment method than antidepressants alone.'

(What is Cognitive Theory, n.d.)

CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)

CBT focuses on how our 'thoughts effect the way we feel,' As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist, I see this slightly differently and believe that our 'emotions' effect our 'thoughts'. The flight, fight and freeze response of the subconscious demonstrates this concept perfectly. When the subconscious deems a situation a threat, it can cause people to act on 'emotion' causing them to behave 'irrationally'. The mind often can't make sense of the behavior because, the body has reacted before it gets the chance to 'think', therefore I believe the 'emotion' must be the trigger and not the 'thought'. However I do subscribe to the CBT concept that people live in different 'realities' meaning that two people experiencing the same event can have very different interpretations of an event. This is why I work in the client's model of the world and is a process I find useful in therapy.

CBT therapy sees the meanings given to a situation as being instrumental in how we feel and behave and not the situation itself, as a Cognitive Hypnotherapist I agree and this allows me to give agency to my clients, in that they are capable of changing how they feel about a situation and don't need to avoid the situation itself, this is one of the reasons why Cognitive Hypnotherapy helps so many people who suffer with anxiety.

(AnxietyCanada.com, n.d.)

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology grew almost as a backlash against previous Psychological practices that depicted the mind as fragile, easily breakable and focused on ill health and not good health. Positive Psychology turns this on its head and focuses on how to find happiness. Positive Psychology may not work for everyone, e.g. daily affirmations for a defensive pessimist may be a step too far, however some positive psychological suggestions such as journaling three gifts in your life today, can help people focus on where they can find happiness in their lives and how to search for it. Small actions like this can be a great help for people suffering from anxiety and depression. Positive Psychology has a feel good factor and can help people feel calm and relaxed, which in my book is usually a wonderfully beneficial thing.

Cognitive Hypnotherapists generally hope to steer people away from labelling themselves as 'being' an illness, indicated by statements such as 'I am a Depressive' as this is an immovable place to house your mental health. Some people may feel relieved and at home with a diagnoses, believing it helps them to not feel 'alone' and

isolated. Some may find it a useful term of expression, however as a Cognitive Hypnotherapist with my Positive Psychologist hat on, I question whether my clients 'labels' are curtailing the opportunities open to them. I question whether a focus on what they can do might not be more useful than what their diagnoses indicates they can't.

(www.psychologytoday.com, n.d.)

(tinybuddha.com, n.d.)

Hypnotherapy

As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist I find that some clients are initially anxious about the Hypnotherapy element in Cognitive Hypnotherapy, but they really don't need to be. Hypnotherapy has been given a bad name, through many myths and its association with stage Hypnotism, which is a completely different profession.

Stage Hypnotists may give the impression that they can control people's minds because it serves their purpose as a form of illusionary magic. If they could really control minds they would be the most powerful and sought after people on the planet. Stage Hypnotists only demonstrate with people who are happy to be chosen and have an expectation that they will be asked to do strange things. The subjects have given consent for something bizarre to happen not only on paper but in their mind. The unconscious is therefore primed and ready to accept the most ludicrous of suggestions. The unconscious ultimately has to agree to suggestions made for it.

Hypnotherapist, uses trance for purely therapeutic purposes, the unconscious would easily recognise out of context demands from a therapist and if not congruent with therapy would not find the request plausible. Just because you can let your mind go on a flight of fancy it doesn't mean it has to. Rest assured the subconscious will only take on suggestions it believes makes good sense and has your best interests at heart.

There are many different type of Hypnotherapists out in the market place, unfortunately some with very little training. Some do not tailor their scripts to the individual and may not be trained in other therapies. Some purchase a one-size-fits all set of scripts, so if you want to give up smoking they read you the stop smoking script, etc, etc. As a Cognitive Hypnotherapists and a Master NLP Practitioner, I have the ability to 'Word Weave™' using your own language patterns to help your subconscious welcome the changes you want to make. Being well trained in other therapies I simply use hypnotherapy as a facilitator to help therapy work at a deeper level.

Once their fears have been alleviated most clients see Hypnotherapy as the most pleasurable part of our sessions, it feels much like when you wake up in the morning but have not yet opened your eyes. Under hypnosis you can choose to open your eyes at any time if you want to. Most people love the feeling of letting their mind drift over positive suggestions and choose to include Hypnotherapy in to their sessions.

