

# Can Depth Hypnosis Heal Mood Disorders? A Pilot Study

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## Introduction

Recent studies have provided evidence that spiritually-based counseling may have greater health-related benefits than secular counseling (Bernardi et al., 2001; Wachholtz & Pargament, 2006, 2008), and better outcomes in the treatment of depression than cognitive behavioral therapy (Propst et al. 1992). Though promising, the number of efficacy studies in this area is relatively small and more research into the effectiveness of spiritually-based counseling is needed.

This study adds to the growing body of research by evaluating the efficacy of a model of spiritual counseling known as Depth Hypnosis in the treatment of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Depth Hypnosis was created by Dr. Isa Gucciardi, PhD, and is an integrative therapeutic model that uses the umbrella of Transpersonal Psychology to unify its multiple streams of understanding, including traditional hypnotherapy, Buddhist Psychology, the catalytic processes of earth-based wisdom, energy medicine, and exposure therapy. Techniques used in Depth Hypnosis include meditations creating connection to experiences of higher self, insight inquiry, suggestion hypnosis, regression therapy, and removal of energetic interference.

Depth Hypnosis allows for the consideration of connection to something larger than the individual person in the context of healing. This integrative transpersonal modality develops powerful resources at the level of the larger self, and brings those resources into contact with the root causes of suffering in order to transform them at their source (Gucciardi, 2004).

## Study Goal

The goal of this study was to examine the efficacy of Depth Hypnosis in the treatment of the symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as show an increase in experience of well-being. The hypothesis was that symptoms from the three mood disorders would go down, and experience of well-being would rise.

## Procedures

### Method

A total of 39 participants consented to this study. The final sample was predominately female (92.3%). Participants were on average 37.92 years old ( $SD = 6.77$ ), and were individuals who sought treatment in outpatient private practice settings. Depth Hypnosis was provided by six certified Depth Hypnosis Practitioners, all with education at the Masters or Doctorate level. Treatment consisted of eight sessions of Depth Hypnosis, 60 to 75 minutes in length. Altered states were induced in a minimum of three of the eight treatment sessions. Altered states sessions could include suggestion hypnosis, guided meditations to connect with the client's own unique experience of higher self, guided hypnotic regression to the origin of a particular issue, or the removal of energetic interference (for example hypnotic removal of internalized family patterns no longer serving the client). Any non-altered states sessions were conducted with Insight Inquiry.

### Measures

The four measures below were used to assess changes in symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and well-being. All four measures were assessed pre-treatment, mid-treatment, and post-treatment.

**BDI-II – Beck Depression Inventory** (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996).

- is a brief (21-item), reliable measure of depressive symptoms

**BAI – Beck Anxiety Inventory** (BAI; Beck et al., 1993). - a brief (21-item), reliable measure of anxiety symptoms.

**PCL-C – PTSD Inventory** (PCL-C; Norris & Hamblen, 2004). - Civilian Version- a short (17 item), reliable measure of PTSD symptoms

**Flourishing Scale** (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2010)-The Flourishing Scale is a brief 8-item summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism.

