

PAIN & THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

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I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

OBJECTIVES: Power of Suggestion in Pain Management

1

**Why do we
need it**

2

**Hypnosis &
Suggestion
and what the
research says**

3

**How to
communicate
with direct and
indirect
suggestions**

4

**How to
communicate
with sensory
language**

5

**Suggestion as
a patient
communication
tool**

Problems in Pain Management

Many reasons why hospitalized patients, providers and nurses complain about poor management:

“It’s complicated!”

“Everyone just thinks I’m an addict!”

“I can’t get rid of her pain. She always wants more.”

“I gave him enough opioid to kill a horse.”

“How am I supposed to manage pain for patients while balancing what insurance will cover and the opioid epidemic?”

A photograph of two hands silhouetted against a bright sunset over the ocean. The hands are positioned to form a heart shape, with the sun acting as the light source within the heart. The text 'Non-Pharmacologic Strategies' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Non-Pharmacologic Strategies

Music or art therapy

Meditation

Reiki

Therapeutic touch

Psychotherapy

Acupuncture/Acupressure

Herbal Remedies

Physical Therapy

Superficial heat and cold

TENS

Chiropractic

Cognitive Behavioral Therapies

Distraction

Aromatherapy

Hypnosis

Pet Therapy

Biofeedback



“There's no question that the mind-body connection is real, even if we can't quantify it. Hope is one of the greatest weapons we have to fight disease.”

--David Agus, MD

HYPNOSIS

A state of attentive receptive concentration that helps patients explore their own capacity to interact with a painful or uncomfortable situation.

