

Hypnotically Enhanced Addictions Treatment: *Strategies & Techniques*

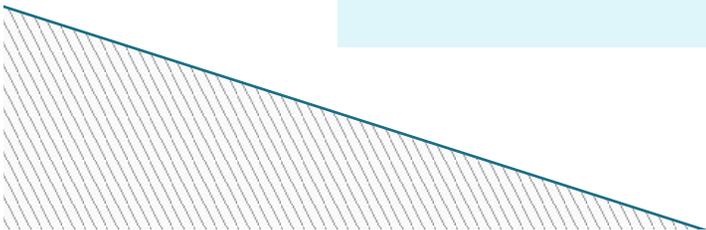
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Hypnotic Approaches To:

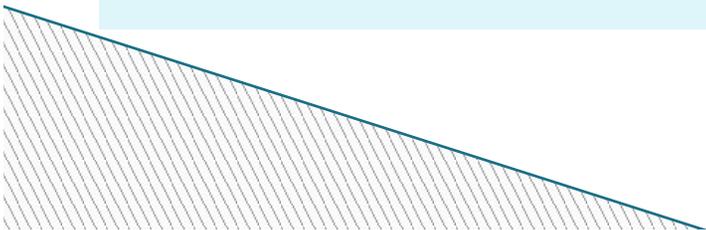
- ▶ Alcohol Abuse
- ▶ Drug Abuse
- ▶ Gambling
- ▶ Weight Control
- ▶ Smoking Cessation



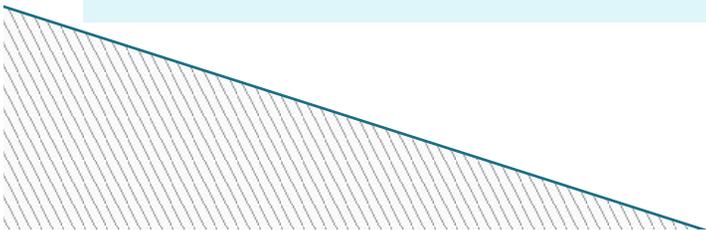
Lemonick & Park (2007) noted that 18.7 million Americans, or 7.7% of the population, are dependent on or abuse alcohol.

▶ They estimated...

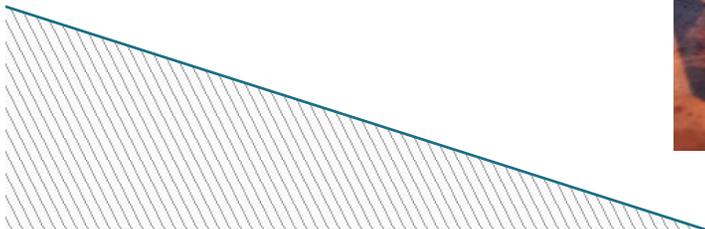
- 2 million members in Alcoholics Anonymous.
- 3.6 million people are dependent on drugs, and approximately 700,000 are undergoing treatment for addiction.
- 71.5 million users of tobacco products, including about 23.4% of men and 18.5% of women who smoke cigarettes.
- 2 million American adults (0.67% of the population) are reportedly thought to be pathological gamblers.
- 4 million adults are addicted to food, with about 15% of mildly obese people being compulsive eaters.



- ▶ Personal Experience – use of hypnotherapeutic interventions for smokers and weight-loss clients since 1978. Shortly after, began using hypnosis as an adjunctive technique with alcohol, drug abuse, and compulsive gambling.
- ▶ Early on in my experiences, a young woman with back pain was referred. Her pain management specialist had said that he had done all he could for her, but that hypnosis could help. At the end of the first session, however, when asked, “How do you feel?” She responded, “Damn, that was better than drugs!”
- ▶ Problem – there is very little in the literature regarding hypnotherapeutic approaches to alcohol, drug abuse & addiction, and pathological gambling.



