

## Hypnotherapy: A practical guide

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**H**OW REFRESHING! A book on hypnotherapy without one of those histories of hypnosis most writers on this subject seem to consider essential.

First published in 1987, "**Hypnotherapy: A practical guide**" is currently in its second reprint, indicating its popularity and usefulness.

It concentrates throughout on practical applications, so it is a guide that can repeatedly be turned to, particularly by newcomers to the field of hypnosis and hypnotherapy. However it also draws on the extensive clinical experience of the authors, making it a valuable reference for the more experienced practitioner.

It is arranged in four parts: (1) Basic Techniques; (2) Treatment Strategies with Adults; (3) Treatment Strategies with Children; (4) Hypnosis in Clinical Psychotherapy, with each part having several sections.

Based on hypnotherapy workshops, initially started in the Bloomfield Clinic at Guy's Hospital in London, the book is readable throughout and contains many scripts – both hypnotic inductions and treatment approaches – with good ideas to stimulate the reader's interest. Several pages of notes also provide additional information about points raised by the scripts.

Following a brief introduction, Basic Techniques begins with a section on the nature of hypnosis and, in view of the practical emphasis of the book, the authors do not go into great detail about the more abstract and theoretical aspects of the hypnotic state or trance. Instead the section is forward-looking with the authors arguing that "*most, if not all, forms of psychotherapy precipitate and employ clearly hypnotic phenomena.*"

Next comes Induction, Deepening, Self-hypnosis and The First Interview. Each is able to stimulate interest in the experienced practitioner, as well as serving as a very useful model for the beginner in the field.

**For Ericksonian practitioners some of the scripts are somewhat too directive – not that this observation is meant in a derogatory way. Such methods are used by probably the majority of hypnotherapy practitioners and do achieve excellent results.**

Although Erickson is mentioned twice, the references are very brief and this is surprising considering the wealth of information that existed when the book was first published.

However the Introduction mentions that "*truly professional practice is characterised by the creation of a unique and original approach to each new patient ...*"

Treatment Strategies begins with habit disorders and is concerned mainly with smoking. Nail biting and nocturnal enuresis are also covered in the part devoted to the problems of children, while there is an excellent section on pain – a subject frequently mentioned in the book. Anxiety and stress are reasonably well covered along with many problems that are commonly seen in a hypnotherapy/psychotherapy practice.

This type of book can easily fall between two stools. A few subjects could be presented very thoroughly and then be criticised for not being comprehensive enough.

Or a large range of subjects could be included, not so thoroughly, and the criticism could then be that it doesn't go deeply enough into the problems. This book sensibly covers a fairly broad range of subjects and problems in a way that will satisfy and stimulate the majority of readers.

The final part – "Hypnosis in Analytical Psychotherapy" – is well introduced by a section on basic concepts followed by "Uncovering Techniques" which gives scripts for age regression with a surprisingly brief five pages on treatment strategies. There is, though, a long section on "Dissociation, Multiple Personality and Ego State Therapy" which, as in much of the book, includes case histories which are both interesting and informative.

The book's final section mentions Psychosexual Problems, Habit Spasms, Performance Problems and a few pages on Group Hypnosis.

One criticism is that as the book was first published in 1987 the latest edition should have included an Addendum taking account of the research and experimentation that has since been carried out.

Still, this is a very useful book that admirably serves its aim.

*Valuable  
as a guide for  
the beginner  
and as a  
reference for  
the  
experienced*

Ray Keedy-Lilley

The EJCH does not normally review works of fiction, however hypnotherapy suffered considerable adverse publicity following publication of **Affliction**, by internationally acclaimed author Fay Weldon. Ms Weldon claims her marriage broke down after her husband received treatment from a hypnotherapist. This book was her response.

## Affliction

Fay Weldon

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Having been asked to review “**Affliction**”, Fay Weldon's new novel, I agreed, approaching the task from a therapist's point of view though initially I could not totally divorce myself from the normal reader's aspect of the book.

It is an unpleasant story about the disintegration of a marriage; brought about, it is claimed, by unethical therapists. Its characters reveal themselves as sexually perverted and promiscuous, indulging in illegal, unnatural, and immoral acts.

All involved obviously needed therapeutic treatment, though the background given by the author was insufficient for a balanced judgment.

Annette, the main character, had a failed marriage behind her, with no indication of the reason for this failure.

Spicer, her partner, to whom, it was later revealed, she was not married, had also experienced a wrecked marriage.

For unexplained reasons Spicer sought therapy. He settles on a medically qualified female practitioner who uses astrology and mythology as a main part of the treatment! This somewhat surprised me – as I was under the impression that astrology was a branch of fortune telling.

Rhea (the therapist) seems bent on destroying Spicer's relationship, and succeeds. She also persuades Spicer to send Annette to her husband (also an M.D. therapist), a very unsavoury character who subsequently sexually assaults Annette, who doesn't even consider reporting him to the Police for prosecution. Neither, in fact, does her friend Gilda suggest this when told of the event immediately afterwards.

Annette, carrying Spicer's baby, suddenly miscarries. There are vague accusations of abortion and she is taken to an N.H.S. hospital where she is unsuccessfully treated by a very young and inexperienced hypnotherapist using North American based theories. This presents the incredible idea that the health service would permit an inexperienced person to practise within the hospital with the full support of the medical staff.

Overall the author sets out to cast hypnotherapy as the sleazy end of alternative therapy, ignoring the view of those competent to evaluate it that it is an effective complementary therapy which is not physically intrusive and can obtain benefits without toxic ill effects.

Frankly, most of the characters in this book needed help

desperately and maybe Fay Weldon should realise novelists are therapists too, in their own field, and that her influence as a respected writer is strong.

Many readers will no doubt accept her fiction as truth, and turn away from the help they may desperately need.

Of course, I am preaching to the converted when reminding the readers of this Journal of the countless numbers of people whose quality of life has been improved by ethical therapists, not to mention those who, having tried most other avenues, would have chosen suicide were it not for our help.

Ms. Weldon insists on pigeon-holing all therapies together; condemning them regardless of discipline. It seems most ill-informed and surely it would have been better had she researched her subject more thoroughly.

Having said that, Ms Weldon's desire for regulation – expressed on B.B.C.2's ‘**Late Show**’ – is entirely correct. I believe *bona fide* practitioners will whole-heartedly accept this view – it is something for which we have long been working

During that televised session the interviewer stated that on Fay Weldon's own admission, “**Affliction**” was “*A personal book inspired by the break-up of her own 30 year marriage.*”

This was not denied, so we are left wondering how much of this is autobiographical. In her own words, “*Reality is more grotesque than fiction.*”

But then what sort of world does she live in? If the therapists known to her are worse than those she writes about, where did she find them? In my 25 years' experience in this field I have found the vast majority of qualified therapists to be trustworthy and ethical. Good news spreads fast, and recommendations are our lifeline. Charlatans are found in all walks of life and are quickly exposed for what they are and quickly rejected.

This work would appear to be a direct attack on a branch of complementary medicine by someone who is in desperate need. I can only hope that the writing of this novel has been cathartic for her.

L. C. Mason

*Apparently a direct attack on a branch of complementary medicine by someone in desperate need*