

# Hypnotherapy, pain relief essay sample



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I would like to talk about a slipped disk also known as a prolapsed disc or a spinal disc herniation and the closely related condition sciatica. When people say they have a slipped disc, they are often using a general term for back problems. Many people are unaware that the term 'slipped disc' can refer to a range of medical problems; all of which relate to the discs of soft tissue that separate the vertebrae in the spinal column. The spine is made up of 24 vertebrae, these vertebrae allow for a variety of movement. Flexion and extension [to bend forwards or backwards] and lateral flexion [side way movement and twisting].

Constant combinations of the two movements can put great strain on the back, which can then result in a slipped disc. A slipped disc can occur due to any one of the following, lifting, trauma, injury or an idiopathic reason. The discs are protective pads which lay between each vertebrae. The disc's job is to cushion and act as shock absorbers to the spine when the body is moving. A slipped disc can occur along the complete length of the spinal column from the neck to the lower back.

Each disc is made up from a tough outer casing, [annulus fibrosus] this contains a soft gel like substance for which the medical term is nucleus pulposus. When the outer casing ruptures and the gel begins to protrude out between the vertebra and so a slipped disc has occurred. The slipped disc can not only cause a lot of severe back pain but can cause pain in any part of the body. If the slipped disc is pressing on nerves, the pain will go to wherever those nerves lead to in the body.

The pain caused by the slipped disc pressing on the nerves in the lumbar area is a condition known as sciatica, although sciatica can be caused by other conditions. The common sciatica symptoms are a pain which starts in the back and then moves down one or both of the legs. Other symptoms of sciatica include weakness numbness and tingling in the leg. This is caused by pressure in the sciatic nerve which runs down into the leg. The medical term for sciatica is acute nerve root compression or radiculopathy. Sciatica may also cause numbness or pins and needles in the leg and be associated with weakness such as foot drop which is difficulty lifting the toes and foot up or weakness when pushing off with the foot.

If the problem is a cervical slipped disc it will press on the nerves in the neck [cervical plexus and brachial plexus] this can cause a number of symptoms such as neck pain, headaches and pain in the face, shoulders, arms and hands. This may also cause numbness or pins and needles in the face, shoulder, arm or hand and may also be associated with weakness of shoulder, elbow, wrist or hand movements. Any one of these symptoms, or a combination of them, can indicate disc problems.

Normally symptoms are only felt on just one side of the body but if the prolapse is very large and is pressing on to the spinal cord or on to the cauda equina located in the lumbar region it can affect both sides of the body.

The most common area for a slipped disc to occur is in the lumbar region of the spine, in fact this accounts for ninety five percent of all people who suffer with a slipped disc. The second most common area is the cervical region of the spine and the third area is the thoracic region of the spine. A slipped disc

is most common in people aged between thirty and fifty years old and normally affects twice as many men than women.

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The diagnosis is made by a practitioner, he will base this on the symptoms, the history and a physical examination. Normally people can suffer for up to four to six weeks with a slipped disk, treatment will include rest, exercise and massage and pain relief to ease the pain. Over time the bulging prolapsed area will begin to regress and the pain will the ease off In worse cases where the symptoms appear to get worse over time then x rays are taken and if needed surgery is performed.

Tests for sciatica also include MRI scans other imaging tests and blood tests, Medical treatment for this is very basic and they just suggest painkillers and ice and heat to the painful area. Of course this condition will not go away with out treating the under lying condition which in this case is a slipped disc.

As I mentioned earlier some times painkillers are the only option for some people, but there are people who do not want to take pain killers all the time. This is where hypnotherapy could possibly help ease the pain. If some one came to me asking for treatment for a slipped disc I feel that I would ask my client for a letter from their doctor. The doctors letter would outline the severity of the slipped disc and also tell me if there were any secondary conditions such as sciatica. I would also find out what medication my client is using. I need to gather this information in order to evaluate whether it can treat them or not.

