

Remote Hypnosis & NLP Sessions

Introduction

In these trying times, many are suffering. People are anxious, frightened, and need our help as hypnotherapists and NLP practitioners. But in the current environment, it may not be advisable to see clients in person. Given this situation, many of us practicing hypnosis & NLP might see our income, and with it, our ability to help people plummet.

This document is meant to help you with one potential solution to this situation -- remote sessions. With remote sessions, you can both help people, and keep your practice going, even with travel restrictions in place.

Some of you may not feel remote sessions are appropriate. If that's so, then don't do them. This document is not an argument for doing remote sessions, it's guidelines and suggestions for those who wish to do them.

I've divided this document into 3 sections; a techniques section, with ideas about what techniques to use, and how to adapt existing techniques to remote sessions, a technical section on how to do remote sessions, and a legalities section.

Techniques

How do your techniques have to change, when working remotely?

An estimated 70% of your techniques won't have to change at all, when working remotely. Most of the rest will just require a little forethought and small changes. A few techniques will have to be abandoned (unless you can get more creative than I am).

Here's what I suggest, as a general approach to remote sessions . . .

- In your mind, go back through the processes you've used in your last 5 sessions.
- Examine each process for things you might have to change when working remotely. Did you touch them? Did you have to see a certain part of their body, or get visual or auditory feedback that would be difficult over video, or phone?
- Think of alternate ways to complete those parts of the processes, or alternate processes you could use.

As an example, I need to see the client from the waist up when doing parts work, and I need to model the process for them, so ideally, they should see me from the waist up, too. So this becomes part of my setup when doing parts work.

What kind of inductions can you use?

In my office, I like to use the Elman induction. It involves picking up arms and dropping them down. Done the classic way, that one is out for remote sessions. Here are a couple that are easy for remote work.

Overload Induction

The overload induction gives the client a bunch of things to do, all of them leading toward trance. Here's a list of what I usually go for (you can substitute any hypnotic phenomenon).

- eye fixation/closure
- arm levitation
- amnesia
- mental relaxation
- Catalepsy

The Induction Procedure

Make sure you can see the client from the waist up.

Eye Fixation/Closure

Have the client pick a spot on the wall and fix their eyes on it. Instruct them that they are to keep their eyes on that spot only, but if the eyes get too tired, they can close.

Catalepsy

“Do you know how you feel sometimes when you wake up, and you decide to move but your body just doesn't want to? Nothing short of an emergency would get you out of bed in that moment. You're so relaxed you just stay completely relaxed.”

Well, you can create that feeling deliberately. I'd like you to imagine one of your arms is so heavy, and so relaxed, that it just stays where it is. You can try to think about moving it, but that makes it feel even heavier and more relaxed. Get that feeling in your arm now. Imagine it's so relaxed and heavy, it's as if it's stuck to your leg. Go ahead and try to move and find it just stays right there.”

Mention the eyes again, if they're still open. Suggest that looking at the spot on the wall is making the eyes tired and heavy, and they can stay open and remain fixed on the spot, or feel wonderfully relaxed, closing.

Arm Levitation

Now, allow that hand to continue to enjoy being so relaxed, and notice that the heavier it feels, the lighter your other arm feels. Soon, your light arm will be so light, your fingers will want to lift up. I don't know which one it will lift up first. It may start with a little twitch. Which will twitch first?”

Keep encouraging lightness in one arm, and heaviness in the other, and positively reinforcing anything they do that direction. When the light arm starts to move, suggest that it float up, “As slowly as humanly possible.”

However slowly it moves, suggest it move even slower. It's got to be so slow they lose track of it.

Then suggest they slowly start counting backward from 100. Slow them down when they start too fast. Suggest that each number mentally relaxes them to the point the numbers just drop out of their awareness.

Every once-in-a-while, cycle through the various phenomena. If their eyes aren't closed, suggest they're heavy. Direct their attention back to the heavy arm and reinforce the heaviness. Remind the light arm to move as slowly as humanly possible. If they've continued counting, reinforce the suggestions of mental relaxation, and the numbers fading away.

I like to float their arm up to their face, and suggest that when it reaches their face, the arm drops down and they go into a deep, profound trance.

