

InPresence 0005: Addressing Pain

with Jeffrey Mishlove

Video Transcript - *New Thinking Allowed* with Jeffrey Mishlove

www.newthinkingallowed.org



Recorded on March 3, 2018

Published to YouTube on March 6, 2018

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(00:40) Hello. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today, we'll explore some methods for addressing pain. I mean physical pain, the kind that hurts. You know, I'm in my 70s now, and many people my age suffer from arthritic pain. I suppose that's why older people sometimes have a reputation for being grouchy, because they are addressing pain in their body, or they're not addressing it so it gets expressed outwardly. They take it out sometimes on other people, particularly little children at times.

(01:18) Now, I practiced as a psychotherapist for many years in California. I was licensed as a clinical psychologist. I found it a useful way to earn a living, since very few avenues were open once I got my degree, my doctoral degree in parapsychology. So, I went back and got additional training as a psychotherapist and practiced for a long time.

(01:48) Naturally, as a psychotherapist, especially working with hypnosis as I did, pain is an issue that comes up. There are some standard techniques in psychotherapy for dealing with pain. One of them is very simple. You ask your client to visualize the pain, wherever they're experiencing it and to let you know the size of it. For example, is it as large as a grapefruit, or an orange in their body? Then you say, OK, concentrate on it like a piece of fruit and now see if you can make that pain a little smaller, perhaps from the size of an orange to the size of a plum. Or, from the size of a plum to the size of a cherry. Or, from the size of a cherry, perhaps, to the size of a pea. And from the size of a pea, maybe down to as tiny as a match head.

(02:44) Usually, people are able to do that. The pain, as they visualize, gets reduced down smaller and smaller and smaller, and less and less bothersome, until they can just sort of flick it off and it's gone. That's a technique that works at least temporarily dealing with pain. It can even be severe pain. In fact, in the history of hypnosis there are cases prior to the development of good anesthesia where surgeries were performed with hypnosis.

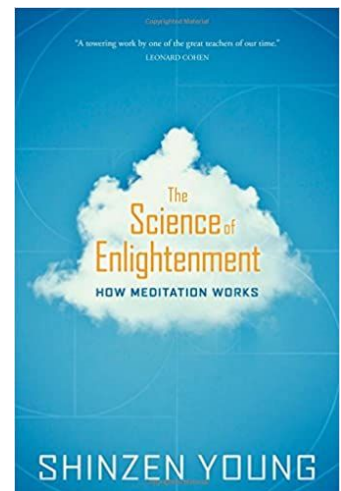
(03:22) So, hypnosis can be used to address major forms of pain. I dealt with a client for many years, someone I learned a great deal from, Joanne Robinson was her name. She was in great pain. She was suffering from spinal stenosis and was gradually becoming more and more crippled. She came to me because she was sort of an atheistic, materialistic person, but she saw that she was losing all capacity

in her body. Pain was increasing and she realized that the only way to address this was to find a seat of spiritual reality for herself, because everything physical was being taken away from her.

(04:13) We addressed the pain using hypnosis in a different way. I think, a more profound way. And that is to experience a sense of loving compassion for the pain. She would find a place of pain in her body, and she would say to herself, or I would help her, guide her, through this under hypnosis, "Pobrecito, pobrecito... oh poor me, I have such compassion for this pain in my body. Embrace the pain, become one with the pain." She was able to deal with excruciating pain in this manner.

(04: 54) You see, normally, if you hit your thumb with a hammer and you go, ouch, what you're actually experiencing many times is a sense of hatred towards that pain in your body. "I hate it when that happens," you know. And, that is actually not a good way to address pain. It's the opposite of really addressing the pain. Embracing the pain with compassion is a way to heal that pain and to deal with it inwardly in a more comprehensive and positive manner.

(05:37) Now, a third approach to dealing with pain comes from the practice of Vipassana meditation. I've had the good fortune of being introduced to Shinzen Young, the author of a book on the science of meditation. He was a master teacher of Vipassana. He would work with people who were experiencing extreme pain or other extreme feelings. For example, addicts, heroin addicts.



(06:09) The point in Vipassana meditation is to sit, keep your tush on the cushion, as he would say, and be with whatever comes up, whatever arises in your mind, which might be addictive cravings or pain. The idea is to appreciate that whatever is arising, you don't have to own it. The pain is not necessarily your pain, it's just the firing of nerve cells in your body, actually. It's nothing more than that.

(06:44) And, when you can separate yourself, your true self, your true self, your inner observer from the experience of consciousness, from the contents of consciousness, then you can achieve some distance from it so that the pain is there, but it's not you. He's been quite successful working with pain using that approach.

(07:08) So, in both cases, I think... In all cases, all three of these examples, the heart, to me, is an important aspect of the process because when you can hold yourself in a deep loving way and realize that yourself is this vast consciousness, far greater than your ego, far greater than your body, far greater even than your life history, from your birth to this moment in this particular body. Yes, we will suffer pain. It's inevitable. Nobody goes through life without experiencing pain. But, the best way to

address it is with compassion for yourself. I'll leave you with that thought. And, thank you for being with me. (08:06)

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