

HYPNOSIS FOR LIPOSUCTION SURGERY: A CLINICAL REVIEW AND GUIDE FOR HYPNOTIC DIALOGUE

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Abstract

Hypnosis is used to reduce the amount of intravenous anaesthesia required to perform liposuction surgery. The patient listens to a hypnotic audiocassette tape intra-operatively. This explains the procedure to the patient. First, relaxation techniques are used to comfort and relax the patient. The patient is then guided to experience their favourite place and then progressed through future positive imagery. Post-hypnotic suggestions for healing and recovery are incorporated and distraction techniques are used to dissociate the patient from the procedure. The author has used this hypnotic tape for more than 300 patients and there has either been a marked reduction in the amount of intravenous medication needed, or frequently no intravenous medication has been needed at all. The patient returns to the recovery area fully awake and ready for discharge.

Key words: hypnosis, liposuction, anaesthesia, imagery

Introduction

Liposuction is the surgical procedure where areas of unwanted fatty tissue can be permanently removed from the body. A narrow metal tube called a cannula is inserted between the skin and muscle layers through a small incision which is usually hidden in a normal skin crease. With repeated and guided motion of the cannula, the fat is broken up into small globules and is removed by vacuum suction through the tube.

Major advances have been made in the field of cosmetic surgery within the past decade. Continued research from several surgical specialties has contributed to refinements and improved techniques in liposuction surgery. Rapidly, liposuction has become the most popular cosmetic surgical procedure performed in the world today.

Initially, all liposuction had to be performed using general anaesthesia in a hospital setting. With advanced techniques in both procedure and instrumentation, liposuction may now be performed with only intravenous or even oral sedation, in an outpatient facility. By reducing the amount of anaesthesia, associated risks to the patient are greatly reduced.

The author performs all liposuction surgery in a private office surgical centre, with the patient under intravenous sedation. Since the use of a hypnotic audiotape for more than 300 patients undergoing liposuction surgery, the amount of intravenous sedation patients require has been markedly reduced.

Method

Forty-five minutes to one hour prior to the surgical procedure each patient receives an oral dose of sedative and pain medication. This is used to help alleviate presurgical anxiety and apprehension. In this short time in the preoperative room the patient is prepared with the insertion of an intravenous access line. When the patient enters the operating room they are connected to all appropriate monitoring devices. Immediately on being adequately positioned on the operating table, the patient begins listening to a hypnotic audiocassette tape prepared by the author for liposuction surgery. The patient has the option to listen to the tape as many times as desired during the operative procedure. The usual intravenous sedation techniques employed by the author consist of sedation, with diazepam, in combination with a narcotic, either demerol or ketamine. Since using the hypnotic tape intraoperatively, there has been a significant reduction in the required amount of intravenous medication necessary. In fact, frequently no intravenous medication has to be given at all.

Dialogue

The following is a dialogue of the hypnotic tape offered to patients during liposuction surgery:

This tape will help you relax during your surgery. I want you to focus your attention on my voice. And you can just let all the other conversations and the noises of the room float off into the background and you can just ignore them, that is, unless you are being spoken to directly. Now pay attention to only my voice. I want you now to start by relaxing your body. I want you first to close your eyes. The medication that you have already received has made you relaxed so just close your eyes and feel the comfort.

Now I want you to relax each part of your body in a progressive fashion. [Relaxation technique employed here – patient is instructed on relaxing body from head to toes.]

By relaxing your body you will be able to go through this procedure very easily and pain free. Since you are awake, you will, at times, naturally feel periods of pressure, pulling or some slight burning sensations. But these will always be very minimal for you. Remember you are in charge and you are in control. The more you relax your body this will allow you to be pain free.

Now the first part of your procedure will be adding the fluid to your tissues which will serve as a numbing solution. And you can picture this in your mind as a cool, soothing liquid filling all the areas that will be liposuctioned. Of course you will initially feel some minor pressure but it is nothing that will bother or disturb you. You will remain calm and relaxed. The cool, soothing liquid is making these areas of your body numb and pain free.