Potter (2004) referred to a single case study done by my old friend and colleague, Harry Feamster (Feamster & Brown, 1963). He demonstrated his approach to me approximately 20 years later. It involved a jar of **stale whiskey and cigarette butts** which were **passed under the patient's nostrils** while they were told to **imagine drinking behaviors**. The smell was quite noxious!

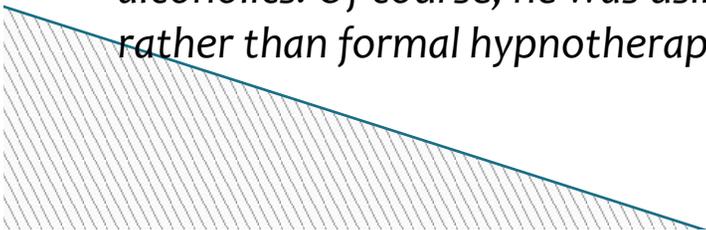


What is the reason behind the dearth of literature & training opportunities on treatment of alcohol, drug and gambling addictions via hypnotherapy?

▶ Perhaps it is because

- hypnotherapists are reluctant to “step on the feet” (so to speak) of programs/philosophies such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Gamblers Anonymous.
- Milton Erickson, considered by many the father or “godfather” of Clinical Hypnosis, stated that hypnosis was not a good approach for alcoholics because hypnosis encouraged:
 - An unhealthy negative transference
 - Dependence on the therapist

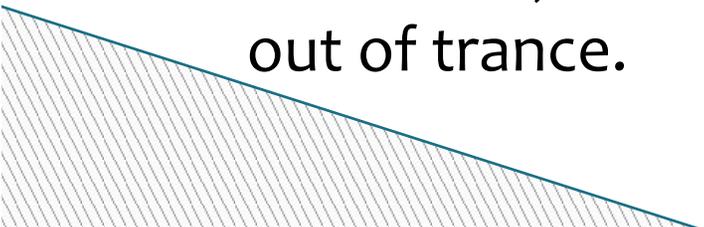
One might find this latter statement strange in light of the fact that Haley (1985) reported conversations with Erickson in 1957 regarding several cases in which he successfully treated alcoholics. Of course, he was using what he referred to as a “strategic therapy” approach rather than formal hypnotherapy.



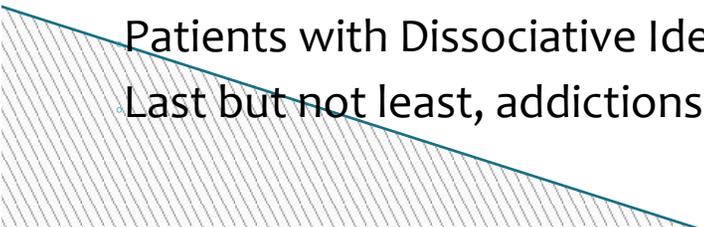
Why “hypnotically enhanced” vs. “hypnotherapy?”

- ▶ Many of the techniques and strategies incorporate a variety of therapeutic modalities, including:
 - Cognitive-behavioral techniques
 - Reframing & other NLP techniques
 - Systematic Desensitization
 - Covert Sensitization
 - Techniques from the literature on “healing the wounded child within”
 - 12-step programs
 - Guided imagery & meditation
 - & others

Furthermore, the techniques are employed both in and out of trance.