The Flowers Induction

Dr. Sidney Flowers created an induction that's famous among hypnotists. It's called the Flowers induction, it's easy to do and works pretty well most of the time. There are various versions of this induction type out there. Here's a nice one, big picture first.

The Big Picture

The flowers induction involves

- Eye fixation
- Setting expectations
- Counting/fractionation/eyes opening and closing

Eye Fixation

You can do eye fixation, in different ways. I like to have folks pick a spot on the opposite wall and have them expand their awareness outward so that they're looking in the direction of the spot but not at it. Or, you just have them pick a spot and suggest that they'll focus on that spot until their eyes become tired and close.

A third alternative is to have them engage their imaginations.

Look at the wall opposite you as if you're dreaming. Look through the wall and see a nice, comforting scene.

Setting Expectations For The Flowers Induction

In the setting expectations portion, you'll tell your client what's going to happen. You'll start speaking in the future tense and let the client know both what they're going to experience and what their role is. It might go something like...

In a moment, you'll find all your muscles relaxing. Your face will relax, your shoulders will relax, your arms and legs relax and your whole body lets go. Soon, you close your eyes and go into a deep, peaceful hypnotic rest.

Soon, I'm going to count from one to twenty. On each number, you'll close your eyes. In between numbers, you may open your eyes. Sometime before I reach the count of 20, you'll just close your eyes and go into a calm, tranquil hypnotic rest. Maybe at the count of 15, 10 or even 5, you go into a deep, peaceful hypnotic rest. Your eyes will just get so relaxed that it will be more comfortable to leave them closed.

At this point, either demonstrate the count/eyes closing or ask the client to do it for a few numbers, so you know they understand the instructions.

The Countdown

Then, you begin counting slowly, making sure they're following instructions and occasionally giving them encouragement and instructions. For instance, you can add, "Each time you hear a number and close your eyes, you relax more and more, letting go of any tension. It simply becomes easier and more comfortable to let the eyes stay closed."

Even after they stop opening their eyes, continue the count all the way, adding suggestions that they're relaxing completely and experiencing a nice hypnotic trance.

That's the Flowers induction — add it to your toolbox!

How do you deepen trance when working remotely?

Deepening trance is basically just making a suggestion that some event is tied to a client going more fully into trance. It's not so important what that event is -- you can use almost anything.

I like to do an arm drop. "In a moment, I'm going to pick up your arm, and plop it down. When I do, and each time I do, you'll go twice as deep into trance (picks up arm, drops it down). Twice as deep!"

In that instance, I've tied the arm dropping down to going deeper into trance. But you can't reach through the screen and pick up someone's arm when you're doing remote sessions! But you can use many, many classic deepeners, or create your own.

Elevators and escalator deepening can be used exactly the same as with in-person sessions. The phrase, "With each deep and easy, natural breath, you go deeper and deeper", works. Countowns work fine. "I'm going to count from five to one, with each number you'll get more relaxed and go deeper into hypnosis. Five, relaxing even more, Four, twice as deep. On the next number, find yourself really enjoying your deepening relaxation. Three. Really enjoy it. Two, going deeper. One. Deeper even still."

In these last two cases, I've linked numbers and breathing to going deeper, but you can use anything. It just has to be language based rather than picking up arms, or other physical deepeners.

Direct Suggestion

Direct suggestion is perhaps the easiest technique to adapt to remote sessions. Direct suggestion is when, after hypnotizing someone, you simply give them instructions.

"From now on, when you are about to speak in front of a group, a feeling of calm automatically flows through every cell of your body, and you speak with ease and confidence."

Direct suggestion may not be the fanciest technique, but it works. It's a service we can all provide to people who need our help in these trying times.

What about regression?

Many regression techniques will work just fine over the phone, or internet. Just as in person, it's a good idea to set up an anchor for dissociation and safety. It's good to be extra careful here, as you have less control over the remote client.

Calendar Regression

If you're regressing to a known date, you can use the calendar technique (have them imagine looking at a calendar, and the pages of the calendar are turning, and as they turn, the client travels into the past).

The Affect Bridge Regression Technique

The affect bridge regression technique uses current and past emotions as a breadcrumb trail to find the root cause of a problem.

Big picture, the technique goes like this . . .

