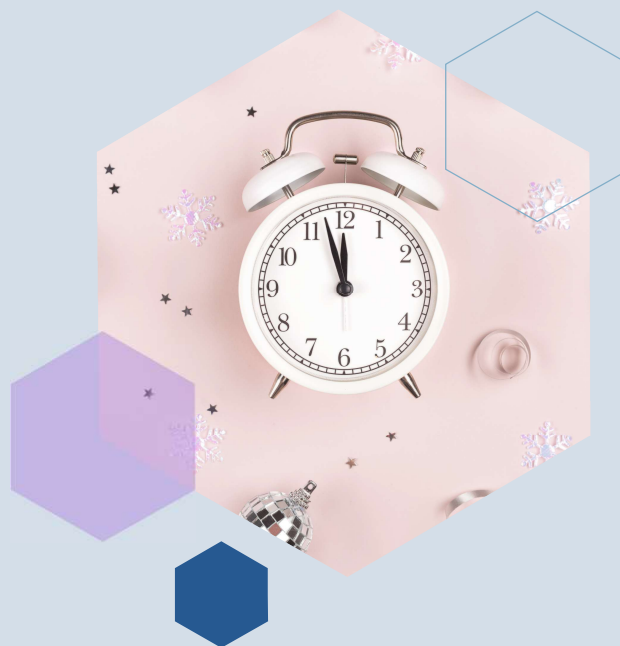


Age Progression in Hypnosis

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1

Agenda



- What is age progression
- Specific techniques in hypnosis
- CBT and imagery parallels
- Applications of age progression


2



Age Progression

- ▶ A future-oriented hypnotic process guiding the client to experience themselves beyond the present problem (Yapko, 2022).
- ▶ In hypnosis, clients can vividly imagine themselves in the future.
- ▶ Difference from "just thinking ahead"
- ▶ "Encouraging hindsight in advance" (Yapko, 2022).
- ▶ Builds expectancy, hope, and agency.

3



"People do not come into therapy to change their past but their future."

- Milton H. Erickson

4

Pseudo orientation in Time (Erickson)

- ▶ Establish that a problem exists
- ▶ Induce a trance
- ▶ Travel to the future – to a time that is sufficiently beyond the resolution of the problem so that it no longer bothers you.
- ▶ Look, or think back towards the present reviewing what you have done step by step in detail so that you can know how you got to the resolution of the problem.
- ▶ Provide your present self with a physical signal or reminder about these changes
- ▶ Return to the present knowing in your inner mind what it is that you will have already done.
- ▶ Reorientate to the present

5

Imagined future self (Dolan, 1991)

- ▶ Communication with an imagined future self (Dolan, 1991)
- ▶ Imagine that you have grown to be a healthy, wise old woman and you are looking back on this period of your life. What do you think that this wonderful, old, wiser you would suggest to you to help you get through this current phase of your life? What would she tell you to remember? What would she suggest that would be most helpful in helping you heal from the past? What would she say to comfort you? And does she have any advice about how therapy could be most useful and helpful?
- ▶ Dolan then asks the client to write a letter to the wiser self and then to write a reply from the perspective of the wiser self.

6



The “Back-from-the-Future” (Torem, 1992)

- Back from the future technique (Torem, 1992)
 - Identify a future image which represents a better, healthier, desired setting (discussion).
 - Age progression by time travelling to a specific time in the future (in hypnosis)
 - The therapist enhances the experience – using the senses.
 - Ego strengthening – suggestion of accomplishment, health
 - Store all the positive experiences and feelings and to internalize them.

7



Future Projection Therapy (Tramontana et al., 2022)

- Builds on Erickson & Torem.
- Clients “write the script” for their future self.
- Therapist helps refine it by halving time intervals (5 yrs → 2½ yrs → 6 mths → present).
- Used for weight loss, grief, PTSD, anxiety, addictions.
- Combines hypnosis, behavioural rehearsal, and cognitive restructuring.

8



Encouraging Hindsight in Advance (Yapko, 2022)

- ▶ Age progression = cultivating foresight and expectancy.
- ▶ Builds optimism → improved outcomes.
- ▶ Helps clients grasp cause and effect between current choices and future consequences.
- ▶ Useful for impulsive or addictive behaviours.
- ▶ “Hypnosis can be used early in therapy to build expectancy and alliance.”

9



CBT Uses of Age Progression (without calling it that)

- ▶ Beck's “Success Imagery” – clients visualise themselves handling situations successfully (Robertson, 2013).
- ▶ “Future autobiography” (Melges, 1982; Beck et al., 2005).
- ▶ Coping imagery – rehearsal of adaptive responses to future triggers.
- ▶ Problem-solving therapy (PST) – use of time projection to evaluate consequences of decisions.
- ▶ Mental rehearsal and imaginal exposure—all future-oriented.

10

How Hypnosis Enhances These Methods

- Hypnosis increases:
 - Absorption & vividness of imagery
 - Access to emotion & motivation
 - Expectancy of change
 - Dissociation from limiting beliefs
 - Reinforces new neural pathways via repetition and sensory detail.
 - Allows embodied rehearsal of desired behaviour.