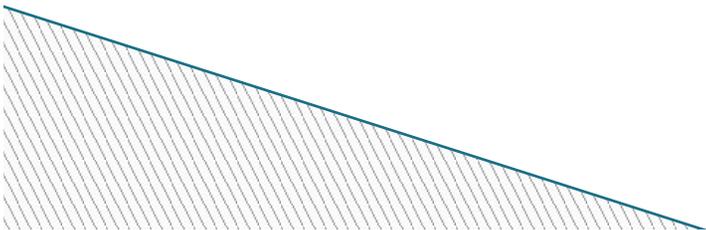
The Lens

- ▶ My view has evolved over the course of 38 years doing psychotherapy, the last 30 of which included hypnotherapy.
 - ▶ I started using hypnosis with smokers and weight-loss clients at first.
 - ▶ I then began using it for other applications, including
 - Chronic pain patients to reduce subjective pain
 - Stress/anxiety reduction
 - Overcoming phobias
 - Performance enhancement, including sports, study habits, and exam taking
 - Recovering lost memories
 - Uncovering subconscious reasons for self-sabotage
 - Dealing with self-esteem issues by uncovering unconscious origins for feelings of low self-worth
 - Uncovering early origins of sexual fetishes
 - Decreasing habits such as scratching infected skin or hair pulling (trichotillomania)
 - Working with bed-wetters
 - Patients with Dissociative Identity Disorders
 - Last but not least, addictions
- 

Harry Feamster told me once:

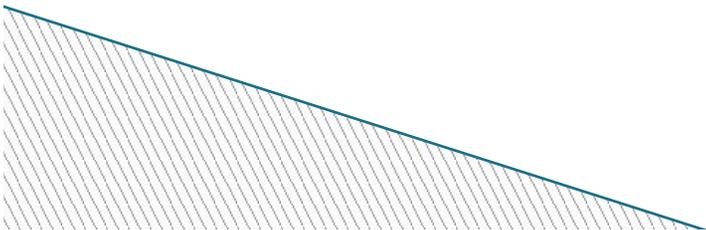
“Joe, hypnotherapy is the most economical psychotherapy tool we have. It is quick and effective.”

I can often find out as much in one hour of hypnotherapeutic uncovering as I could in many, many hours of traditional talk-type therapy.



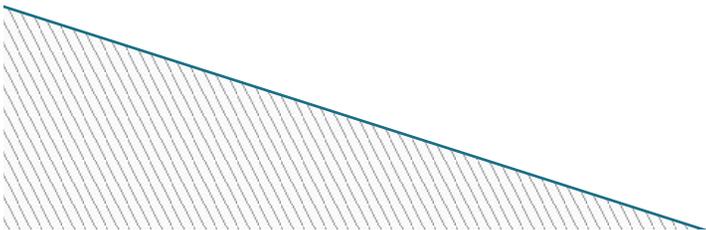
The First Session

- ▶ Talk with clients who come in seeking treatment for addictions about the “acting-out cycle.”
- ▶ Idea is that when one engages in a behavior that causes feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame, the logical, rational response would be to say: “Well I’m not going to do that again. I don’t like the way I felt after doing that!”



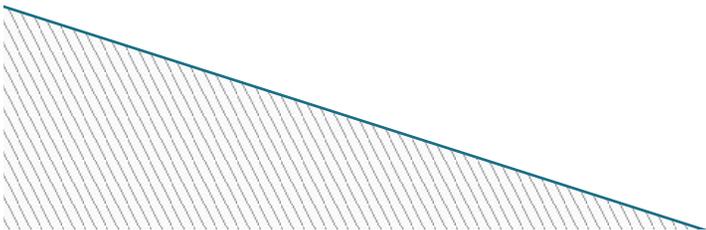
The First Session

- ▶ BUT – the very behavior that caused the negative feelings arouses the person to a level of excitement (or calm) that gets them over the negative feelings.
- ▶ The high that comes with drinking, or drugs, or gambling, for example, helps one forget the previous negative feelings, and so the behavior continues to be repeated in a cyclical fashion.



When a Patient Questions Hypnotizability

- ▶ My standard answer is, “Oh anybody bright and creative can be hypnotized.”
- ▶ I always start off by providing an overview of what hypnosis is and what it is not!

