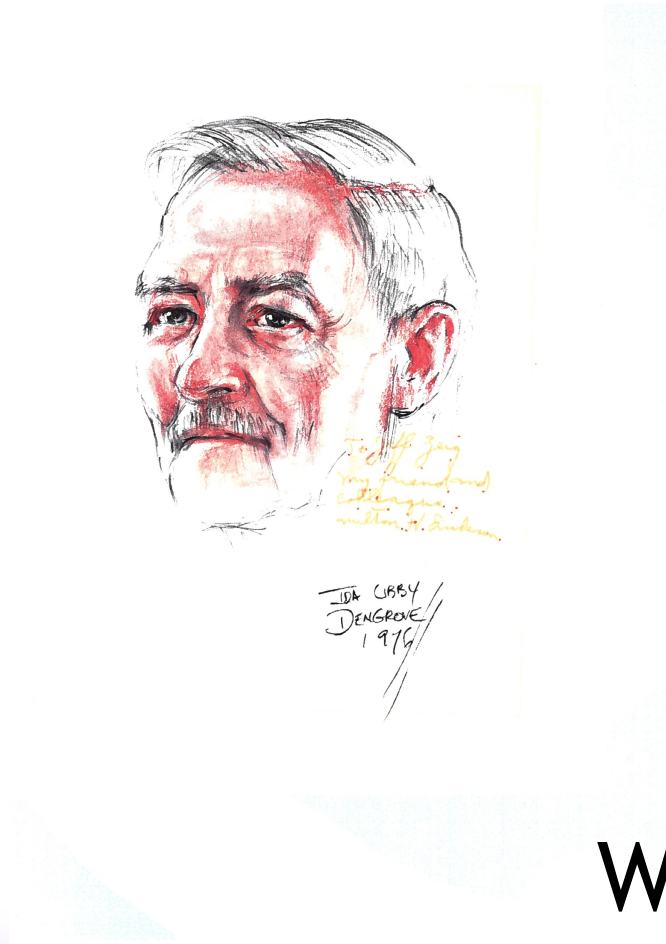


Dedicated to:



With great appreciation

Hypnosis to Elicit Post Traumatic Growth: Live the Present, Learn from the Past, and Project the Future

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**Past President of the
European Society of Hypnosis**

VIRGINIA SATIR (1916-1988)



Life is not what it should be.
It is what it is.
The way you can make it
is what makes the difference.

Confucius (551 BC- 479 BC)

**WE HAVE TWO LIVES, AND THE SECOND
BEGINS WHEN WE REALIZE WE ONLY
HAVE ONE.**

Confucius
QUOTEAMBITION.COM



Pierre Janet (1859-1947)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is the disease of not being able to feel fully alive in the present



Traumatic Memories

When a subject lives a trauma the brain goes into hyper arousal and dominates mental life

Lack of attunement with the caregiver predisposes to having difficulties in managing negative emotions

Traumatic memories are disorganised and dissociated

(Stephen W. Porges. *The polyvagal theory*)

Post Traumatic Growth

Post traumatic growth highlights subjects' resilience and their positive change after the trauma

Positive change is based on the recognition that the subject has learned something that was not known before

A greater awareness is gained after the trauma as an improvement

What do we Improve?

Improvements of Post Traumatic Growth

Personal and social resources are developed: some relationships are deepened, others are broken; interdependence with others is recognised

New skills are developed and / or learned

New meanings are attributed to the world

New priorities are given, new goals are created

More attention is paid to spiritual awakening and / or connection with something bigger and more important

Hypnosis Centered on PTG

Hypnosis helps traumatised subject to:

Cope with “negative” emotions

Diminish suffering with evolutive emotions

Find meaning and the teaching lesson of pain

Transform adversity into a challenge and potential development

Be stronger than despair

Pain triggers a challenge that shapes and strengthens the character.

Hypnosis Centered on PTG

When the therapist meets the subject s/he lives in his/her **present**

The trauma happened in the **past**, in another time
and in another place

Therapist treats the subject who suffered the trauma,
(not the trauma) and help him/her to go toward his/her **future**

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The Polyvagal Theory

Stephen W. Porges



The sense of social connection that defines trusting relationships responds to a biological imperative

Security is defined by feeling safe, not by removing the threat

In order to support health, growth and to recover subject's energies, it is necessary to activate social involvement system and to give security.

