

"Catharsis in Regression Hypnotherapy (Vol II)"

by Randall Churchill

(Transforming Press, 2008 — ISBN #978-0-9656218-2-3)

Review by Paul Von Ward

This book not only identifies regression therapy practices that fail the client, but offers solid and specific professional principles that avoid misleading outcomes.

Randall Churchill is highly qualified to write such a definitive text — based on forty years of commendable work and teaching. His focused and highly self-critical development of techniques and their refinement is grounded in follow-up and testing with both students and clients.

More than a century ago Freud, Jung, and other analysts "re-discovered" what many traditional societies had long known: Emotional blocks based in earlier trauma — resulting in dysfunctional behaviors — could be overcome through various means of cathartic release during group and individual healing rituals.

Late 19th-century analysts — working within the mores of Victorian culture — invented a more sedentary process. They learned that patients, mostly women, could be hypnotized to recover suppressed memories of childhood trauma. The setting, an authoritarian power figure, and the depth of emotion involved created conditions comparable to the freedom given the psyche through tribal rituals.

The history of some 20th-century psychological and spiritual traditions produced innumerable variations of the fundamental process of energetic clearing of debilitating unconscious memories. Among them are many superficial, even deceptive descriptions whose claims greatly exceed their merits.

Churchill's work stands out for its professionalism, suggesting openness to new techniques, but requiring their validation through tangible results. It requires considerable self-restraint by the therapist at two levels: Do not over promise and do not interject personal perspectives into the dialogue between the hypnotist and the hypnotized.

While Churchill does not see his work as "past-life" oriented, from time to time some students access memories that appear to be related to possible previous lifetimes. In these cases, he scrupulously uses his same neutral stance.

His reality-based approach — always aware of the illusive nature of recovering and describing memories — does not suggest or reinforce interpretations that go beyond the uncertainty of what is by nature an uncertain process. He reminds us that "in the highly suggestible state of hypnosis, well-meaning therapists can help create false memories." (This is an acutely sensitive issue in past-life regressions.)

The recovery of traumatic memories, particularly potential sexual abuse or other

personally abusive situations, requires neutral attention on the part of the therapist. Churchill notes (p. 223) that "most age-regression hypnotherapy ends of focusing on memories that were never forgotten." However, it may heighten the recall of details, providing more accuracy than recall attempts in a waking state.

Case transcripts — the core of the book — graphically display his sensitivity and, as seen in their reactions, his deft passing of the responsibility to the hypnotized. He sees himself as the facilitator of the individual's own self-exploration.

Churchill's philosophy and approach are quite conducive to realizing the values and principles associated with humanistic psychology. Based on the premise that humans are self-actualizing beings participating in a multidimensional, consciously evolutionary process, this book demonstrates a therapeutic, self-empowering tool. It ought to be on every therapist's bookshelf, whether they use hypnosis or not.

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