National Guild of Hypnotists
Recommended Standards for Online Hypnotism

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Best Practices for Online Hypnotic Sessions

In today's world many people depend on their computers as the major channel for information or for receiving help. Therefore, a demand has been created for a Best Practices regarding how to do such sessions as online hypnotic sessions. The guide is the product of a team of senior Guild colleagues, with most of the content produced by Cal Banyan of the Banyan Hypnosis Center and the Rev. Dr. C.Scot Giles.

This material is offered in good faith. However, the Consulting Hypnotist is always responsible to ensure that what you do matches the law for your state.

This Best Practices for Online Hypnotic Sessions guide is freely offered to all members of the National Guild of Hypnotists who wish to do such sessions. It is the recommendation of the Guild that you follow it carefully. If a problem arises, the fact that you conducted yourself according to established professional standards may help resolve any concerns.

General Considerations

There are two basic ways of conducting online sessions with clients. First, there is the model where the Certified Hypnotist will hypnotize the client while online, just as if the client were in the practitioner's office.

The second model is where the practitioner conducts the pre-talk or coaching part of the session online, and then creates a recording for the client to use for self-hypnotism at home. As the hypnotism does not happen in real time, there are different issues created. We discuss both models in this guide.

Regardless of the model used, there are some general considerations that everyone doing online sessions should take into account:

• Practice self-awareness, especially of appearance and professionalism.
• You should dress like you would in a physical office.
• Be aware that bi-focal glasses make you tilt your head back and it looks odd Therefore, consider universal focus glasses or a dedicated set for online work.
• Always remember to look at the camera, not your image.

- Be aware of how you are placed on the screen. There is a videographer rule called the Rule of Three. Divide the screen into three equal bands from top to bottom. Your image should always fill at least two of the bands.
- Be self-aware of how you look and how you behave. Consider a few "dress rehearsals" to polish your skills.
- Make sure your background has a professional appearance. If your space cannot do that then use a green screen that you can transform into an image using appropriate software or use a folding screen behind you.

Benefits of online sessions

For the client:

- Greater confidentiality.
- Greater convenience for your clients because they don't have to travel.
- Saves time because of not having to travel to appointments.
- Sessions may be more accessible because there may be no hypnotists in their area.
- May feel more able to self-disclose because of distance.
- May feel more able to self-disclose when in a familiar home environment.
- Weather is not a factor unless it affects the Internet connection.
- Some clients cannot leave their homes and this enables them to have sessions.
- Some clients are so introverted or shy they would not have sessions if they have to look a hypnotist in the face in the same room.
- May be fearful of being alone in a room with someone of the opposite gender.
- May be unable to have office sessions only because of transportation issues such as not having a car,or unwilling to drive.
- May be better able to schedule sessions with a busy hypnotist when they don't have to factor in travel time.
- Can have hypnosis sessions when traveling, for example on a business trip.
- Client saves money.

For the hypnotist:

- Less expensive to get started in the profession if you do online only at first.
- Less expensive to continue to have an "office" because it is virtual.
- May be safer for the hypnotist because unethical touching could not be alleged.

- May be safer for the hypnotist because he or she is not being placed in physical proximity to clients.
- May enable the hypnotist to serve a greater number of clients because of ability to serve clients anywhere in the world.
- May have fewer no-shows when you eliminate variables like distance, traffic, travel time and the hassle of having to drive to a location.
- May also be able to conduct sessions when traveling.
- May be better able to see clients after hours when done online.
- Could be healthier for the hypnotist because of not being exposed to germs or viruses from seeing multiple clients in person.
- Be able to see clients if injured or unable to get to the office because of a medical condition.
- Ability to "time shift" and see clients in the evening by serving clients in other time zones.
- One does not have to be concerned about noise from sessions being heard and bothering other people in the office (when using headphones).

Common Concerns About Conducting Online Sessions ("What if…?")

Here are some issues that you will need to consider about doing online hypnotism. This guide proposes responses to some of them, but there is no absolute answer to any of these issues. Still, you should consider how you would respond in these situations and work toward an online philosophy that is a match to your temperament and hypnotic style.

- What if your client doesn't have an adequate computer or the power goes out?
- What if your client's house catches on fire?
- What if there is a medical emergency?
- What if your client's location is too noisy?
- What if there are interruptions by family members, pets, etc.?
- What if the Internet connection goes down during the session?
- What if you can't see your client's face clearly during the session?
- What if you can't see your client's finger signals, head nods, etc.
- What if your client doesn't know how to use video conferencing?
- What if your client doesn't have an adequate chair or recliner to do the session?
- What if you have to have your clients fill out forms?
- What if you want to get paid for the sessions?
- What if you want to show your client a video, like the pre-talk video?