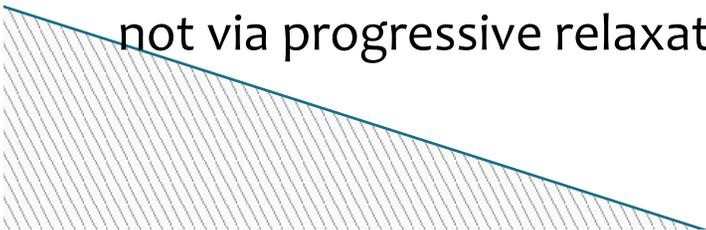


Pre-Induction Techniques

- Muscle Testing demonstration
- Test of hypnotic suggestibility

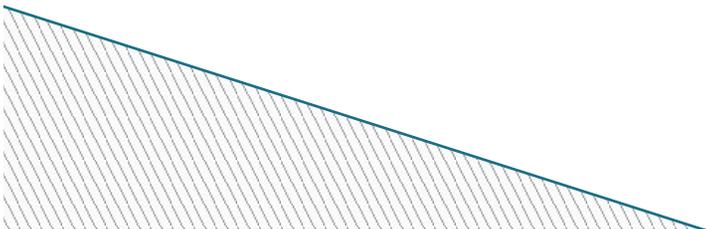
First Hypnotic Session

- ▶Reverse arm levitation technique
- ▶Deep breathing techniques
- ▶Deepening technique involving visual imagery of an elevator ride (unless the client has an elevator phobia) to a safe and comfortable room.
- ▶*Different induction techniques are used in subsequent sessions, including eye fixation, an eye roll approach, and progressive relaxation (imagined, not via progressive relaxation exercises).*



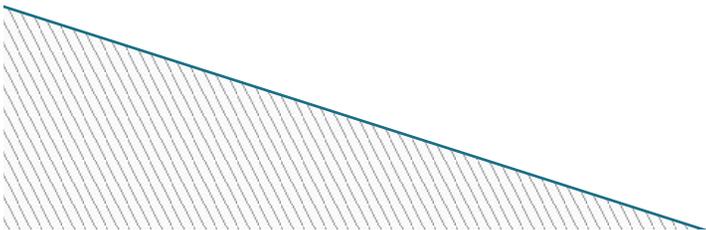
Deepening Techniques

- ▶ Different deepening techniques are also employed, in subsequent sessions, such as
 - Staircase
 - Escalator
 - Gently sloping hill, always counting the client down.
 - Counting forward, with each number taking him/her to a *higher level of relaxation*.



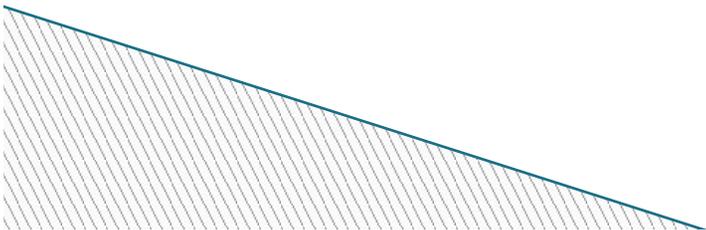
▶ The sessions typically go from more structured, detailed approaches to shorter, less detailed and more flexible ones. I prefer the reverse arm levitation technique in the first hypnotic session because this approach is slower and more dramatic than some of the others.

- ▶ Diaphragmatic breathing
- ▶ Visual imagery
- ▶ Practice Effect
- ▶ Generalization Effect



Self-Hypnosis Instruction

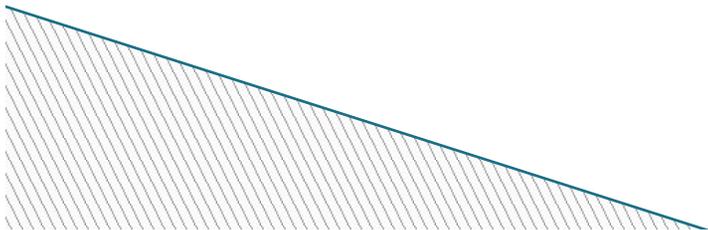
- ▶ **Step 1**: Eye Fixation
- ▶ **Step 2**: Deep Breathing
- ▶ **Step 3**: Visual Imagery involving *going deeper*



