Topical Panel-
Depression

With Erv Polster and Michele Weiner-Davis
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Key Points About Depression

• Soft diagnosis - 227 symptom combinations yield a correct diagnosis; highly co-morbid

• High response rate to placebo-based interventions (disorder of perspective)

• Predominant form of treatment is medication; unfortunate-not nearly as safe or effective as we’ve been led to believe; highest relapse rate

• Growing in prevalence and severity
Key Points About Depression

• Depression is a product of many risk factors, especially in the areas of cognitive style, coping style, problem solving style, and interpersonal style.
• Inability to make key discriminations (e.g., controllability, expectations).
• The therapies with the highest success rates focus on skill building; not just solving a problem solving but teaching problem solving on whatever dimensions are indicated; pattern interruption and pattern building.
• No single entity called depression, no single best treatment.
Key Points About Depression

• Common denominator of effective treatments is behavioral activation
• Experiential treatments, especially hypnosis and structured homework, require active participation; pure discovery vs. guided discovery
• The merits of hypnosis in treatment, especially to help people detach from depressogenic patterns and to help create automatic responses
• The potential for prevention
The more we learn about the biology of depression, the more we discover the power of human relationships to either *increase or decrease one’s vulnerability to depression*. 
No Amount of Medication Can Teach Your Client:

• More effective coping skills
• More realistic explanatory styles
• Healthier relationship styles
• More flexible and discriminative cognitive skills
• Sophisticated problem-solving skills
• More effective decision-making strategies
• How to build and maintain a support network
• How to transcend an adverse personal history
• How to build a realistic and motivating future
Helping people develop key skills in these areas in order to empower them to live effectively is what therapists can do that medications can’t
Let’s Focus on Global (Over-general) Thinking and its Relationship to Depression
Examples of Global Style in Client Self-Reports

• “I just want to be happy”
• “I just want to feel normal”
• “I am my depression” (anxiety, history, or diagnosis)
• “I’m just so overwhelmed”
• “I get so bad I just can’t think”
• “The symptom just happens to me”
Hypnosis and Re-directing Focus

- Focusing **globally** on what’s wrong, not noticing what’s right
- Focusing **globally** on past hurts, not specific future possibilities
- Focusing **globally** on helpless feelings, not specific proactive solutions
- Focusing **globally** on the subjective, missing specific chances to reality-test
Experiential Learning Drives Flexibility and Skill Acquisition

• People learn best through experience; therapists provide “guided discovery” opportunities as well as “pure discovery” opportunities

• Two key forms of experiential learning are focusing strategies (such as hypnosis and mindfulness) and skill-building homework (task) assignments
Good Psychotherapy Teaches:

• Greater self-awareness and self-acceptance
• Skills in reality testing, using information instead of subjective perceptions
• Skills in building and maintaining positive relationships with others
• Skills in coping with life’s inevitable adversities
• Skills in decision-making
• Skills in thinking preventively
Characteristics of Empowering Interventions

- Outcome Oriented
- Active interventions
- Future-oriented
- Change-oriented
- Specific, defined targets of pattern interruption
- Experiential methods (e.g., hypnosis, mindfulness)
- Individualized approaches
Please visit my website (**www.yapko.com**) and sign up to receive my **free** electronic newsletter!
Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.
e-mail: michael@yapko.com
website: www.yapko.com
P.O. Box 487
Fallbrook, CA. 92088-0487
USA