- What if your client is concerned about confidentiality?
- What if you want to record your sessions?
- What if your client becomes emotional during the session (privacy)?
- What if you need to contact your client about scheduling, etc.?
- What if you are not trained using inductions, deepening, depth-testing needed without touching the client?
- What if the online situation leaves you and your client not feeling as "connected" as when you are face-to-face?

Ethical and Legal Issues

In all cases you must follow the National Guild of Hypnotists Code of Ethics, Standards of Hypnotic Practice and Recommended Terminology. Nothing about online sessions exempts one from ethical practice

In general, the hypnotist is regulated by the laws of the state in which he or she is physically present. States have an absolute right to regulate commerce within their borders. However, only the Federal Government can regulate interstate commerce and we are not aware of any federal regulations that would affect online hypnotism.

However, the situation with liability insurance is different. Insurance companies have the right to set additional requirements and if you are not in compliance with them they can refuse liability insurance or void your policy.

Most National Guild of Hypnotists practitioners are insured with the American Professional Agency. This group has assured the Guild in writing that they do provide coverage for liability to any policy holder who is doing online sessions under the same provisions that they insure in-person sessions.

However, they do make a further stipulation if the hypnotic practitioner is also a licensed mental health provider. In that case the hypnotist must be licensed as a mental health provider in the state where the hypnotist is, and in the state where the client resides. Also, you must use a HIPAA certified platform for the sessions. We recommend Zoom as a platform that is suitable for most Consulting Hypnotists, and the company does have a HIPAA compliant option available. American Professional Agency recommends iTel Companies to supply the platform (www.itelcompanies.com).

This raises a further issue. Some states require a hypnotist to be registered with the State Government. It is not clear that an unlicensed hypnotist must be registered in a state if the client is in a state that requires registration, but it is likely that it would be required to secure liability protection. However, state registration as a hypnotist is merely a matter of filling out a form and paying a fee, which could be passed on to the client. It is your responsibility to check to see if that state where your client resides is a state requiring a hypnotist to register, and to follow through with registration if need be. The National Guild of Hypnotists maintains a database of state laws and regulations.

General Solutions

TECHNICAL ISSUES

- You must ensure that your client has a device capable of video conferencing: a computer, tablet or smartphone. Generally, your client will have a better experience if you do not work using an audio-only phone, but circumstances may require that you do that (for example, with a client who is technologically challenged and cannot master a more advanced platform).
- You should decide and share with your client the procedure you will use if the session is interrupted because of poor Internet connection.
- If you plan to hypnotize the client online, be sure you have the ability to see client's face clearly on the computer screen, and that you have the ability to see finger signals, light head nods, etc.
- If you plan to record sessions, be sure you can provide security for recordings.

Recommendations

Provide the client with written instructions on what the minimum requirements are regarding the technology used and the Internet or phone connection they are planning on using.

Provide the client with a pre-online-hypnosis meeting with the client before the first hypnosis session to test the computer/Internet connection and assess your client's ability to use the software/platform, such as Zoom.

As you are doing the online hypnotism in real time, inform your client during the session that if the Internet connection is lost or there is any other technical difficulty during the session that causes you to be unable to communicate with

them, that they will notice the silence and be prepared for a call. State that in every other case when the session is going on he or she will ignore any incoming calls and attend to them after the session. The ringer should be set on a low setting.

Be aware that it is possible to do a computer with simultaneous phone contact. That is, you can simultaneously be in contact with your client via the video conferencing platform, such as Zoom and by phone. This saves internet bandwidth and can prevent internet congestion that might cause the session to slow or drop. Your client can have her phone on in loud speaker mode and you can have your phone on mute. In any event where you need to talk to your client you can take your phone off of mute and talk to him or her.

Some phones and tablets allow dual connections. Some phones enable the user to both communicate via video conferencing and take calls. Apple iPhones have this capability.

Safeguard the online session by having an uninterruptible power supply and ideally a second Internet Connection. Uninterruptible power supplies can be purchased that provide power instantly if you lose power to your computer. Your phone can be equipped to share its data connection so that you can use it as a hot spot for the session if your regular Internet connection goes down.

Environmental Issues

Be sure the client has a safe location for the session. For example, be sure there is no food cooking, no candles or cigarettes burning. This is a wise precaution under any circumstance, but is especially important if doing online hypnotism in real time.

Minimize excess noise, or interruptions by family, pets, etc.