The Power of Story



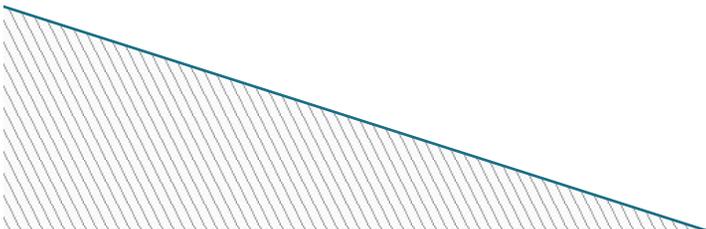
- ▶ “I believe in the power of story to awaken, to challenge, to enrich, and to heal. Come sit by my fire.”
- ▶ Dawn Daniels, Stone Soup Productions



Stories



- ▶ The man whose wife passed away
- ▶ The woman whose husband sabotaged her
- ▶ The Road Home
- ▶ The Boxer
- ▶ Las Vegas High

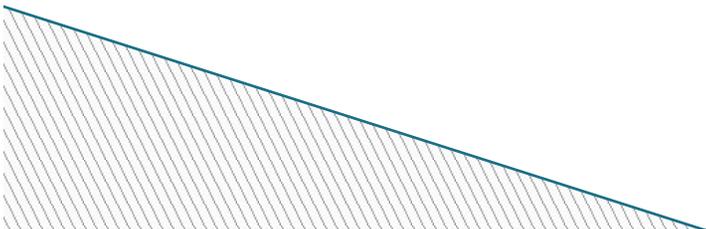


Stories

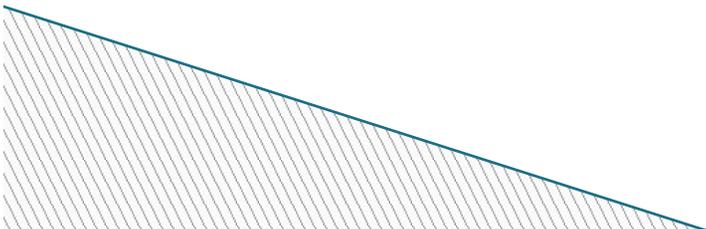
▶ I typically share various stories with the client – in or out of hypnosis.

◦ Junkie

◦ Fake-fun



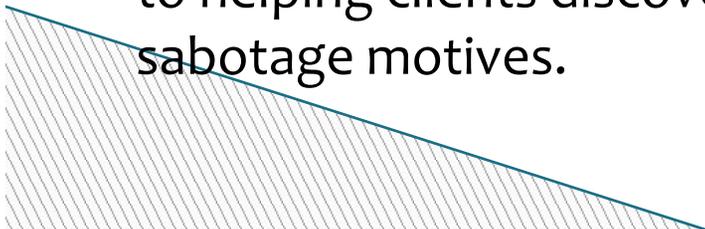
- ▶ Pieper & Pieper's (2003) book entitled *Addicted to Unhappiness* or one of Carolyn Myss' (2002) archetypes "Saboteur" may be discussed.
- ▶ Individuals who are high-functioning tend to describe how just when everything seems like it is going well for them, they will do something to "screw up."
- ▶ They are usually not consciously aware of what might trigger their self-destructive tendencies.



Other Techniques



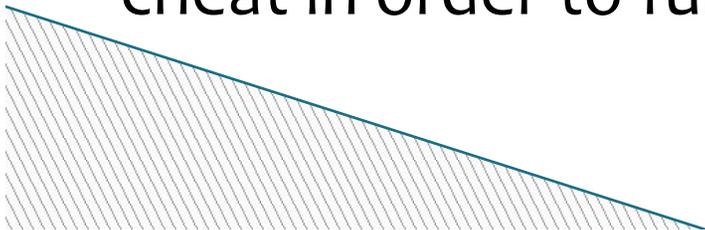
- ▶ Covert Sensitization (Cautela, 1966)
- ▶ Collapsing Anchors Technique (Zimberoff, 1999)
- ▶ Note: Cross-addictions may be of concern.
- ▶ Changing one's playground & playmates
 - Story of patient whose friend showed up early one morning.
 - Story of University of Mississippi's marijuana fields.
- Space Travel Meditation
- Dealing with Resentments
 - In summary, using as many techniques as possible to investigate self-defeating possibilities should be given priority. Time must also be devoted to helping clients discover their own techniques for discovering their self-sabotage motives.