1. Set up a way for them to achieve a feeling for safety and/or dissociation -- a safe place, or an anchor.
2. Figure out what feeling is causing the problem, or happens immediately before the problem (For instance, if they have an anxiety problem, that's the feeling you want to identify. If they're a smoker, they likely feel either an uncomfortable feeling just before they smoke, or a nice feeling which motivates them to smoke. That's what you want to identify).
3. Have them associate into that feeling (You can suggest they step into a time they felt that feeling).

4. Once they have that feeling in their body, have them say to themselves (internally), “Go to an earlier time when I had this same sensation”, and notice what thought comes up.
5. Do that perhaps three times, and , “Go to the first time you ever experienced this emotion -- the time that, once resolved, will make this issue completely disappear”.

Here’s an example of this technique.

<https://www.hypnosis101.com/hypnosis-tips/affect-bridge-example/>

Once you locate the root cause, you can use any technique you might typically use on a root cause event.

The Library Technique

1. Induce trance.
2. Suggest the client find themselves in a library that contains all of their experiences.
3. Have them find their way to a row of books that contain all their good experiences on one side, and ‘not-so-good’ experiences on the other side (the colors of the books can be different, if you like).
4. Have the client notice a book on the ‘not-so-good’ side that has the title of the specific issue they want to deal with (for instance the title could be “Smoking”, or “Anxiety”).
5. Tell the client that the book contains everything about the issue -- all their experiences, all the information -- everything.
6. Suggest they pick the book off the shelf and notice that the back cover of the book contains a synopsis of anything of value to be learned from the situation. Suggest they absorb any valuable lessons or information -- give them time to do so. If they like, they can tell you any insight they received, but it’s not necessary.
7. Have them take the book and go to the nearby furnace, or fireplace (it’s a nice library) and that when they throw the book into the fire, every aspect of the issue will disappear, except the learning and insight that they may have received earlier. As the book burns completely, the issue disappears, and they have new strengths, thoughts, behaviors and emotions that help them to live the way they want to live.
8. Have them throw the book into the fire and notice how they start to feel differently.

How can you anchor?

Many NLP practitioners think of anchoring as a touch technique. They help the client get into a state, and they squeeze the client's shoulder, perhaps. It’s useful to anchor in the three major representational systems -- visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. It builds redundancy into the technique, and one ‘rep system’ might be more effective than another for a particular client.

What many don’t think about though, is that they are already using all three rep systems. When they move toward the client in a specific way, to squeeze the client’s shoulder, that can become

a visual anchor (if the client's eyes are open). If the practitioner is anchoring the state of calmness, and they say the word "calmness" in a particular way, both the tonality and the word can become anchors. And, there's the squeezing of the shoulder, too.

We want to build that redundancy in with remote sessions, too, when we can.

Here's how . . .

- Before you go for an anchor, make sure you have rapport with the client. When they go into the resource state to anchor it, you go into that same state too!
- When a client is feeling a resource state. Notice how their tonality shifts when they speak. Notice what specific words they use when they talk about it. Mirror that tonality, and those words, when you set the anchor. That way, you're feeding their existing, internal anchors back to them.
- Make a subtle motion while you're setting an anchor. Nothing distracting. Don't worry if they aren't looking.
- Have them set the physical anchor. It should be something reasonably unique, but not distracting or too strange. I sometimes have the client touch the third finger to the palm of the hand to set the anchor.

No you have an anchor, and anytime you want to fire it off, simply ask the client to touch their third finger to the palm of their hand in the way they did before. As they do, feed their resource state words and tonality back to them, make your subtle motion, and go into the resource state, yourself, if it's practical.

It takes a bit of practice to do this consistently. Remember, it's a redundant system. If you get one or two things right (especially if you have rapport, and go into the state yourself), you're liable to have a decent anchor.

What about timeline work?

Timeline work is when you use, or create a representation of time to help a client regress, or find memories, or set goals for the future. I like to lay a timeline out on the floor of my office, with one direction representing the past, and another the future. I can walk the client up and down the timeline (into the past, present, or future), anchor different emotions by touching their shoulder at an opportune time, and dissociate them from any traumatic events by stepping them physically off the timeline.

Well, I can't do most of that remotely. So, how do you adapt?