Be sure that your client has an adequate chair, couch or recliner to do the session.

When doing the hypnotic session in real time, be sure that client has a private place for the session where the client can become emotional without being overheard.

Provide for bathroom breaks if needed.

Safety Issues

You must ensure that there is a fast and effective way to handle any medical emergencies during the session.

Make sure there is a way to contact your client in case of an important but non-medical situation such as your client fell asleep or you become aware of some other situation that needs to be attended to during the session.

Get an emergency contact number for the client. The hypnotist should also have the client's phone number so that the client can be contacted in case they fall asleep or if there is an internet disruption.

In extreme circumstances you can call your local 911 number and explain the situation and the client's location. That 911 operator can forward an alert to a 911 operator in the client's location.

Administrative Issues

You must have a way to provide forms to the client and have them signed. This can be done using online fillable PDF forms or using a service such as Docusign® (https://go.docusign.com).

Another alternative for the hypnotist is to fill out the forms by interviewing the client, then sending the completed forms to the client by email to review. After review, the client is instructed to respond by email that the forms have been examined, that they are correct, and that the client agrees to any business conditions stated. The client's email is then placed in the client's record as a sort of digital signature.

You will need to have an efficient way to provide the distance client with any workbooks or reading materials that are needed.

You will need to be aware of different Time Zones. For international distance clients remember that other nations do not observe daylight savings time. If you send reminders to clients be sure that you, or the system you employ, compensates for different time zones.

Obviously, you will need to have the ability to receive payment for sessions, using a service like Square, Authorize.net or Paypal. Alternatively, you can invoice clients by email and accept physical checks by mail.

Confidentiality and Security Issues

You must ensure your client's session security and confidentiality. That almost certainly means a secure internet connection and that your computer or other equipment is protected against computer viruses and malware.

If your sessions are being recorded using the conferencing software/platform, the security of recordings must be assured. Most online conferencing platforms will allow you to option to store the recordings on their server or on your local computer. The latter option will be the most secure provided you have a regular backup discipline.

When Doing Hypnotism in Real Time (Not Prerecorded)

The hypnotist must be competent in using inductions, deepening, depth-testing needed without touching the client. The hypnotist should be confident and competent regarding his or her ability to perform all the techniques that he or she intends to use before using them with clients online.

The hypnotist should be able to provide a feeling of connection between hypnotist and client without being in the same location.

The Banyan Hypnosis Center points out that techniques such as the Eyelid Catalepsy Convincer can be accomplished without touching, as tapping on the forehead can be replaced by tapping on the computer screen, another part of the computer or by snapping fingers.

Reflect on your ideal visual presentation. Do you want to sit facing your client or to one side? If you like to sit to the side of your clients when working with them in a physical office, you may want to have your client place his or her computer or webcam on that side of himself or herself.

When Doing Hypnotism Entirely by Means of a Recording Sent to the Client

The practitioner must have the technical skill and equipment to make quality recordings. You will need to decide if you are going to use analog equipment such as recording decks and mixers, or are you going to use digital programs such as Garage Band, Quick Time, Audacity, Sharm Studio or similar recording platform?

Think about whether you will record voice only or use video as well as audio? Decide if you want to attach a thumbnail graphic to the recording so that when the client plays it on a computer or other digital device an attractive icon will appear.

Consider the equipment you will need. If you are using your webcam or smartphone how will you handle lighting? Do you need a tripod or similar stand? How will you edit the recordings to create quality product?

Decide how you will get the recording to the client. Almost certainly the recording will be too large to send as an email attachment, even if recorded with compression. There are file delivery services such as Digital Pigeon or Hightail that allow you to send a large file to a client easily. Also, it is possible to use a cloud-based drive for this purpose, such as Dropbox or GDrive. Of course, you can always mail a client a CD or jump drive if you wish.

You will want your finished recording to be a compliment to your professionalism. Therefore, you should learn how to edit recordings smoothly, how to remove background noise, etc.

The are many different ways to answer these questions and how the hypnotist answers them will depend on his or her comfort with technology, budget and time availability.

Dr. Giles, one of the authors of this document, has made available a video demonstration of creating such a recording, start to finish, on the Macintosh/Apple platform. This video is available for free download from the National Guild of Hypnotists website alongside this publication regarding online work. You will find other helpful videos on YouTube explaining the details of making and polishing a recording

IN CLOSING

Do not be intimidated by the work involved in doing professional quality online sessions. It seems more complex than it actually is. If you find yourself puzzled about how to proceed consider asking a senior colleague who is already doing a good job at online work and would allow you to ask questions about how things can be done.