Now I want you to, in your mind, go to that very favourite place that you totally enjoy, whether it be somewhere on a beach, in the mountains, or in the woods; whatever this place may be for you. And in your mind, just go to that place now, and see yourself at that happy, enjoyable place. [Incorporate all five senses into the patient's favourite place.] And see yourself there (in the future) with your new body, completely happy, satisfied and proud of your results with this new change in your body shape. [Progress imagery into positive future imagery.] And you can just go back to this favourite place as often and as frequently as you wish. This will keep your mind off of your procedure and you will continue in a completely comfortable and relaxed state. After completion of the numbing solution you will receive a twenty- to thirty-minute resting period where you can doze off and relax or can easily give your mind positive

suggestions [Post-hypnotic suggestions] (Erickson, 1994), which can help you with your healing and recovery after your surgery. That is, by seeing yourself recovering rapidly and easily, and with minimal discomfort and immediately after your surgery with no feelings of pain, or with no nausea. After your surgery you pay close attention to all your instructions as directed to help you to recover in the least time possible. Feeling very proud of yourself, knowing that in time you will look and feel great. And you will be even more motivated to change some of those old habits and even improve the results of your liposuction by dieting and exercising.

Now the second half of the procedure is the actual liposuctioning of fat. Now remember total body relaxation, from your head to your toes. You are in charge and you are in control. Drifting, drifting, further and further into complete, total and comfortable relaxation. The areas to be liposuctioned will feel numb and pain free. And now I want you to concentrate and relax each body part. [Distraction – a progressive relaxation of each separate body part is emphasized from head to toes] (Houge and Hunter, 1988).

And now we are at the end of this tape. At this time you can tell the anaesthesia person sitting next to you that the tape is finished and she can replay it for you if you wish. Or you may choose just to close your eyes again, and on your own drift back to your favourite happy place, totally relaxed.

Discussion

With the use of certain surgical techniques, liposuction surgery may be performed with intravenous sedation. By having the patient listen to a hypnotic audiocassette tape during the operative procedure there can be a marked reduction in the amount of intravenous medication given. In fact, not only is this amount markedly reduced, but very frequently no intravenous medication is necessary at all. Being difficult to assess objectively, this is based on subjective findings of the author in more than 300 patients treated with hypnosis for liposuction surgery.

This responsiveness to hypnosis has been found to be directly related to the patient's anxiety level and personality (Amen and Simms, 1986). Although some patients may not be apprehensive about undergoing an elective surgical procedure, others may be extremely nervous when placed in this type of environment (Domar, Everette and Keller, 1989). The oral medications that are given preoperatively are used to help alleviate this apprehension somewhat and work well in most patients. If a patient enters the operating room relaxed and comfortable, they can easily focus their attention on listening to the hypnotic tape. If, however, patients are overly nervous, they are easily distracted and concerned with what is being done around them and, even with earphones in their ears, they do not listen to the words of the tape. They listen to what is being said by the staff instead. In such cases, the author has directed the patient's attention by commanding them to focus and to pay attention to the words of the tape. Frequently, then, such apprehensive patients can rapidly become very relaxed (Bourne, 1989). Also in such individuals, if one is fortunate enough to have an anaesthetist trained in hypnotic techniques, he or she can easily direct the patient's attention and employ relaxation techniques.

With outpatient surgical procedures, there is a significant advantage in reducing the amount of intravenous sedation given to the patient. With the production of a deep intravenous sedation the risks of respiratory depression increase. This may lead to hypoxaemia and can even progress to cardiac arrhythmias. Higher intraoperative doses of sedatives and narcotics lead to longer recovery time. The adverse effects of

the medication can frequently result in nausea and vomiting. With the use of the hypnotic tape described by the author, the patients walk into the recovery room themselves, fully alert and awake, and are soon able to be discharged home. Extra advantages of the techniques used on the tape allow for positive imagery (Fromm, 1987) for the patient and incorporate post-hypnotic suggestions for rapid healing and recovery.

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