Well, just like your in-person session, you'll want to set up your resource anchors in advance. Set an anchor for dissociation, and whatever resource you, or the client thinks might be useful.

A good way to come up with resources is to ask what's the opposite feeling to what the client is currently experiencing with their problem. Maybe they bite their nails and feel anxious, and calmness is the opposite feeling, to them. Get an anchor for calmness.

Have those anchors ready before you have them step into a timeline.

You can work with timelines without physically walking, by having the client close their eyes, and imagine they're floating up above their life, and they see time represented down below. Have them practice floating further up, away from events (dissociation). Have them take some trips into innocuous events and practice dropping down into the events and experiencing them first person, and then floating up, out of those events.

In other words, teach them control, and get them used to following your directions.

With that, and your resource anchors, you can pretty much do anything you could have in the office.

Technical Setup

What equipment do you need?

You can do remote sessions with a phone, or computer, a stable internet connection, and any reasonably quiet space that allows for client confidentiality.

Ideal setup

Most laptops, phones and tablets have built-in webcams and microphones. These will work. An ideal setup would be a computer, a webcam, a good internet connection, and a headset microphone, on your end. Each client will need a phone, tablet or computer, internet or data connection, a webcam and a microphone, as well. Most will use their phone, or laptop with built-in cameras and mics.

Why a headset microphone for you?

Headset mics are best to minimize room noise, as they stay close to your mouth. And with the speakers close to your ears, you avoid potential feedback and echo.

The gist of it is, when you use microphones and speakers, the speakers produce sound, which gets picked up by the microphone, and cycles back through again -- echo. If your microphone can't 'hear' your speakers (as with a headset), you don't get that echo.



Suggested headsets

USB is good, unless you have a really old computer. Logitech makes good headsets. The models change regularly. Get a lightweight headset -- not one where the earpieces cover your whole ear. Look for frequency response from 200 Hz - 5,000 Hz, or better (100 Hz - 10,000 Hz is better).

Units of thousands of Hertz (Hz) are sometimes abbreviated as kHz, so 10 kHz, is the same as 10,000 Hz.

Second best setup

This is the setup I (Keith Livingston) use. I use an external microphone, and an external webcam, both plugged in to my laptop via USB. I listen through speakers plugged into my laptop (at a fairly low volume).

If I have an echo problem, I put on headphones, and turn off the speakers.

Suggested external microphones, webcams, and speakers

Mics: You don't have to break the bank for a USB mic. Almost any mic over \$40 will probably do. Here are some that are a little more. Rode NT-1 microphone, Blue Yeti, Blue Snowball pictured below.



Webcams: Logitech C920



Workable setups

Any modern phone with a camera, an iPad or other tablet, or using a laptop's built in webcam and speaker will work, just fine.

Sessions With Zoom

Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and sign up for an account. Your clients don't have to have an account. When it's time for a session . . .

How to test your zoom session before session time.

1. Plug any webcams and microphones in.
2. Go to zoom.us and sign in.
3. Select "Host a meeting" with video on (unless you're doing an audio only session).
4. Follow the download, or open prompts
5. After a few seconds your webcam image will appear
6. If you mouse over your webcam image, in the lower left-hand corner, you'll see a microphone icon, and a video icon, with arrows next to them. Click on the arrows and select the correct microphone, speakers and webcam.
7. In the microphone menu, select "Test Speaker & Microphone" and follow the prompts. Do this every time.
8. When you're ready, click on invite, and send the invitation to your client.
9. When you invite them, your client will receive a link in their email that will take them to Zoom, and directly to your video conference.

Other suggestions

- Always sign in a few minutes early, and go through the test procedure to make sure everything's working.
- If you consult with the client before your first session, do it using the same technology. That way you can get any technical bugs worked out in advance, or switch to another platform that's easier for your client.

Other video conferencing solutions

Skype and Facebook messenger are widely used throughout the world. Each has a similar setup to Zoom, in that there is a settings menu and you can choose your webcam, microphone, and speakers. Many people have Facebook and already know how to use messenger. If they already have Skype on their computer and know how to use it -- fine. Zoom is simple and only requires a very small download.

What you want to avoid is getting caught in a technical quagmire, in which the client has to download something and it's not working, the session time is going by, and you're not a computer tech. I would advise that you do one or more of these things.