11

"The most important thing in changing human behavior is the person's motivation."

- Milton H. Erickson

12

Examples of its use

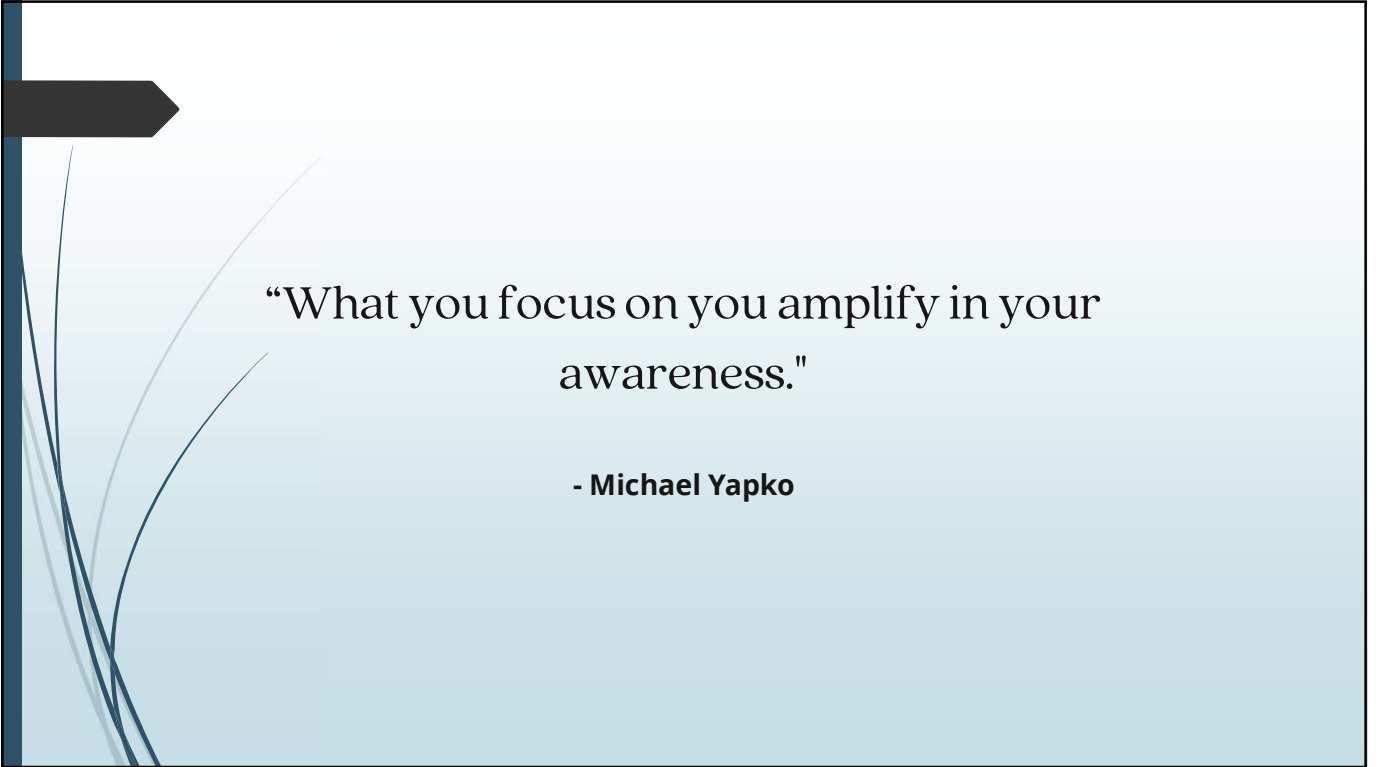
- ▶ Increasing motivation to change:
 - ▶ encouraging the client to time travel to the future and consider the consequence of not changing
 - ▶ Then imagining that they have achieved their goals and inviting them to time travel to the future having changed their goals
 - ▶ Asking: "What steps did you take to get here?"
- ▶ Rehearsing helpful behaviours:
 - ▶ Identifying what will work
 - ▶ Managing triggers
- ▶ Positive expectancy, reduced urges, increased sense of agency.

13

Mechanisms of Change

- ▶ Expectancy → belief that improvement is possible.
- ▶ Imagery → activates emotional and physiological correlates.
- ▶ Agency → linking present actions to future outcomes.
- ▶ Ego-strengthening → integrates self across time.
- ▶ Hope → antidote to helplessness (Torem, Yapko).

14



“What you focus on you amplify in your awareness.”

- Michael Yapko

15



Limitations

- ▶ Not all clients tolerate future imagery.
- ▶ Clients with EUPD / Complex Trauma / severe depression may experience futurelessness or despair.
- ▶ For these clients, age progression can intensify distress or suicidal ideation.
- ▶ Begin with ego-strengthening and stabilisation first.
- ▶ Use short-range, neutral projections (“a calm moment tomorrow”).
- ▶ Maintain dual awareness and grounding throughout.
- ▶ The goal is not to impose hope, but to build capacity for it.

16



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17



THANK YOU

18