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Once I know I can treat the client as well as getting a full explanation of the clients pain I need to know how long they have suffered and if its on going or if it comes and goes. I would need to also know the times of day the pain occurs and what is the person doing at the time.

In discussion with my client during the initial consultation or from information I receive in a letter from their doctor I may discover that they are on anti depressants. As long as the client is just suffering from reative depression which has occurred due to their situation then it will be fine for me to treat them. The client may well be suffering from depression if so I would find out why, it could be due to the constant back pain. If this is so once the client has had a course of treatment for their back the depression may ease up.

I will also ask my client if they are doing all the things that they could be doing to help reduce the prolapse. In this case they would need to be taking gentle exercise, rest and massage. These may help to reduce the slipped disc over time. I could help to reduce the pain but the client needs to put the work in, in other areas if they want to resolve their back problem. Pain relief using Page three Cathy Bland

hypnotherapy is very effective but the pain relief will wear off. This is especially important in a case like a slipped disc because if the condition does deteriorate the client needs to know and they will be aware of this and can then get medical advice.

The relaxation part of the hypnotherapy will also be very benifitial to the client. As the slipped disk causes constant pain the muscles in that particular area will also be quite tense due to the constant pain. Giving and teaching  
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relaxation techniques will help by relaxing the muscles. The main issue here though is to use the hypnotherapy to help to reduce the pain of the slipped disc. Also depending on which nerves the prolapse is pressing on and where the pain is being directed, hypnotherapy can relieve this pain.

To promote pain relief or a reduction in pain hypnotherapy can aid the sub conscious by suggestion with an increased production of endorphins.

Endorphins are endogenous opioid peptides [digested chemicals within] and they function as neurotransmitters [chemicals that transmit]. Endorphins flow into the blood from the pituitary gland and also into the spinal cord and brain. When they reach the brain they interact with the opioid receptors to reduce the perception of pain. When the body releases enough endorphins it can have a very similar effect to the pain killing drugs morphine and codeine and the benefit is that they are not addictive , endorphins just serve a beneficial purpose.

A person with a slipped disc and the underlying conditions may be also suffering from stress because of the pain that they have to endure and how having this problem makes life so hard. The client may dread having to do daily tasks that used to once be easy just because they know that the task they have to do will cause them pain. Just the thought of having to do something that was once easy and pain free and now difficult and painful could cause stress and anxiety.

Hypnotherapy can ameliorate every thing that is concomitant with the pain of the slipped disk. Once the pain eases the the client will find general daily tasks much easier. Although while hypnotherapy is being performed on the

client positive affirmations will be given to reduce any anxiety and stress that the client did have.

During the hypnotherapy sessions the client is guided to visualise their complaint so that the unconscious mind can help to heal the body.

Visualisation of dials that they will see, the dial would be numbered from one to ten and suggestions would be made to the client to slowly turn the dial up. As the dial is turned up endorphins are released. The client could visualise the endorphins in any way that they decide, colours, shapes etc. Suggestions would then be made for the endorphins to travel to the place of pain, in this case the spine.

The place of pain could possibly be imagined as a colour and as the endorphins engulf the pain the colour changes to a pleasant healing colour of the client's choice. The endorphins are then visualised travelling down the affected painful nerves where they will see the pain disappear. To diminish the sciatic pain in another way I could ask the client to imagine a nerve blocking injection. This method is fine and will work as long as the client has no fear or phobias about needles. Of course this is something that would be discussed in the initial consultation so scripts could be adapted for the client's needs, their modality and if they were permissive or authoritarian.

The subconscious will soak up all the positive suggestions and visualisations for their pain, they will listen to positive affirmations to help with any stress or anxiety that they may have and they will learn to relax. The client will need a number of sessions to help them, during the sessions I will teach them self hypnosis. Self hypnosis can be used for pain relief or just for pure

relaxation. I will also provide a compact disc of the session so they can continue to use hypnotherapy between each session.