

## The Now Deepener

Often the simplest of techniques are the most effective, and the ‘Now Deepener’ is a clear example of how a simple anchor can help people to reduce their anxiety in a moment. I first came across this technique during my training and was surprised when I was unable to find a direct reference for its use in clinical practice. That being said, the technique is very similar to the ‘calmness anchor’ (Bandler and Grindler, 1979; Kraft, 2013) in which the patient says the word ‘calm’ in order, immediately, to evoke feelings of comfort and ease associated with a special place image. In the treatment of driving phobia, Williamson (2004), in conjunction with self hypnosis training, use of dissociative imagery and positive mental rehearsal, encouraged her patient to create a ‘calmness anchor’ in order to generate, ‘a link between something seen/heard in the mind’s eye and feelings of calmness’ (Williamson, 2004, p.90). The ‘Now Deepener’ is also similar to the ‘calmness mantra’—that is to say, repeated suggestions of calm and ease. This technique can be utilized by the therapist in the consulting room; in addition, it can be used by the patient during self hypnosis or in potentially anxiety-provoking situations during the day. This method, which was utilized by Smith (1985) in the treatment of a dental phobic, and described as a ‘meditational mantra’ (see also Blofeld, 1977), was employed successfully in conjunction with progressive relaxation (Jacobson, 1938), ego strengthening (Hartland, 1965) and systematic desensitization (Wolpe, 1958; Kraft & Kraft, 2010).

Thus, the now deepener can be used on its own or in connection with special place imagery. Importantly, if special place imagery is used, it is important to choose a place in which the person is calm and relaxed. For example, I have helped a client to re-establish his confidence in all areas of sport by imagining the feelings associated with a successful and invigorating

sky-diving activity; however, one could argue that this would not be appropriate for reducing stress in a potentially anxiety-provoking situation. However, practitioners who use CBT-based approaches in treatment may disagree in that it is often helpful to re-frame tachycardia, increases in heart rate and hyperhidrosis, amongst other features of 'stress', as the exciting physiological changes that occur during, say, a sports activity or being on stage. Indeed, the concept of 'Eustress', in which the physical changes in the body that occur in 'stressful' situations are re-framed positively, (Nelson and Simmons, 2005), can be utilized here especially when educating the patient.

So this is how it works. In the hypnosis, the therapist says the word 'now' using a warm but breathy tone for approximately four or five seconds. The word should taper off towards the end of the utterance. This can be set up as follows:

*When I say the word 'Now'... you will immediately feel a sense of relaxation spread all over your body...or parts of your body...a wonderful warm wave of relaxation spread down or up your body...in your own way... 'Nowwwwww'.*

In addition, a post hypnotic suggestion can be set up so that they can utilize this technique whenever they wish, and repeat it in potentially anxiety-provoking situations, thus:

*And you can utilize this word by saying it in your own mind's eye whenever you need to in the future...whenever you need to reduce any unwanted and unnecessary tension...you can say*

*the word 'Now...' and you will immediately be able to breathe in comfort and ease and breathe out any unwanted tension...*

Essentially, the Now deepener is an internal anchor which can be used as a self hypnosis coping strategy, but the importance of this simple tool is that it is so quick. Thus, it can be used in all sorts of situations: for example, an agoraphobic can use it when travelling on a bus, or, alternatively, someone who is fearful of public speaking could employ it before speaking or at various times throughout the presentation. Moreover, this anchoring technique, which may be employed as a quick deepener, can also be utilized both in the emergency setting and in the consulting room. It is hoped that this simple explanation will help health professionals to include it in their work in clinical practice.

### References

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