Gambling Addiction



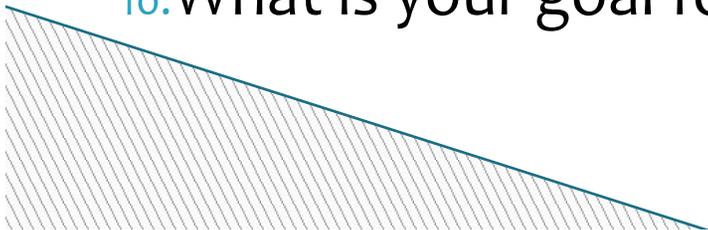
- ▶ Not all gamblers are pathological gamblers, no more than all drinkers are alcoholic or even problem drinkers.
- ▶ The behavior is only pathological if it is controlling you instead of you controlling it.
- ▶ However, with gambling addicts, it is usually an addiction almost as serious as crack cocaine addiction in the degree of deviousness involved in it. The gambling addicts I have worked with will steal, lie, and cheat in order to fund their addiction.



Betting Questionnaire



1. At what age did you make your first bet?
2. Where were you/on what were you betting?
3. Did you win that bet?
4. Has there been a progression in the amounts bet?
5. Have you ever lied to anyone important to you about the extent of your gambling?
6. Have you ever thought you were gambling too much?
7. Have you ever had arguments/conflicts with others about your gambling?
8. Do you ever feel guilty about gambling?
9. Have you tried to quit or cut back? If so, what happened?
10. What is your goal for this treatment?



Current Techniques



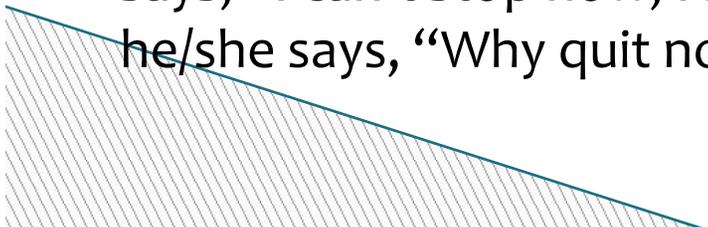
- ▶ Education

- ▶ “Law of Large Numbers” – if the “house” has even a slight percentage edge (which they all do), they will eventually lose.

- ▶ “Comps”

- ▶ Probability statistics – developed using gambling models. Casinos are quite aware of the statistics for their games.

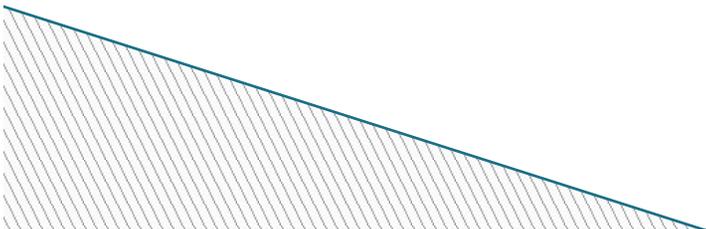
- ▶ “The Gambler’s Fallacy” – if the gambler is winning, he/she says, “Well why stop now. Now I’m playing with their money.” If losing, he/she says, “I can’t stop now; I need to recoup my losses.” If breaking even, he/she says, “Why quit now? I didn’t come here to break even!”



Examples



- ▶ Gamblers' Anonymous: Different than AA, NA?
- ▶ World Champion – Women's Poker?
- ▶ ESPN: Poker a sport?



