



Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy

Raising the Standards of Hypnotherapy Training

10/12/2015

Hypnosis, Suicide and the Case of Former North Port, Florida Principal George Kenney

The official position of the Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy, Tampa, Florida

By Founder and Executive Director, Matthew Brownstein, CIHt

All of us who have followed this case are first and foremost deeply saddened by the loss that has occurred for parents, family and friends of three youths who are now no longer with us. On behalf of the Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy (IIH) our hearts go out to all involved.

As the Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy is Florida's first and currently only State-Licensed school offering legitimate career diplomas in the field of Hypnotherapy, as backed by the Florida Department of Education, we felt it was our responsibility to offer our position on the unfortunate events that occurred at North Port High School and for former Principal George Kenney.

For those unfamiliar with the case, we encourage you to watch the ABC News video and read the article here at: <http://www.abcactionnews.com/news/local-news/tampa-hypnotherapy-community-weighs-in-on-sarasota-student-suicides-following-hypnosis>.

It is our firm position that there has been no causal link ever made between the use of hypnosis and the subsequent suicide of any client or patient. Further, that the use of hypnosis is still considered to be an exceptionally safe modality available to the masses through various outlets including books, audio recordings, YouTube videos, weekend trainings and comprehensive true post-secondary vocational institute education.

Hypnosis can simply be defined as a natural, yet altered state of mind, where communication and responsiveness with the subconscious mind is present.

The state is natural in that we enter into altered states of consciousness frequently, such as when day dreaming or while becoming absorbed in a fascinating movie. Our brain waves move from beta (regular waking consciousness) into alpha, theta and delta activity all throughout the day and night. There is nothing for the public to be concerned about when it comes to entering into these relaxed and rather pleasant states of mind.

We also understand that true hypnosis does involve a level of communication and responsiveness with the subconscious mind. In this sense, a person is allowing for positive and beneficial suggestions to help them in a way that is meant to enhance their lives. Because the conscious mind is still present during hypnosis it is generally agreed in the professional hypnotherapy community that a person would never go against their moral principles or cause harm to themselves or others because of this state. The concerned reader is encouraged to do their research to discover the very safe and effective uses of the hypnotic state and how it can be used for immense good.



Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy

Raising the Standards of Hypnotherapy Training

In the case of former Principal George Kenney, there are a few themes that the interested reader will want to be aware of prior to drawing conclusions about the safety and effectiveness of the practice:

- 1. What type of hypnosis training did Mr. Kenney have?**
- 2. What are the laws of the State of Florida that governed his use of hypnosis?**
- 3. What Code of Ethics was he functioning under?**

1. Type of Training

Hypnotherapy/Hypnotherapist is an occupation acknowledged by the United States Department of Labor. This acknowledges that hypnosis is used as an occupation and that schools offering certifications in this occupation must be licensed by their respective State's Department of Labor. To do otherwise is illegal. To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Kenney, did not have diplomas from a State-Licensed school. This does not make his use of hypnosis illegal, yet it does bring questions as to the legitimacy of his training and how well-prepared he was to use hypnosis in public and/or professional settings. However, even with unlicensed training we do maintain that his use of hypnosis did not cause injury or death.

2. Florida Hypnosis Law

Florida Hypnosis Statutes make a very clear distinction between therapeutic and non-therapeutic hypnosis. Hypnosis is considered to be therapeutic when it is used for human injury, illness or disease, whether physical or mental. As Mr. Kenney did use hypnosis to manage pain without the prescription, referral, supervision or direction of the appropriate licensed practitioner of the healing arts, then it is our understanding that his actions were illegal, although they cannot be said to have caused death or suicide.

3. Code of Ethics

The International Association of Interpersonal Hypnotherapists and the Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy have a very clear Code of Ethics and very clear ethics training in our school's curriculum. All of our students are trained to never perform hypnosis on a minor without parental consent. While not illegal, we do find this behavior to be unethical. We do however maintain that performing hypnosis on a minor with or without parental consent, does not cause death or suicide; it is simply not ethical to influence a minor in an altered state without parental consent.

Summary

We find these events to be exceptionally unfortunate for all involved and believe that Mr. Kenney did perform therapeutic hypnosis in a way that violated the Florida Hypnosis Statutes and did act unethically by hypnotizing minors without parental consent. It is our opinion that the School Board paid out a settlement to the parents to



Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy

Raising the Standards of Hypnotherapy Training

“put this issue behind them,” but that their payment is not in any way evidence of, or a declaration of, a causal relationship between hypnosis and the death or suicide of the students.

We still maintain that hypnosis is a safe and effective modality and that its use should continue to be acknowledged under ever-increasing high standards of professionalism and training through State-Licensed Institutions. It is our opinion that the public should be aware of State-Licensed requirements for hypnosis education, State Hypnosis Statutes and a refined Code of Ethics to govern the behavior of hypnotists and hypnotherapists and should continue to regard the practice and its trained and certified practitioners as valuable contributors to the overall wellness model.

Believing that Mr. Kenney did not intentionally cause any harm we do wish him the best in restoring his life to one of peace and balance. We especially extend our sincerest thoughts and prayers to the family and friends who have suffered a great loss for reasons that perhaps we will never truly understand.

Sincerely,

Matthew Brownstein

Executive Director, Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy
President, International Association of Interpersonal Hypnotherapists
Tampa, Florida



Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy

Raising the Standards of Hypnotherapy Training

Anahat Education Group Inc., dba Institute of Interpersonal Hypnotherapy
One Tampa City Center, Suite #3415, Tampa, Florida 33602
(813) 463-2064 | (800) 551-9247 | www.InterpersonalHypnotherapy.com