



The Virtual Center for VCFS

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Issue 03

VCFS News: Your Information Resource

In this issue: *THE USE OF HYPNOTHERAPY TO TREAT ANXIETY AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN VCFS*; A Q&A session with one of our experts, Ran Anbar, M.D., author of *Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis*

Also in this issue: An excerpt from a book written by our Newsletter Editor and Peer Group Director Raymond Cheng, who is an adult with VCFS and a valuable member of our team at the Virtual Center. Finally, see a map of where the registrants to the Virtual Center live...in more than 30 countries around the world.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Watch This Space!

Over the past few months, The Virtual Center for Velo-Cardio-Facial Syndrome, Inc. has been working on an important project to connect our registrants with each other in peer groups. The purpose of these groups is purely social so that similar age groups and possibly similar geographical locations can meet in small groups online and get to know each other. The only focus of these groups is to have fun, discuss interests, school, jobs, and more.

Raymond Cheng is busy working on forming these peer groups so please keep an eye out for more information in upcoming newsletters! If you are interested in having your child participate, please send an email to our Director of Community

Relations, Jodi Bloom at jodi.bloom@vcfscenter.org. In the email, include your name, your child's name, your location (country and city), their age, and their gender. You might also wish to tell us a bit about any special interests your child has. The groups will be monitored by our professional staff and our Director of Peer Relations, Raymond Cheng. We will let you know about the launch of the program which is in a trial phase at the moment.



An Excerpt ...

The following is an excerpt from a book written by our Editor and Director of Peer Relations, Raymond Cheng.

“I don’t remember much about growing up in Scarsdale, well-known suburb of New York City located in Westchester County. But I do remember the cul-de-sac of our little street, riding around with my brother on our bikes and visiting neighbors. There was a certain neighbor that we befriended, Matt. He was about the same age as us when we first met and always invited my brother and me to his parties, and vice versa. Our houses were just a few steps away, so it was easy to hang out, play basketball in the driveway, video games, or Legos in his room. I don’t recall much of his house, but it was similar to our house in structure. Although we were friendly with the other neighbors, Matt was our only true friend, the one with whom we played the most and with whom we felt most comfortable.



I have vivid memories of the treehouse that my dad built in the backyard. It was a cute, wellbuilt structure with a sandbox around the base, stairs on one side, a long metal slide on the other, and a little space on the roofless second floor, so we could watch the stars. Some of my fondest memories are of lying down, looking at the stars with my brother, and sharing laughs and memories. At times, it would be the two of us ruling the world, our immature, childish hearts, minds, and souls running around, climbing trees, and discovering new places. I really do miss those times.

THE USE OF HYPNOTHERAPY TO TREAT ANXIETY AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN VCFS

A Q&A session with Ran Anbar, M.D., F.A.A.P., Center Point Medicine, La Jolla, California

Ran D. Anbar, M.D. is currently the President and Founder of Center Point Medicine located in La Jolla, California with offices in Syracuse, New York. Dr. Anbar is a certified pediatric pulmonologist and began his interest in hypnotherapy while Director of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology at Upstate Medical University, also serving as Professor of Pediatrics. He left Upstate and Syracuse after 21 years leading the pediatric pulmonology program to return to his home state of California. After graduating from the University of California , San Diego with degrees in biology and psychology, he earned his M.D. at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, completed his residency and pediatric pulmonology fellowship at Mass General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School. He completed training in hypnosis from the Society of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatric. He has published and



lectured extensively, authoring many peer-reviewed journal articles, chapters and a book, "Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis." Dr. Anbar has been involved in using hypnosis in children and adults with VCFS for more than two decades, both at Upstate and at Center Point Medicine and has also participated in research using hypnotherapy with hundreds of people with VCFS.

1. Can you explain what "hypnotherapy" is and how it works? Do you put people to sleep or in a trance like you see on television?