The usefulness of Hypnotherapy is largely undocumented because there is such a variety of Hypnotherapists. This means that results calibrated across the board would be like comparing apples and oranges. Cognitive Hypnotherapists are actively bucking this trend, however, collaborating to analyse the efficacy of our results and we are now really proud to be able to say our approach is 'evidence based' (Journal)

For further information on what to expect in Hypnotherapy, I recommend this article on the myths of hypnosis.

(hypnosistrainingacademy.com, n.d.)

Cognitive Hypnotherapy a one-stop-shop of therapy

With Cognitive Hypnotherapy I offer a one-stop-shop for you to try a variety of therapies. I have many tools in my therapy toolkit and am constantly training and adding to them. I take the cream of techniques from Gestalt, CBT, Positive Psychology, Cognitive Theory and Hypnosis and an array of other therapies and concepts, this means that there is a good chance that I will find something that will work for you. In collaboration we work together using a variety of techniques, eliminate the ones that don't work for you and use more of the ones that do. As we are all individuals with unique life experiences, I aim, with this flexibility, to tailor your sessions to you so that you no longer need therapy.

Concerned about Overthinking and Raking up the Past – My Journey to Cognitive Hypnotherapy

As a young adult I went through a period of depression and anxiety, I went to see a Counsellor but came out more confused than ever with a stack of new, past problems to consider. I tried to view them as a precursor for my problem but just couldn't find the connection. Some of the recommendations made to me were a totally curved ball and I now know to be of absolutely no relevance. I never once experience an 'a ha!' moment, this, I now believe, was because the Therapist I saw, was working from their own model of the world and not mine. Suffice to say for me at that time, as an active over-thinker, I found this a nightmare and it was years later, whilst travelling, that I found relaxation and meditation helped me see the wood for the trees. It helped me filter out which thoughts and problems were peripheral and which were the 'biggies' that needed my energy. Through this experience I found out that relaxation would be an essential element to therapy, beneficial to me. Personally I find switching thoughts off and detaching from them as useful as switching them on.

'A group who received Meditation showed a significant reduction in their levels of state and of trait anxiety compared to both controls (those who received no intervention) and to the group that listened to Mozart.'
(meditationresearch.co.uk, n.d.)

Eventually after much research, I came across Cognitive Hypnotherapy which combines talking therapies, physical techniques and relaxation/meditation through hypnotherapy, it provided reasoning behind why meditation was so useful to me, focused on my solution state and not problems and made perfect sense to me. I have not looked back and still find it incredibly useful in my day-to-day life and am learning all the time.

As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist, In a client's first history take session, I seek to understand the context, structure and process of a problem, i.e. in what circumstances does the problem happen or does not happen, is there anything about the exceptions we can use, what is the way 'you' describe the problem and how do 'you' behave when doing it. I may ask questions that lead 'you' to find alternative ways of thinking, by using suggestions plausible to 'you'. Together we discuss positive thoughts to give the subconscious something to cling to when negative thoughts are moved out of the spotlight. This may initially lead to more thinking but these thoughts are there to help the client quickly have an answer to negative self-talk and not to provide them with more unsolved problems to think about.

When retrieving a memory it becomes moldable, I do not rake up any past hurts or anxieties unless I believe I can change them to something positive and if they seem relevant to what is being discussed, this is only done with the client's permission at the time. If a client does not wish to discuss a past event with me, we can still work on an issue through a process of secret therapy which works on the emotion attached to it. It does not involve the client having to divulge the memory at all if they don't want to. Working on an emotion attached to a problem also means that you must be dealing with the right problem.

Concerned about moving too quickly

As a Cognitive Hypnotherapist who has suffered anxiety in the past, I appreciate how frightening moving forward can seem. The subconscious does not want you to change your behavior and so will always throw obstacles in the way of getting therapy. As far as it is concerned in making you shy away from difficult situations, or else instigating fight, flight or freeze responses, it has done very well in keeping you from experiencing situations it fears. However in doing so it may also have limited your life and altered your perception of what you really are capable of.

Overcoming obstacles is so necessary as it is how we learn to grow but stretching in bite size chunks and building on regular improvements is the way to gently alter your ways without your subconscious putting up barriers.

With Cognitive Hypnotherapy we move at your pace, and you tell me when you feel ready to be free of therapy.

If you want to know more please contact me on <https://www.ponderingelephants.com/contact-me/>

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