Stephan W. Porges. *The polyvagal Theory*)

The Polyvagal Theory

When we feel scared and unloved, the brain specializes in managing feelings of fear and abandonment

When we feel loved, connected and safe, the brain specializes in exploration, play and cooperation

It is important that subjects learn to bear what is happening within themselves to endure what happens outside them

Stephan W. Porges. *The polyvagal Theory*)

How to interrupt Patient's Vicious Circle

Trauma creates a vicious circle: fear immobilizes, and immobility reinforces fear

To restore active defensive responses, the therapist helps the subject to interrupt the vicious circle

In order to achieve that, the therapist recognise, legitimise subjects' fear, anger, impotence, guilt, shame... and guides subjects to recognize the residual traces of the sensations left in their body

(Bessel van Der Kolk, *The Body keeps the Score*)

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How to Create a Therapy's Virtuous Circle

The therapist helps subjects to experience a secure attachment
sending verbal and non verbal messages such as...

I see you, I am with you in the here and now, I am attuned with you

You are in a safe place

I resonate with you, I help you to sooth you down; I teach you how to calm you
down

In this safe place you feel seen, soothed, secure... so that you can elicit all your
resources

How to Create a Therapy's Virtuous Circle

Creating a secure attachment, the therapist uses hypnosis to:

Reduces sense of alert

Enhance a sense of safety, of being in a safe place (*Temenos*) in a world full of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity

Build a therapeutic alliance based on trust

Therapeutic Alliance based on Trust

The secure attachment between therapist and subject helps to:

Identify the secure base from which to explore a new world

Create new strategies to repair the interrupted connections

Awaken the subject's dormant resources

Contribute to the construction of subject internal locus of control

Hypnosis Centered on PTG

With hypnosis the therapist:

calms the subject in the present moment

helps the subject decrease the sensation of fear and
increase executive functions

replaces the traumatic memory with narrative memory

Somatic Experiencing, Peter Levine

How to help the subject decrease the sensation of fear?

Put your feet on the feet of the subject

Touch his/her knees, elbows, joints

Contain his/her legs between yours (**Rosella, Barbara**)

Invite the subject to get up, to move his/her body, kick, shake arms, release residues of fear, of immobility



W. Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Give words to your pain.
The pain that does not speak
whispers to the heart too swollen
and invites him to break

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Function of the Story Telling

The act of telling own story changes the story itself

If the problem of PTSD is dissociation, the goal of the PTG is integration:

Integrating the dissociated elements of the trauma into a coherent narrative of life helps brain, mind and body to distinguish what happened in the **past** and what happens in the **present** life

Replace Traumatic Memory with Narrative Memory

The therapist asks the patient to be in the here and now, in his/her present moment, separating time dimensions:

Be in the **present** with your current resources:
now you are in the **future** of your past

from the point of view of the present, with a retrospection,
revisit what happened in the **past**, learn from it

After you make peace with the past you can go towards your future
Imagine your **future**

Karen Blixen (1885-1962)

All pains are bearable
if you let them enter a story
or if you can tell a story about them
(Or in a song, **Barbara**)

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Tell me about your Pain

We are NOT able to tell others what we can not tell ourselves

Communicating is the opposite of being traumatised

When subjects talk about their pain they make explicit what was implicit and acquire greater awareness

David Grossman

After the death of my son Uri I was paralysed by pain.

Only when I found the words to say it, to write it
I managed not to be just a victim, but to find life again.

A life filled with pain but my life again



The Autobiographical Self

Talking about their pain, subjects gain two types of awareness:

1. The awareness that keeps track of the **old self in the past**
grasping the **new self in the present**

I was the father of Uri. Now I am orbatus.

