

## I am not a Hypnotherapist, but I am a Healer

I achieved my certification in hypnotherapy in 2000. I had a master's degree in Transpersonal Psychology, and, at that time the National Guild of Hypnotists considered me qualified. I was so excited and pleased. My dream of becoming a past life regression therapist, several years in the making, was moving forward. With that hurdle overcome, my next step was to train in past life regression therapy, which I did with the late Henry Bolduc in Wytheville, Virginia, in May, 2000. I opened my office in the Syracuse, NY area. My practice was called GateKeeper Alternative Therapy.

Then, in 2006 I received a notice from the National Guild of Hypnotists that in New York State there was to be a new law in New York state. By 2007 only those who are certified, in New York, to be a Certified Mental Health Practitioner were allowed to refer to themselves as a therapist, or use therapy in any form in their marketing or promotional information, or any way appear to promote themselves as a therapist. Also, only certified mental health practitioners were allowed use diagnostic words such as depressed, depression, anxiety or anxious, or use any terms that could be construed as medical in any form.

At first I didn't pay all that much attention, I figured I was too small to be noticed. However, along with all the NGH hypnotherapists in New York, I was contacted by Dr. Scott Giles, and given very specific guidance on how to protect myself from these legalities. He was very helpful and very clear that we had to adhere to the letter of this new law, or we would lose our ability to practice. It didn't matter that I had trained in therapy and counseling, if I had not completed the required clinical hours that New York State requires, I could not use those words.

Dr. Giles also told me this was going on around the country. Many states, influenced by professional organizations like the AMA and the APA, were creating such road blocks for anyone they perceived as treading on their turf. Hypnotists and hypnotherapist were definitely on that list, and they were trying to stop us from practicing autonomously. Some states had tried to pass legislature that prevented a hypnotherapist to practice outside of a doctor's office. This was struck down, but restrictions remained.

I contacted some of the teachers I had trained with, including Henry Reed at The Edgar Cayce Foundation in Virginia, and asked him what he thought I should do. He made it very clear that it was not a good idea to get involved with this issue, to change my words and phrases and train myself to be a healer rather than a therapist. Apparently, Virginia had passed the same legislature. He was a therapist already, so he went along with it, and it had destroyed his practice. Because of all the legal hassles with insurance and their complicated rules, he ended up closing his practice and taking out another legal name, in order to work without all those issues. After that, I changed my name to GateKeeper Alternative Guidance - GAG for short, so I didn't take myself too seriously - and rewrote all my promotional material to reflect these new rules.

While this is very annoying and inconvenient, some of their reasoning is valid. It does help to keep hypnotism on a professional level. There are many websites that claim they can train students in hypnosis in a weekend, with certification and promises of work as a hypnotherapist. I am a certified trainer in hypnosis through the National Guild of

## I am not a Hypnotherapist, but I am a Healer

Hypnotists, and I can safely say this level of training is not full and complete, at all. The idea of being a certified anything, in today's mind set, seems to be required in order to be taken seriously. So, the promise of being certified is a draw. But, what is the structure for certification, who is the certifying body? That is very important. To be certified means to have learned and trained to a point where one can meet the criteria of one's peers, on a professional level. This is a good thing. Many of the states have such laws, with variations that are very confusing. There is a link at the end of this article to the 2017 NGH guide to state laws about using hypnosis.

The problem really comes up, today, when we think about working remotely, as so many of us do. We need to be aware of the requirements of the state we are working in, as well as the state where our client resides. For example, a person who is a certified mental health practitioner in one state, let's say Florida, is not recognized as such in New York. They are a listed as a hypnotherapist, in Florida, and can work with clients in person or remotely, as long as the client is in Florida, as well. However, if they are working, remotely, with a client from another state, where they are not certified, they cannot work as a therapist, only as a hypnotist. It can get confusing, but it is a good idea to be informed and pay attention to such annoying but significant details.

It was interesting that in 2006 and early 2007, I got many phone calls asking for Dr. Waldron, or asking what kind of therapies I used in my practice.. Forewarned by Scott Giles, I stated immediately that I was not a doctor or a therapist. They would then hang up. I asked Scott about this and he said it was not uncommon for the state attorney general's office to assign some of their interns to make these calls to try to entrap practitioners into claiming they were qualified to use those terms when they were not. This could have gotten me into some serious legal trouble, so I was most grateful for his advice ahead of time.

According to the state of New York, I am not a hypnotherapist, I am a certified consulting hypnotist. I do not do therapy. I describe what I do this way - I create and hold sacred space where clients can do the work they need to do to heal themselves. That is fine with me. It works for me. I do, however, feel a little like the poorer cousin when so many of my fine colleagues have all sorts of tags and labels, and great long alphabetic strings after their names, but I love my work, and I am good at what I do, so I am content.