

# Mindfulness and Hypnosis

with

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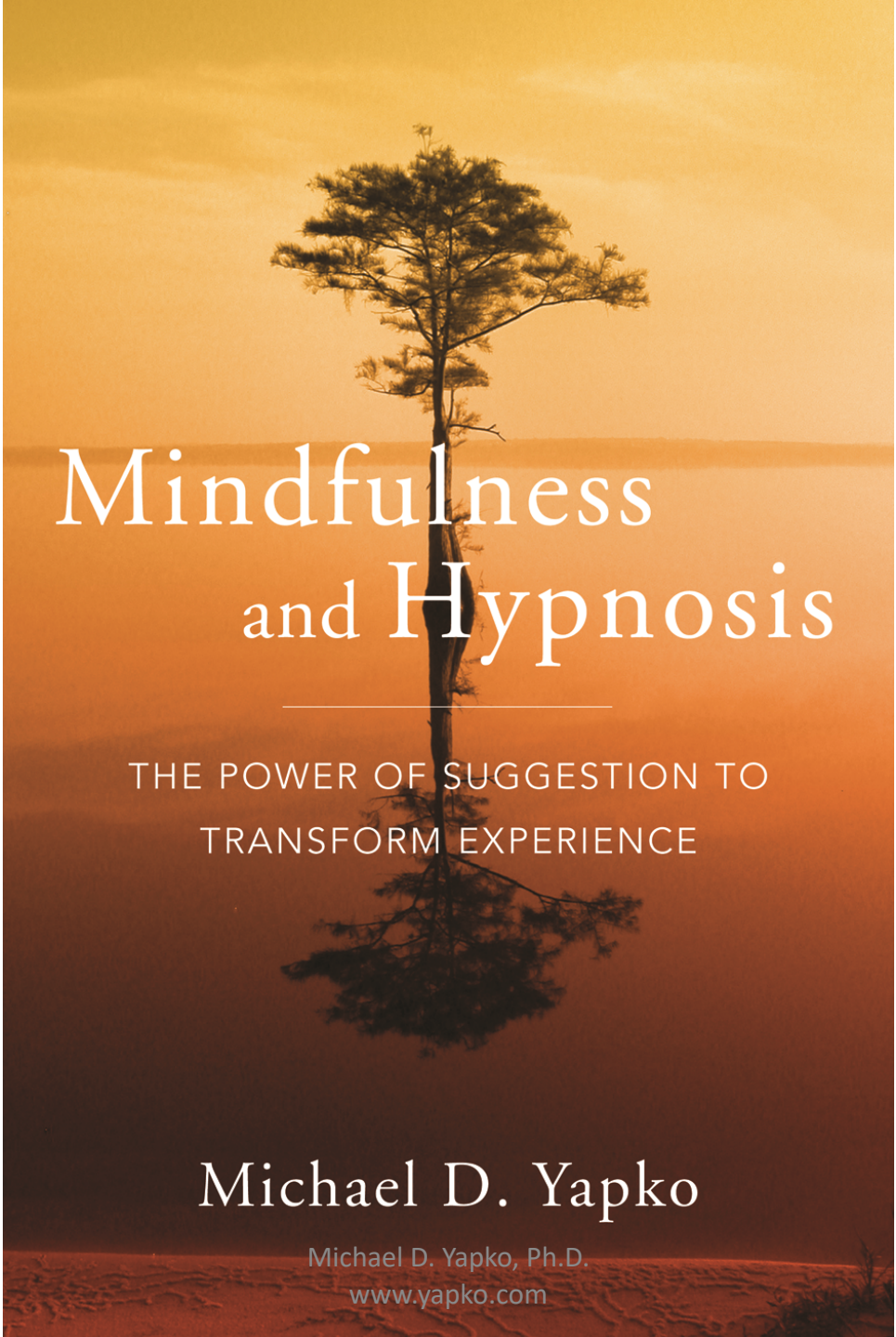
To encourage a more “whole person” participation, clinicians have begun to use guided mindfulness meditations (GMMs)

These have proved valuable in reducing anxiety, depression, and pain (and many other conditions); GMMs work, but *how* do they work?

# To Answer Such a Question, We Must Consider Different Levels of Analysis

- Strive to identify **changes in the brain and nervous system**?
- Explore the **historical roots** of the practice?
- Analyze the prevailing **social conditions** giving rise to its popularity?
- Explore the **therapeutic relationship** in which it is practiced?
- Measure the tangible **clinical benefits**?
- Contemplate the **spiritual dimension** and its tangible and intangible benefits?

