



# Simple Psychology for Therapists

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Psychology is one of those big words that seem to scare most people, especially therapists. We hear horror stories of how easy it is to damage people, so the best thing is often not to say anything and leave it to the professionals. But who are the professionals that deal with psychology? Someone with a certificate? A counsellor, psychotherapist, or aromatherapist? A human being?

I practice Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and when I apply any of my modalities to the body, I am going to affect the psychology of a person through the Zang-Fu (internal) organs and their relationship to the 5 elements, whether I like it or not! I am also a human and I utilise all of the human modalities that affect psychology, like body language, words and tone of voice. This is before we even attempt to describe the energetic communications between mammals. Do I have a certificate in psychology? No. I have 42 years of experience though. I wonder if that counts.

My best friend is a Rottweiler called Max. Unfortunately, Max was beaten by a man as a puppy, so he has suffered a fear of men and quick movements throughout his life. In the morning if I jump out of bed, he runs away because he thinks he has done wrong and I am going to beat him. So before I take any action, such as taking him for a walk on the beach, I actually ask him "Do you want to go for a walk on the beach?" As any dog lover will know, this totally changes his mind set: he is happy, hyperactive, barking and begging me to move as fast as possible. What a change in his psychology! Just imagine if you could do that to your clients. Imagine being able to change people's lives with some simple words given as a small part of the holistic treatment(s) you provide. Possible? Very possible. Lets start by looking at one or two simple techniques ...

First I want you to concentrate on the words 'TRY' and 'TRIED'. How do those words resonate with you? To me they sound negative and imply a lot of effort. How about when someone says "I tried to close the

door ... I tried to give up smoking ... I will try to do it ... You won't believe how much of a trial it was just getting here"? Can you perceive the negative connotations of this word? If I said to you "I will try to be there at 3pm", I am preparing you for a disappointment - the chance that I will not be there at 3pm. I am also saying I will put a great deal of effort into getting to you.

Now imagine saying to your client: "I want you to try and relax". That poor person is now facing an inner conflict, because how can they 'TRY' and 'RELAX' at the same time? Instead, why not use one of the following techniques to help them relax:

- Encourage them to remember how they feel just before they fall asleep. "How does it feel when the bed sheets are clean and soft, and the quilt envelopes you with warmth, comfort and security? When the mattress supports your body, and the pillows hold your head in that perfect place, allowing you to forget the day, and any of its worries, as you start to drift away ..."
- Describe what relaxation is: a state of nothingness, where there is no tension - just distant, unfocused thoughts. No awareness of time, just floating.
- Ask them if they have a favourite beach or place where they feel at one with everything. Ask them to go there and feel the sun on their back, hear the sea quietly lapping in the distance, to know they are in a place or space that has no fears or time. They are simply relaxed.
- Give them gentle commands such as: "Feel the softness and warmth of the towel on your skin as you lay on the couch. Feel how comfortable and supported your body is as you slowly begin to relax ..."

As you speak, start to gradually tone your voice down, to gently and quietly draw them into that space of just being. Then you apply your treatment and see the difference.

It is also essential for all therapists to stay with the positive aspects of their clients' lives.

Everyone has past traumas in their life and it is our job to help them leave them there and move forward. For instance, I had a client visit me with a number of physical complaints, including weight gain. Whilst discussing this, she broke down and said she had been divorced for 2 years after 18 years of abuse from her husband. I said "Fantastic!", to which she replied, "No, you don't understand - he was terrible. He bullied and dominated me so I was not free to do anything". Again, I said "Congratulations, that is fantastic! How does it feel to be free at last? Where have you been over the last 2 years? What have you achieved? Your kids must be very happy to see you smile so much now! What are your plans for the future?" I was instantly talking to a smiling, happy woman who had not realised what she had, and could only see what she had *not* had. She had used the word 'was' frequently in her description ("he was terrible ... I was not free"), which means the past, but she needed to learn to leave it there.

Having helped her to see things from a more positive light, I could have applied any therapy in the world and it would have been the best treatment ever! Because her treatment was in *herself* already, she just couldn't see it.

Our potential to help people heal is immeasurable and even if we don't know it, we do this through layers and layers of subtle communications, including touch, sound, colour, smile, smell, movement, vibration ... and words. None of us are truly qualified in psychology and yet we are all experts in our own right, because we utilise every aspect of communication, every day. However, please remember that it is not your job to counsel people unless you are professionally trained to do so, but it is your job to communicate and listen.

**Be careful with your words: be gentle, but be very, very positive.**