2. The awareness that creates new links between different experiences and integrates them into a coherent story

Tell me about your Pain

The therapist invites the subject to tell his/her story from the point of view of the present, separating three fundamental moments:

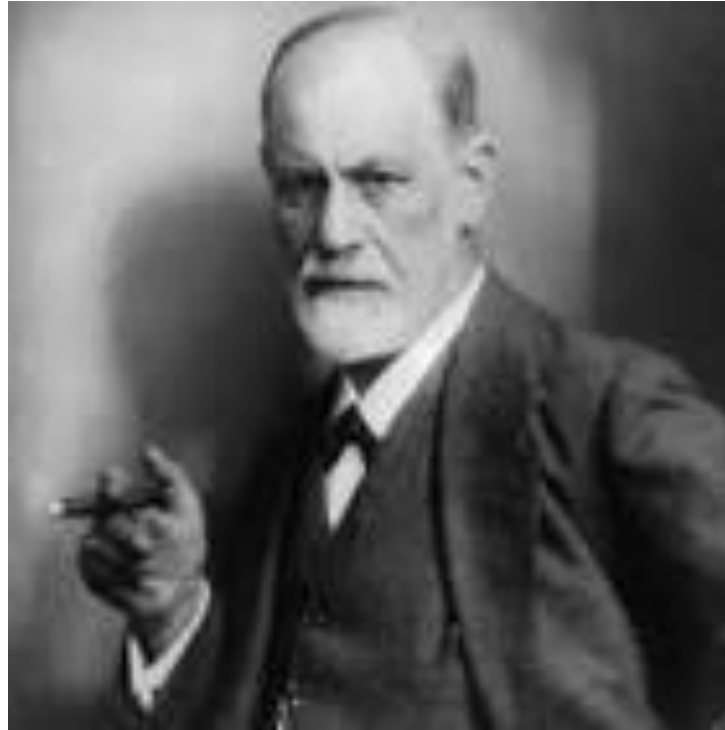
Retrospection: you're in the here and now, you're in the future of your past

Observation: what did you learn that you did not know then and that you could not learn differently

Integration: what do you want to change in your future

S. Freud (1856-1939)

Therapeutic work consists in bringing trauma back into the past



Listening to your Story

While the therapist listens to the subject's story, s/he looks at whether the subject shows

1. passivity, victimisation, sorrow, guilt, anger... towards what happened
2. trivialisation of the meaning of events, excuses, justifications
3. fixation in trauma, absence of projects, generalisation, anticipation of a catastrophic future

VIRGINIA SATIR (1916-1988)

We must not allow limited perceptions
of other people to define us



Hypnosis Centered on PTG

While listening to the subjects' narration, the therapist helps them to:

Evaluate the characteristics of the internal / external stimulus

Enhance management and adaptation skills (coping style)

Improve self-regulation, self soothing

(B. Ecker, R. Ticic, L. Hulley: *Unlocking the Emotional Brain*)

Hypnosis Centered on PTG

While listening to the subjects' narration, the therapist helps them to

Develop a sense of emotional coherence

Identify limiting beliefs and emotions of oneself and others

Making explicit what was implicit

(B. Ecker, R. Ticic, L. Hulley: *Unlocking the Emotional Brain*)

Rumi (1207-1273)

Your way is not to seek love
but simply search and find
all the barriers that you have built
inside of you against that

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Hypnosis Centered on PTG

It helps patients to:

Trust one's own resources, recognise one's own vulnerability

Learn from experience

De-emphasising suffering with constructive emotions

Develop a pragmatic, systemic and strategic approach and a sense of responsibility

Mature equanimity, gratitude, compassion, loving kindness, generosity

Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

Acceptance is the precondition of change



Hypnosis Centered on PTG

Hypnosis has the main aim of helping the subject to:

observe the traumatic experience from a calm and conscious state, when mind and brain can see differences and integrate the trauma within the whole plot of life

place the traumatic event within the entire life span: it has had a beginning, a middle phase and an end.

shift the attention to the future and go further and elsewhere

Hypnosis Centered on PTG

To nurture PTG, hypnosis helps patients to:

Develop equanimity, empathy, connection, gratitude, compassion, generosity

Differentiate needs and desires; necessity and preference

Find meaning of life and recognise one's limit

Smile of their own (and others) errors, fanaticisms, superstitions, magical or primitive thoughts

Balance risk factors with protection factors

William James (1842-1910)

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can change their lives by changing their mental attitude.



Hypnosis Centered on PTG

It has five goals:

1. Stabilise and calm the subject, make him/her feel Seen, Safe, Soothed, Secure, and Satisfied
2. Stop the intrusion of traumatic memories and ritualisations
3. Reconnect the subject with the current life
4. Make peace with the past
5. Trust in the future

M.H. Erickson (1901-1980)

Once the trunk is moved,
the river re-starts flowing.
When people begin to integrate
traumatic memories,
they continue to improve
spontaneously