My Own Level of Analysis is on the *Language* of Mindfulness-  
the *Linguistic and Semantic Components* of the Things  
Clinicians *Actually Say* to Their Clients and The *Suggested*  
Effects

A vertical rectangular image with a warm, orange-gold color palette. It depicts a single, dark silhouette of a tree standing on a sandy beach. The tree's reflection is clearly visible in the calm water in the foreground. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# Mindfulness and Hypnosis

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THE POWER OF SUGGESTION TO  
TRANSFORM EXPERIENCE

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Hypnosis, the study of how people generate experience, especially in response to suggestions from others (as in GMMs) has a great deal to offer in terms of relevant insights into these methods

# Like Hypnosis, The Word Mindfulness Can Have Different Meanings

- A system of thought
- A vehicle for self-exploration
- A path to enlightenment
- A means of living

Mindfulness emphasizes the importance of establishing a greater focus on being in the present moment rather than rehashing the unchangeable past or anticipating a future that may never happen.



Mindfulness makes use of guided meditations that are structurally identical to hypnosis sessions, but they are preceded by a very different statement of expectancy:

*“This is a process of cultivating generosity, compassion and openness toward yourself, an orientation of non-harming ”* (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

The field of hypnosis has a considerably longer history of exploring many of the key factors – *especially unconscious ones* - that regulate peoples' response to experiential processes in general and GMMs in particular

Modern clinical hypnosis employs attentional focusing strategies to elicit healing resources the patient may not even know he or she has, empowering him or her in the process

# The Key Questions:

- How does paying attention – focusing – translate into non-volitional yet meaningful responses?
- Why do some people respond so dramatically to experiential processes such as mindfulness, finding them “transformative”?
- What general factors determine one’s capacity to respond?
- What role do specific factors such as expectancy, suggestibility, and dissociation play in patient responsiveness?
- Can an individual’s quality of responsiveness be increased?

# Common Elements of Mindfulness and Hypnosis

Hypnosis and Mindfulness are *experiential processes* that share the common structural components of ***suggestion*** and ***dissociation***; they both hold great potential to ***redirect attention*** and ***expand awareness*** in meaningful directions

# Common Elements of Mindfulness and Hypnosis

Both methodologies are built on a foundation of capacity for focus. What do we know about the relationship between guided experiences such as these and factors such as the client's attentional capacity, dissociative ability, cognitive style, and other such influential patterns ?

# Mindfulness and Hypnosis

- Both are non-rational
- Both involve utilizing attentional capacities
- Both emphasize the importance of full participation in the moment
- Both emphasize the potential for personal growth derived from the experience
- Both emphasize acceptance as a precursor to greater well-being
- Both use language as priming agents for stimulating expansive unconscious, automatic processes

# Suggestions Catalyze the Goals of Treatment

- *Here is the greatest overlap between mindfulness applied therapeutically in a goal oriented way and hypnosis.*
- Hypnosis is unabashedly, overtly goal-oriented.
- It establishes an expectation and then gently leads the client (with direct and/or indirect suggestions) on an experiential path towards fulfilling that expectation.
- *When guided mindful meditations are explicit in their goals, their methods are every bit as suggestive as hypnosis.*



# Does Either Hypnosis or Mindfulness Cure People?

**NO!** It's what happens ***DURING*** these experiences - the new and beneficial associations the client forms through the shift in focus and absorption in new possibilities – that holds the potential to be therapeutic

The ability to detach from your own thoughts and other aspects of your internal experience is essential to transforming it

# Dissociation is Evident in Suggestions for Mindfulness

- **“Focus on acceptance”** *suggests* separating what one wishes for or strives to deny from what is
- **“Focus on breathing”** *suggests* separating one’s attention on breathing from other elements of experience
- **“Focus on compassion”** *suggests* separating one’s attention from the usual self (or other) criticism
- **“See your thoughts as if clouds floating across the sky”** *suggests* separating one’s thoughts from Self

# Dissociation and Automaticity

- In hypnosis, dissociation becomes especially evident when people respond non-volitionally, that is, without conscious effort, to a suggestion. For example, a clinician might suggest an experience of lightness or warmth in his or her body; Suggestions are offered for the client to *allow* the experience of lightness or warmth. The client is not aware of expending any effort to respond, instead the feelings of lightness or warmth seem to “*just happen.*”

“It is easier to meditate than actually do something for others. I feel that merely to meditate on compassion is to take the passive option. Our meditation should form the basis for action, for seizing the opportunity to do something.”

**The Dalai Lama**