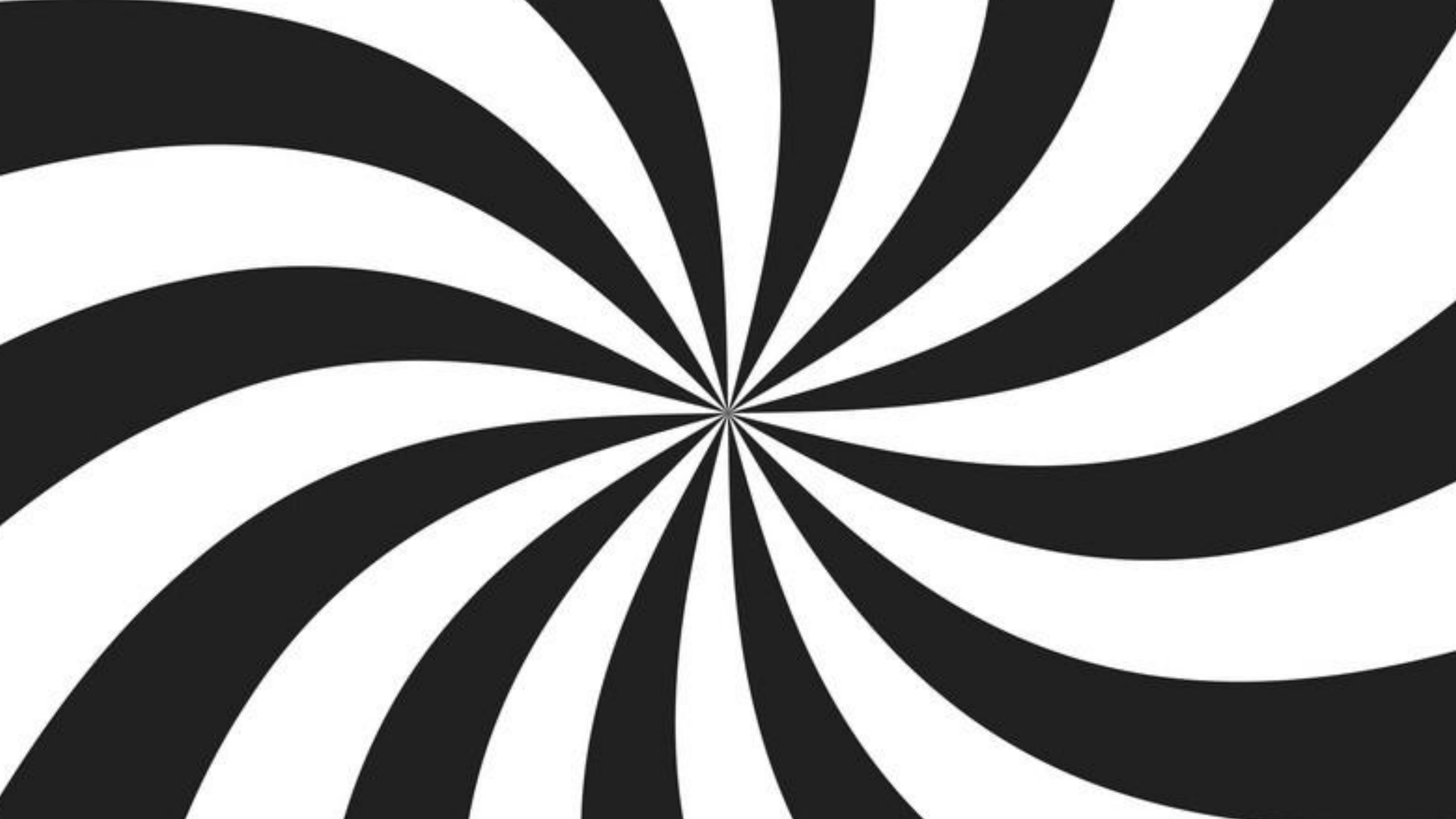
Widely used

Hypnosis has been used to treat every type of pain condition imaginable over centuries and across cultures.

Effective

Supported by much research over several decades.

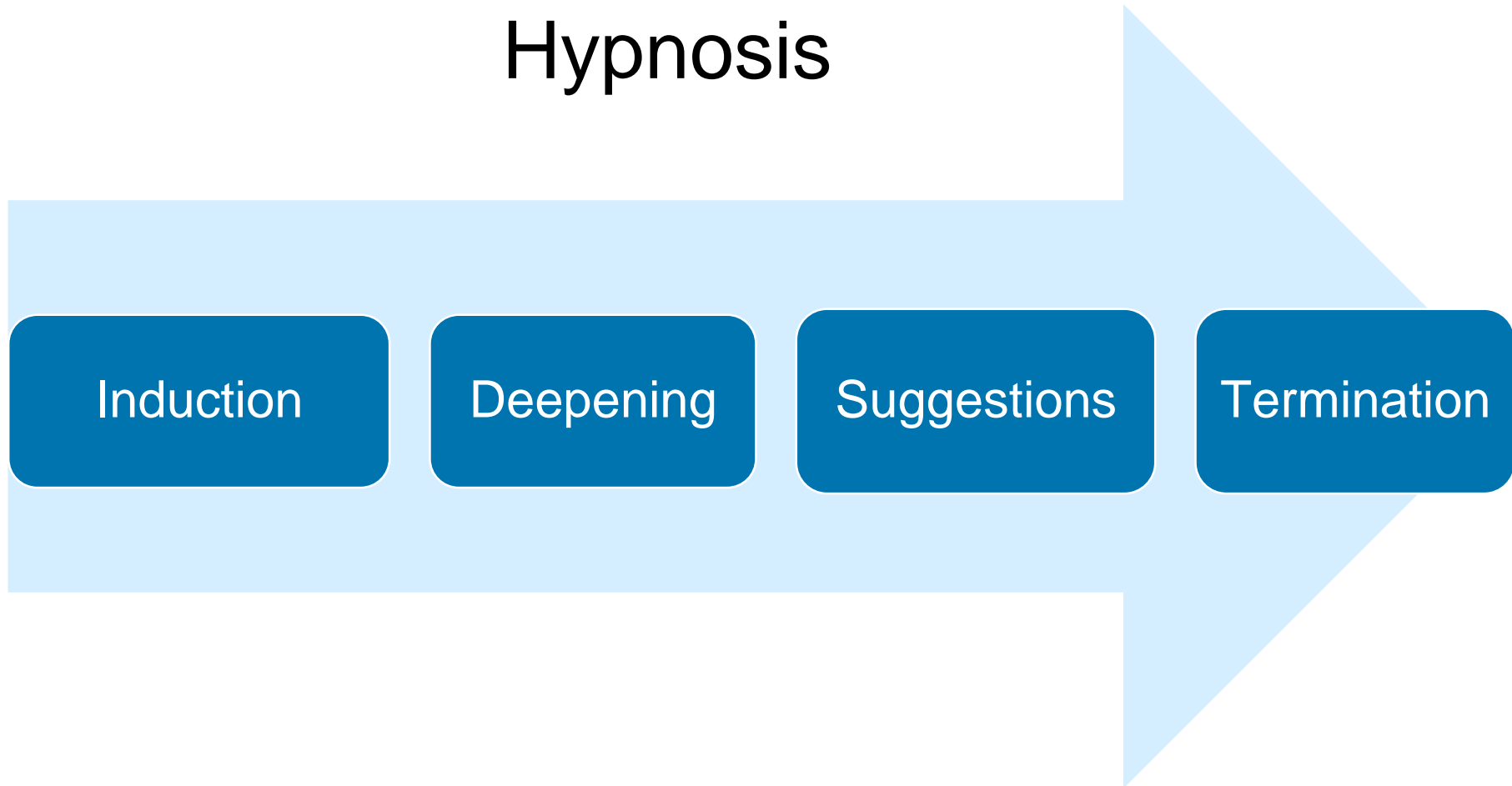
EXAMPLE: Burn patients who accept suggestions that the wounded area is cool and comfortable are easier to treat, more optimistic, and heal faster.







