

Hypnotherapy

IN THE CLASSROOM



Caroline Dyson, founder of the Hypnotherapy in Schools Programme, is bringing clinical hypnotherapy into the classroom to improve learning and wellbeing amongst pupils needing extra support...

THE Hypnotherapy in Schools Programme (HISP) uses clinical hypnotherapy to support pupils with issues that are negatively affecting their learning or emotional health and well-being. It is also used to help education staff deal with stress and work related issues. We deliver sessions within the school setting for approximately 6 weeks. While many individual referrals are for anxiety or low self-esteem, we also work in small groups for exam anxiety. HISP can provide help for many more issues than this.

In 2010, I was working as a support teacher working with children with social, emotional and behavioural issues. I also had my private clinical hypnotherapy practice specialising in helping children. Many of the children I

was seeing privately had similar issues to those I was supporting in my teacher role so I decided to try and merge the two. Now the topic of mental health in schools has finally been recognised as a significant issue, HISP is more relevant and needed that ever before.

There a lot of misconceptions about what hypnotherapy involves, so starting HISP in a local authority wasn't easy. I provide training and a demonstration, and children are only treated with informed, written, parental consent. The children themselves are generally very positive about HISP. It often has a 'cool' reputation which appeals to some of the harder to reach children who have refused other therapeutic input. In some schools now, the pupils themselves are asking for HISP and there is a waiting list!

Schools refer those children they feel would benefit most. It can take a while to gain acceptance with teachers and parents, and overcome negative preconceptions but the results tend to change adult's viewpoints.

My aims for HISP were twofold. Firstly, I wanted to make it accessible to those children whose parents might not know or have the time or money to seek this support privately and so make it accessible to all children no matter what their personal circumstances. Secondly, I wanted to raise awareness of hypnotherapy as a useful therapeutic tool that can help children. Many people either aren't aware you can use hypnotherapy with children or dismiss it as "wacky". I wanted it to sit alongside other mainstream therapeutic approaches and be available to every pupil, in every school, in every country.

The evaluation data shows that 75% of pupils achieved or exceeded in at least one of their aims and every pupil who completed the programme made some progress. I'm not

claiming HISP is the best or only approach for children or schools but I do believe it is very valuable and should sit in the toolkit which schools can draw upon if a pupil is experiencing difficulties. ■



Caroline Dyson is a qualified teacher with 17 years' experience in education working in mainstream, specialist provision and at local authority level. She has over 15 years' experience as a clinical hypnotherapist and specialises in using this with children in her private practice in the Midlands. She is the founder and Director of HISP which launched in 2011. If you are a school who wishes to use HISP yourself or a hypnotherapist who would like to train in this approach, get in touch via www.hypnotherapyinschools.co.uk

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