## Results

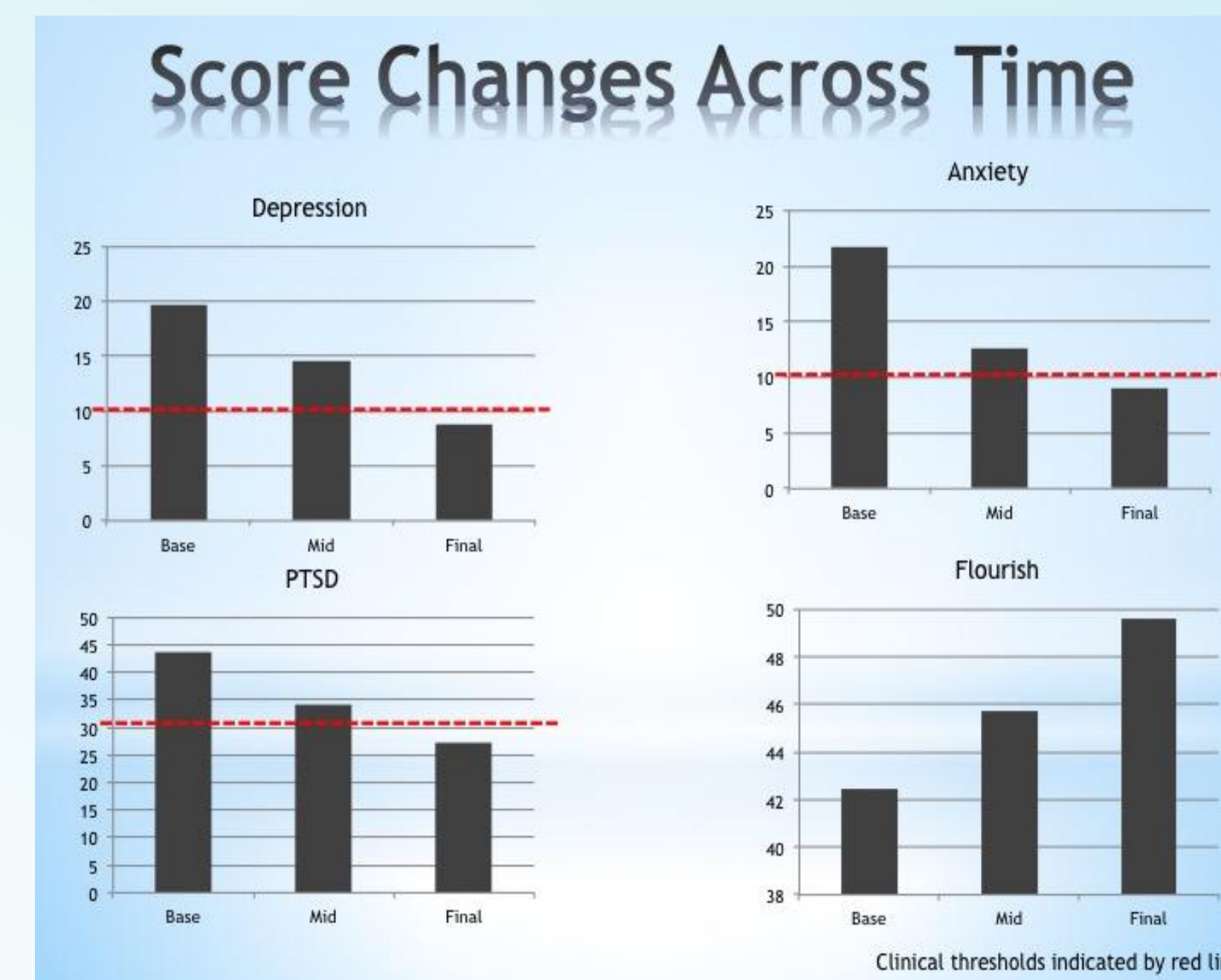
Data was analyzed through a within subjects, repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVAs). All analyses were conducted in SPSS v. 21, and significance was set at the .05 level.

As shown, the effect of time was significant,  $F(8,27) = 9.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = .736$ . Results of the pairwise comparisons indicated that all time points within a given measure differed significantly, all  $ps < .05$ .

These results indicated that Depth Hypnosis was associated with highly significant decreases in depressive, anxious, and PTSD-related symptoms, and associated with increased quality of life.

### Mean Score Changes

BDI: 19.6 to 8.7	Down 56%
BAI: 21.6 to 9.1	Down 58%
PTSD: 43.5 to 27.1	Down 45%
Flour: 42.4 – 49.6	Up 15%



## Discussion

This study strongly suggests that Depth Hypnosis provides expedient and significant shifts in symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and well-being. This spiritual counseling model appears to be highly effective.

### Why is Depth Hypnosis so Effective?

Depth Hypnosis draws from Buddhist Psychology in understanding that problems occur when people twist away from their authentic nature. This twisting away can happen if parts of the self are disavowed, or if experiences occur that feel impossible to tolerate on one's own.

In Depth Hypnosis, wholeness is cultivated through connection to one's own experience of higher self. A sense of agency is created as one co-participates in tracking the roots of their own unique problems and changing their relationship to them. Clients learn to rely on themselves, knowing that they have the key to healing within them. Thus, Depth Hypnosis techniques bring people back into the innate state of wholeness that exists within everyone (Gucciardi, 2004).

## Future Research

1. Data is now being gathered to allow for a comparison of this treatment group to a wait-listed control group. We will then be able to make even clearer statements about the efficacy.
2. More research is needed to understanding the nature of the mechanisms behind the support of higher consciousness in hypnotherapy.
3. Lastly, it would be helpful to have research into understanding how resourcing a client within a focused state of compassion might change the treatment of mood disorders.

## References

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### Thupten Jinpa, PhD on Depth Hypnosis

*I see Isa's Depth Hypnosis as a creative and a powerful approach that brings the best of Buddhist psychological insights into a practical application relevant to someone living in today's highly complex and stressed society...In Depth Hypnosis, because of the creative use of an altered state, there is the beautiful opportunity for us to be able to let go of ourselves and experience that sense of freedom and spaciousness, within which we can then begin to reconnect parts of ourselves that are somehow misaligned. So I see Depth Hypnosis as a creative approach that could really help many people with their deeply rooted challenges of self-harshness and lack of adequate self-kindness.*

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