Hypnosis



Suggestion

- Process by which a physical or mental state is influenced by a thought or idea.
- Easy to implement with every interaction, does not require induction into trance, or permission to use.





“I CAN BECAUSE I THINK I CAN.”

-Response Expectancies

Response Expectancies

We respond to a situation
the way we anticipate we
will respond.

EX: If you think you'll do well, you'll likely feel more positive and create favorable outcomes.

EX: If you think you'll fall, you are 50% more likely to fall.

EX: If a patient expects something to hurt, they are more likely to experience pain.

The power of suggestion can influence a patient's perception of pain



Suggestions shape your reality

Suggestions can influence:

- how a patient remembers things
- how they respond to treatments
- how well they will behave

What happens at the cellular level?

Activation of endogenous opioids and pain modulating networks

Decreased pain transmission

Release of dopamine in striatum



BUT...

DOES IT WORK?

Meta-Analysis of 5 meta-analyses of 391 publications found medical hypnosis is a safe and effective complementary technique for use in medical procedures, and can be a component of effective doctor–patient communication in routine clinical situations. (Hauser, Hagl, Schmierer & Hansen, 2016)

Hypnotic analgesia during cardiac ablation was related to significant reduction of intraprocedural anxiety, perceived pain, procedural analgesic drugs dosage and perceived procedural ratio without affecting total RF delivered time and procedural safety (Scaglione, et al, 2019).

Hypnosis represents a safe and valuable tool in chronic pain management of hospitalized older patients. (Ardigo, et al, 2016).

After participating in a 15-minute session...patients reported an immediate decrease in pain levels similar to what one might expect from an opioid pain killer (Garland, et al, 2017).





On Hypnosis:

There is “empirical support in pain management.

Empirical evidence also supports the use of hypnotherapy to manage cancer pain, low-back pain, arthritis, pain from SCD, TMJ, fibromyalgia, and other pain conditions.

**-Department of Health & Human Services,
Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force Report, 2019**



“Hypnosis...has few negative side effects. In fact, with hypnotic treatment, most patients report positive side effects, such as an improved sense of well-being, a greater sense of control, improved sleep, and increased satisfaction with life, independent of whether they report reductions in pain.”

-Jensen & Patterson, 2014

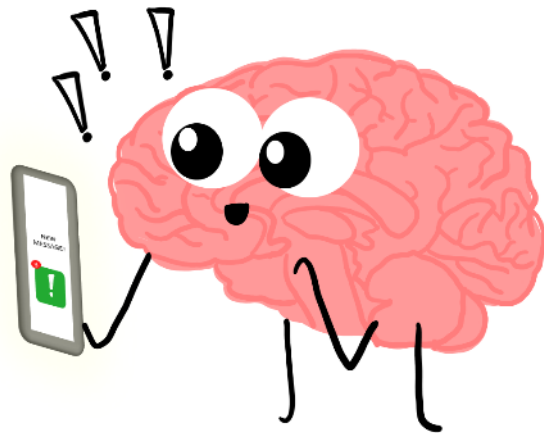
The image features a solid blue background. Two human hands are positioned on the left and right sides, with fingers slightly curled as if holding or framing a central area. A thin white circle is centered in the image, partially overlapping the hands. Overlaid on this circle is the text 'Direct versus Indirect Suggestions' in a white sans-serif font, and below it, the title 'HOW TO IMPLEMENT SUGGESTION' in a larger, bold, white sans-serif font.

Direct versus Indirect Suggestions

HOW TO IMPLEMENT SUGGESTION

Direct vs. Indirect Suggestions

The critical filter examines, interprets and filters incoming information.



Direct suggestions:

Telling a person what to do or experience.
May meet more resistance.

Indirect Suggestions:

More likely to bypass the critical filter of conscious because they are permissive, not direct commands.
May gain more compliance.

Direct vs. Indirect Suggestions



Direct: Look at the ceiling.

Indirect: You may want to look at a spot on the ceiling; any one you like.

Direct: Your eyes feel relaxed.

Indirect: You might be surprised to find the small muscles in your eyes relaxing.