Techniques

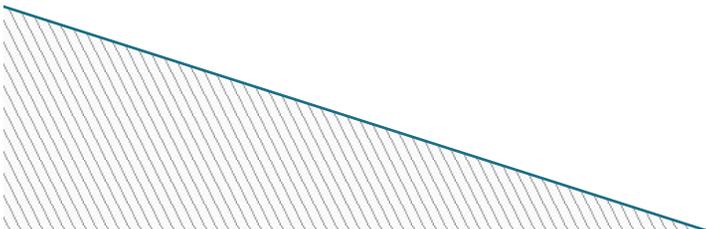


- ▶ Lingo
- ▶ Hypnosis
- ▶ Stories/Metaphors
 - “Good players”
 - “I just play match-play chips”
 - Ewin’s Techniques: Ideomotor Signaling (case example)
 - One Failure: Moderation Approach (case example)
- ▶ Covert Sensitization (Cautela, 1966)
- ▶ Collapsing Anchors Technique (Zimmeroff, 1999)

Cross Addictions

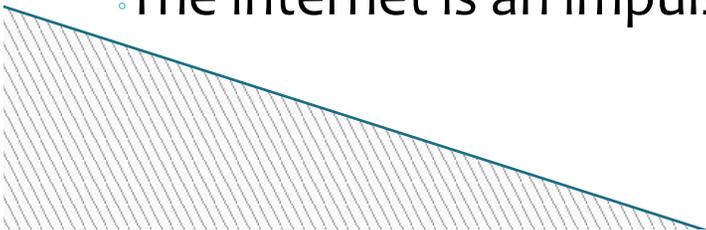


- ▶ Casinos are famous for giving their players “free” drinks. It is for this reason that traditional AA/NA-based rehab programs tell their patients they “can’t go” to casinos and stay clean and sober.
- ▶ Case example: “Closet smoker,” video poker gambler



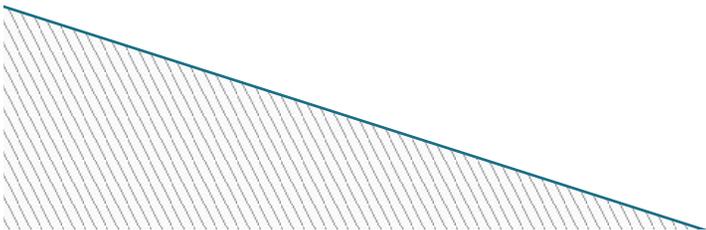
Conclusions

- ▶ Addictions appear to be a very ripe field for hypnosis and hypnotherapy.
- ▶ Addicts are looking for the “quick fix.” While we cannot provide “magical cures,” hypnotic techniques are certainly very effective in dealing with addictions.
- ▶ Many other addictions not covered... including sexual addictions, shopping, people with whom the client is obsessed, pornography, the internet, etc.
 - 16 million Americans suffer from compulsive sexual behavior, sometimes called the “least understood of all addictions.”
 - The internet is an impulse-control disorder, like gambling.



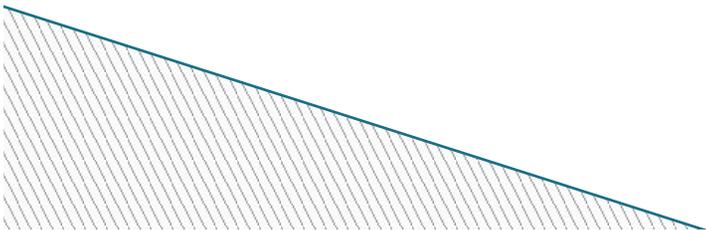
Important Lesson

- ▶ In Step One of the 12-step programs, one learns that anything can be substituted for alcohol.
- ▶ Often, the addiction is the primary problem but is hidden behind some other presenting problem.
 - Example of Atlanta Contract



Word of Caution

- ▶ Many of the individuals with gambling, drug and other addictions turn out to be quite the “Con Men/Women”
- ▶ One “eye-opening” experience – individual with a “created identity” who was referred for anger issues.
- ▶ Be careful teaching hypnosis/self-hypnosis to sociopaths!



In my first ASCH training session in 1978, one of the presenters said, in the Basic Workshop,

“Hypnosis will not only change your practice, it will change your life.”

The possibilities are limitless!

