

P Dream Power

A state of calm and envisioning good health help patients fare better in surgery and recover more rapidly

BY SHIVAUN MANLEY HINMAN AND JANICE KLEINSCHMIDT

When Troy Dunne learned that he needed surgery on his badly injured rotator cuff, he fretted over the prospect of a major interruption to his life. “I had read that it could take up to six weeks to regain full range of movement in my arm and upper body, and I just didn’t have that kind of time to spare,” he says. “I lead a very active father/son lifestyle of off-roading, motorcycle riding, and other competitive sports.”

Dunne scoured the Internet and the local medical community for ways to shorten his recovery time. Then he heard about Ted Logan, a certified clinical hypnotherapist in Palm Springs.

“My goal is to empower the patient to take charge of his or her recovery process,” Logan says. “With any surgical process, a wound is created; and with a wound comes the promise of healing, as well as the potential for infection. Hypnosis helps activate the autoimmune system. The patient and I work together to build more white cells, strengthen resistance to infection, and pre-empt any element of danger.”

“Positive surgical experiences can fall into place like a jigsaw puzzle,” he adds. “It can take as little as two or three sessions to achieve the results you desire.”

In a study reported in the Aug. 28, 2007, issue of *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 200 patients scheduled to undergo breast biopsies or lumpectomies underwent a 15-minute session of hypnosis or received routine anesthesia and “nondirective empathic listening.” The hypnotized patients spent an average of 10.6 fewer minutes in the operating room and experienced less pain, nausea, discomfort, and anxiety without medication following surgery. (The cost-per-patient savings at Mount Sinai School of Medicine was \$772.71.)

Other studies at Mayo Clinic and Stanford University Medical Center support those findings with similar results of significant benefits that include reduced blood loss and shorter hospital stays.

A former dentist who trained at the Hypnotherapy Training Institute of Santa Rosa, Logan uses a class of hypnosis known as “transactional hypnotherapy” that has been around for centuries and used extensively in the healing arts. He relies on his voice and training to relax the mind into a state of transcendental calm.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” Dunne says. “But after meeting Ted, I realized that it would be a gentle, almost effortless process. You’re somewhere in between sleep and relaxation. Your body feels like it is floating, and you hear this peaceful voice in the background. Sometimes you are aware the voice is there and sometimes not. When the session is over, you get up and you feel like you have taken a long, restful nap; but you’re shocked to discover that less than an hour has elapsed.”

Michael Gurk, Dunne’s physical therapist in Palm Springs, attests to the benefits Dunne experienced. “Troy had the surgery on Friday, was off all pain meds by Saturday, and had full range of motion in his shoulder by Tuesday of the following week. That’s weeks ahead of other people we see here. Troy was a motivated patient, but it’s clear that the presurgical hypnosis helped speed the process along.”

Hypnosis, which began in the early 1800s, is generally credited to physician Franz Anton Mesmer and became known as “Mesmerism.” Up until that time, medical and dental procedures were performed without any kind of anesthetic, other than alcohol or laudanum to dull the senses. John Elliotson, a professor at University College Hospital in London, met with such resistance to Mesmerism that he resigned and founded the Mesmeric Hospital in 1846. Following Elliotson’s writings, Dr. James Esdaile, a Scottish surgeon in India, performed more than 300 major operations using Mesmerism and noted a reduction in the death rate from 50 to 5 percent.

For a century following, hypnosis was mostly applied in psychotherapy as a tool for psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and phobias. These days, it also is used to alleviate allergies, improve

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pain management, and prepare patients for surgical procedures under mild or anesthetic sedation.

John Melton, a 12-year clinical hypnotherapist and instructor at the Hypnosis Motivation Institute in Tarzana, has seen the benefits of hypnotherapy in his own home. His wife, who suffered an ankle fracture that required two surgeries, was “out of the boot” two weeks ahead of schedule.

Melton has talked with doctors about their experiences operating on patients who have undergone presurgery hypnotherapy. “There appears to be some anecdotal evidence from surgeons that the state of the person coming in can affect the way the body reacts during surgery,” he says, explaining that physiology changes with the state of mind, i.e., the presence of stress hormones in someone suffering anxiety.

Melton also has seen the benefits of postsurgery hypnotherapy. “It helps people with compliance with [rehabilitation] regimes they need to go through,” he says. “It helps with motivation and learning to control some of the discomfort that may be present during that time.”

More and more, the public seeks alternative healthcare strategies to complement traditional medicine — often with great success.

“I want to give the patient the greatest sense of confidence going into surgery,” Logan says. “It is all done with the cooperation of his or her doctor or dentist. I am drawing the patient’s awareness to the idea of perfect health, and I genuinely believe that is possible when we welcome and engage the seat of the mind.” ■

The Insurance Question

Your insurance company may not provide coverage for presurgical hypnotherapy. Blue Shield of California, for example, considers the practice “investigational/experimental” and therefore does not include it as a covered expense. The insurer does, however, offer members “guided imagery” CDs that it claims are beneficial before surgery. And although Kaiser Permanente published an article in its journal supporting the benefits of presurgical hypnotherapy, none of its plans cover such therapy.