Direct: Hold, please.

Indirect: Would you mind if I placed you on a brief hold?

Use Positive Suggestions

“How *comfortable* are you?”

“What can I do to make you as *comfortable* as possible”



Indirect Positive Suggestions:

“I wonder when you’re going to start feeling this medication relaxing the muscles in your back.”

“I think you’ll notice this medication is slowly relieving your nausea.”

WATCH OUT FOR...



THE NOCEBO EFFECT!

An expectation of a negative outcome may lead to the worsening of a symptom



“...individual expectations may lead to physiological changes underpinning the central integration and processing of magnified pain signaling.”

--Blasini, Corsi, Kliner & Luana, 2017



**Say No to
Nocebo**

Psychological and Physiological Effects of Nocebo Language

Pain Catastrophizing



Anxiety/Avoidance



Cortisol Release



Avoid Negative Qualifiers & Warnings

“Don’t” becomes “Do”



The mind takes on the image and disregards qualifiers. Telling a patient, “Don’t move,” may actually suggest to the patient to “move.”

Phrase directions with positive language. When you want a patient to remain still during a procedure, use “*Stay still*” rather than “*Don’t move.*”

Warning a patient of upcoming painful stimulus may increase pain and anxiety. Be descriptive but leave the interpretation up to the patient.

Negative Suggestions

Positive Suggestions

"You have 6 months to live."	"Longevity can be increased by forming healthy habits."
"Your knee is showing signs of <i>wear-and-tear</i> ."	"Exercise can improve physical function and helps keep the joint lubricated."
"There is no cure for your disease."	"You can improve or even reverse your symptoms by living a healthy lifestyle."
"The muscles around your shoulder are weak."	"The muscles stabilizing your shoulder can be strengthened for improved function."
"You may experience a burning sensation in the back of your leg with this stretch."	"You should feel the muscle lengthening and relax as you perform this stretch."
"Your age may cause you to heal more slowly."	"Your body is capable of healing at any your age."
"You can get sick from eating that."	"Making better food selections will promote higher energy levels and better overall health."
"You're at a high risk of falling due to your poor balance."	"We can improve your balance to help you become more stable."
"Your diabetes can cause nerve damage and neuropathy."	"Your nerves can be protected by eating a diet that is low in sugar and high in fresh whole foods."
"Your hip will never be the same after a hip replacement."	"We can strengthen the muscles supporting your hip to maximize efficiency decreasing your need for a hip replacement."

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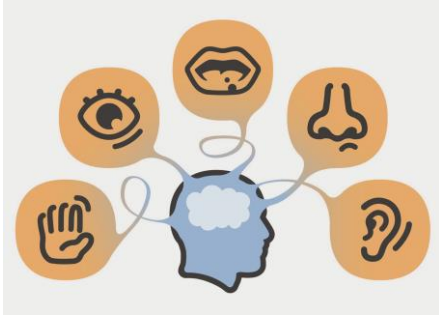
Matching Sensory Language

Observe your patient's language pattern to determine their perceptual strategy.

Matching your language to their perceptual strategy will facilitate rapport and communication, and put your patient at ease.

Matching Sensory Language

Sensory Preference	What the Patient Says	Example Response
Visual	"I don't like the looks of this."	"Are things beginning to look a little better?"
Auditory	"This is enough to make me scream."	"Does that sound like something you'd prefer?"
Kinesthetic	"I feel like I'm falling apart."	"If you can just hold on a few more seconds."
Olfactory	"This stinks."	"Have I cleared the air a little?"
Gustatory	"I'm getting fed up with trying to get a straight answer."	"I'll explain it in small bites that are easier to digest."



Word Clues to Sensory Preferences

Sensory preference	Words
Visual	Appear, bright, focus, dark, picture, envision, view, watch, pretty
Auditory	Argue, call, describe, hear, listen, silent, tell, sound, quiet, ring
Kinesthetic	Connect, cut, grab, grasp, handle, hold, pressure, smooth, feel
Olfactory	Breathe, inhale, odor, smell, stink, whiff, fragrant, stuffy
Gustatory	Bite, delicious, flavor, sweet, taste, tongue, juicy, yummy



FINAL
SUGGESTIONS



Build awareness of your tone
and word choice.

Your past experiences may
influence your beliefs.

Choose empathy.

QUIZ

Quiz: Direct or Indirect Suggestion?

You liked this presentation. **DIRECT**

I think you'll find the concepts of this presentation useful with your patients.

INDIRECT



“Change the mind,
Change the brain,
Change the pain.”

--Unknown



THANK YOU!

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