

TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

I have been a clinical Hypnotherapist for three years. Before this I worked in the welfare department attached to human resources in a national company. I have actually been counselling and coaching for nearly ten years. Before I began to study hypnosis I was, to say the least, sceptical. I could not accept that a stage act could have practical applications; my previous training would not allow the concept.

My conversion came about because in a counselling session, under hypnosis I was able to say what I had always wanted to say to a person long dead. Apart from feeling very much freer in my own mind, I stopped smoking!! Since this time I have been researching, studying and finding methods of becoming a better practitioner of hypnotherapy.

I use the word 'professional' frequently when describing the work we do so perhaps I had better give you my interpretation of the word.

A professional person has a recognised skill and belongs to an organisation made up of people with the same skills. These people and the organisation, to which they belong, set, achieve and maintain the standards of their work. It is this definition that dictates the following ideas.

As practitioners we wish to be recognised as a profession made up of people who are dedicated to their work. I constantly hear people talking about this wish but when it comes to actually doing something about it ego or fear gets in the way. By doing nothing about our profession ourselves we are opening the way for other organisations to step in and tell the Government what standards we must have. Can you imagine a Counselling organisation that does not recognise our skills, dictating exactly what we must do to stay in business? It could happen.

I realise that my personal observations may not concur with the views of others but I urge you to ask yourself three questions before making any reply to this article.

1. Do I consider myself to be a professional person?
2. Which is the lesser of two evils? The Government sending out decrees as they did in the teaching profession, or regulating ourselves by ensuring national standards of education, further development and professionalism?
3. How else can we achieve professional status?

With these questions in mind and a determination to get us the respect we have a right to in my heart I submit the following proposals.

1 STUDENT TRAINING

All tutors and training schools must meet certain standards. These standards to be laid down by a National Body (in our case, the Hypnotherapy Association) and agreed by members of that body, not the administrators of it or the people who devise courses. This way, we, the practitioners can set the criteria by which all new students are trained. It should also be a requirement that all students complete an assessment form twice during a course of a year of study. This form should enable the students to comment on the course content, pace of learning, the style of teaching and what could be done better. By doing this it should then be possible for tutors to improve the quality of a course and produce practitioners with a more professional attitude. I am still amazed that a correspondence course is sufficient to set up in practise. Where are the counselling skills and empathy and personal evaluation that are essential to becoming a practitioner?

2 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

In my years as a counsellor, coach and trainer, I found that it is an absolute necessity to keep up with new developments and research. If we do not ensure that all practitioners are committed to personal development we run the risk of never reaching our goal of being respected as professional people who have the right to be heard and respected in the talk therapy world.

Each member of an organisation must be able to provide evidence of further study every year as a requirement of membership; preferably they should produce a body of research at least every five years. This may sound harsh, but how many of us get clients who have been to see other Hypnotherapists or counsellors and they tell us “I went for six sessions but they were no help”? People who qualified years ago cause this problem. They have never attended a seminar or had further study of any kind. They cause an obstacle that those of us who aspire to proper recognition have to fight to defeat.

3 SUPERVISION

Every therapist who sees clients on a regular basis needs to seek supervision. This is not about needing others to tell me what to do. It is about helping me become a more professional therapist. A supervisor does not tell anybody anything, they do not tell anyone how to do it better. A supervisor facilitates the practitioner finding the answers they seek within their own experience. Again, the amount of supervision we should have is something that we as members of the profession should set. I can only quote my own preference as an example. I see on average fifteen clients each week and in addition to this I supervise eight other practitioners because I am trained to do this. I use two supervisors and see one or the other every two weeks for one hour each. I do not consider this to be excessive and in fact, look forward to my sessions.

Because I feel that supervision is such an important issue I would like to quote two instances of how supervision works in order to clarify the process.

Marion is a therapist who has been in practice for just over a year. She had a male client in his sixties come to her. Marion told me that whenever he came to a session she felt as though she did not know how to help even though the client said he was deriving benefit from the sessions. I asked her who the client reminded her of. That is all I as a supervisor did, nothing more. From this question Marion realised that there was a parent/child transference occurring and being aware of it she was enabled to work in a more effective manner.

Another therapist of four years experience was seeking to help a client by using a 'negotiation of parts' process he became stuck because he could not find a way to broker a truce between an unhappy part and a critical part. My question in this case was "is there a happy part that you can talk to?" again, sufficient to make a radical difference to both therapist and client. This is the sort of work a supervisor does. It is not about superiority or ego; supervision is about becoming more professional in our work and our approach to our clients.

As a supervisor I also act as coach and mentor to newly qualified therapists. I help them to find methods of developing their business, I counsel them, and generally help them in any way I can until they have enough client hours for proper supervision to begin.

I love my work and if it were possible I would do it for nothing. I believe passionately in what we as therapists can do to help those around us. I am in this profession because I want to be, it is not about showing others how clever I am, or telling others how to live their life, it is about using my life and studies to empower others. I want

as many people as possible to be pleased to take responsibility for their own happiness.

I have written this article from a passionate belief that we have a right to recognition of our work. We have a right to be recognised as a body of professional men and women. I believe that until we take active steps to develop clear standards and guidelines, neither the Government nor the medical profession will acknowledge us fully.

The proposals and views I have put forward are entirely mine and presented to the members of the Hypnotherapy Association for debate through this publication. In my opinion healthy public debate with reasoned arguments for and against my thoughts will only serve for the good of our profession. I would also welcome it if we could spend some time at our next conference debating these thoughts and any alternative views.

Please remember! I am not attacking anyone in particular; I do not want to set up a big brother organisation with me, or the Hypnotherapy Association at the centre. I want us to become proud members of a professional organisation working for the emotional happiness and development of others.

I have a (self-designed) web site that you are welcome to visit if you would like to find more about my work or myself. www.positivehealth.gbr.cc

I look forward to meeting you all at next year's conference.

Bill Bliss