1. Develop a system and use the same piece of software every time. Get to know it. Develop a procedure to onboard your clients with this software. For instance, you can send them instructions for testing out Zoom before your session. Or . . .
2. If you're comfortable with technology, let your clients choose which software works for them.
3. Test the setup with your clients by having a five minute chat at some convenient time well before the session. It will give you time to deal with potential technical issues.

Troubleshooting Technical Problems

One of the benefits of testing your setup before every session, is that it eliminates half the potential troubleshooting options. You'll know where the problem is -- on their end.

Zoom has a chat feature, and if they start talking away and you can't hear them, or if they start motioning that they can't hear you, use the chat.

If they can't hear you, ask them if they have their speakers turned on. If they say yes, ask them to go to YouTube and watch the first few seconds of any video, to see if they can hear it. Chances are 9 out of 10, they forgot to turn something on, or plug something in, or turn something up. If they can't hear YouTube, that will become obvious.

If they can hear YouTube, but they can't hear you, there's not a whole lot you can do. You can have them check their preferences, but that's difficult to explain over chat. If you have their

phone number, call them and lead them through it. I've had reboots solve mysterious problems before.

One final note -- it's good to develop a backup system that you can go to at a moment's notice. As an example, have a phone or tablet charged up, with Facebook messenger loaded, and ready to go. If there's a problem you can't solve quickly, just pop over to your phone, call them on messenger and away you go. But this only works if you're ready for it!

Legalities

Nothing in this document should be taken as legal advice. If you want legal advice specific to your location and situation, please consult a legal professional.

That being said, the legalities of working across borders are tricky. I (Keith Livingston), once consulted a lawyer about doing remote sessions across state lines (I was in one state, and the client in a different state of the US).

Most states have no regulations at all with regard to practicing hypnotherapy or NLP, beyond getting a business license and other business laws. But what if the client was in a state that did have regulations?

The first subject the lawyer and I discussed was where the session was legally located. Would a court of law consider the session to be in my state, or the client's state, or both? His answer was that I certainly needed to follow all the laws of my state, the same as if it were an in-person session. As to the client's state -- that was more of an open question. Perhaps I needed to abide by their rules. But here was the upshot . . .

He told me that most likely, there would be no problem. But even if there was a complaint and the remote state decided to take action, the most likely outcome would only be a cease and desist letter from the remote state. In other words, they would say, "Stop this".

He further pointed out that another state would have little power in compelling me to do anything. There are no extradition agreements between states for this kind of thing. They don't have the power to do much to you. And doing a remote session, if it were a problem, is not high up the list in terms of seriousness.

It was a bit of an unsettling answer, for me. A summary of what I understood was, "The law is not completely clear here, but the risk is very low." That's my summary, not his. And this is from memory -- again, it's not legal advice.

And, of course, you may not be working in the US, or you may be working across national borders. Consult a lawyer.

HIPPA Compliance

HIPPA compliance is a set of regulations regarding privacy, security and ownership of patient records, in the US. Whether hypnotherapists are required to follow HIPPA regulations is another matter for debate. If you're concerned about HIPPA, again, you'll have to consult a lawyer.

HIPPA involves all aspects of recordkeeping and privacy, not just remote sessions.

Zoom can be HIPPA compliant, but is not HIPPA compliant out of the box. If Zoom signs an agreement with you regarding HIPPA, it's a HIPPA compliant setup. Here's a link with more info . . . <https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-hipaa.pdf>

Different countries may have their own regulations with regard to privacy. They'll likely be similar to HIPPA regulations.

So, what do we advise, in terms of remote sessions? Follow the laws of your locality, both in terms of sessions and record-keeping, and consult a legal professional for anything more.

Conclusion

I hope you are all well, and remain well during this crisis, and beyond. Please take care of yourselves and follow the advice for keeping yourself, and your families safe. The world has changed now, and we must adapt to it. I hope you've found this document useful in keeping your practice going, and fulfilling the vital role hypnotherapists and NLP practitioners fill in times of high stress.

Let's all do our part in creating a world where people can thrive.

Sincerely,

Keith Livingston: Director of Education

International Hypnosis Association

HypnosisCredentials.com