Hypnosis involves a shift in the thinking pattern. To my patients I define hypnotherapy as "using your imagination to help yourself." However, that describes what we can do with hypnosis, rather than what it is.

Hypnosis involves a state of focused attention. Thus, learning how to focus your attention on a swinging watch, or by imagining a favorite place, or staring at a spot on the wall can all lead someone into a hypnotic state.

In the state of hypnosis people are more receptive to suggestions. This occurs because the conscious mind is focused on a task, and therefore is less likely to interfere with incoming suggestions by expressing doubt or resistance to change.

It is important to emphasize that all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. No one can hypnotize you, nor make you do something against your will. During entertainment shows, the people doing hypnosis choose to follow the entertainer's instructions.

Hypnotherapy has been defined as involving the use of hypnosis in the treatment of a medical or psychological disorder. I like to think of it in broader sense: As a way of helping people improve any area of their life that they would like to address.

People can learn to harness many powers of their minds using hypnosis. The knowledge of how to do this can be dramatically empowering.

2. What is the goal of hypnotherapy, and what conditions does it treat effectively?

The goal of hypnotherapy is to empower people to help themselves. It can treat any condition that involves the mind. All patients who have chronic physical symptoms have mental reactions to their illnesses. For instance, they might be anxious that their disease will become worse. They might become depressed because they feel poorly. They might become angry because having an illness seems unfair, and not in their control.

Thus, hypnotherapy can help anyone with chronic symptoms. It can help treat patients with anxiety, asthma, bedwetting, cancer, diabetes, depression, eczema, headaches, insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, obesity, restrictive eating, shortness of breath, smoking cessation, and tics. It can also help people improve their lives by becoming better artists, athletes, leaders, scientists, students, and writers.

3. Who does hypnotherapy? Is it only psychologists and psychiatrists?

Hypnotherapy can be done with the help of a trained health care provider, but as I mentioned earlier, people can learn to use hypnosis for themselves.

It is important that the health care provider who teaches hypnosis has been accredited by a professional organization such as the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, or the International Society of Hypnosis. Such health care providers can include psychiatrists and other physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, counselors, and social workers.

4. At what age is hypnotherapy most effective?

Children between the ages of 10-12 have the easiest time using hypnosis because they use their imaginations easily, understand instructions well, and do not have a lot of preconceived notions about hypnosis that may get in the way of using it.

That being said, hypnosis can be done with people of all ages beginning with children as young as 3 years of age (although it takes a different form than with older children or adults).

5. Do you have experience in using hypnotherapy with people who have velo-cardio-facial syndrome? How many cases have you seen or treated?

Through my work with Dr. Shprintzen and then as a result of my affiliation with the Virtual Center for VCFS, I have worked with more than 200 people with velo-cardio-facial syndrome over the past two decades.

I think the first patient with VCFS whom I helped needed to undergo an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) as part of one of Dr. Shprintzen's studies. He was 7 years old and was frightened because of the loud noise made by the MRI machine. The study involved children between the ages of 6 and 9, and usually they required anesthesia to calm them down enough to undergo the study. I suggested to Dr. Shprintzen that perhaps hypnotherapy would be a good alternative to the anesthesia, because it was safer and did not require any medication.

I taught the 7-year-old how to calm himself by imagining he was in a happy place, which he picked to be a bed in a Paris hotel. During the MRI he was told a story about being in Paris, and held perfectly still. Dr. Shprintzen was then able to complete the study that involved more than 100 children and required use of anesthesia with only one other individual.

It turns out that people with VCFS often have excellent imaginations and are gifted with the use of hypnotherapy. I think this is because they tend to be very accepting of suggestions. Frequent issues facing people with VCFS include dealing with anxiety, fears and stress related to medical procedures, and

sometimes developing hallucinations in later life. Hypnotherapy along with counseling has helped all these challenges.

6. Is there a book or books I can read to learn more about hypnotherapy?

A couple of good books to start with would be Josie Hadley's "Hypnosis for Change" (1996) and my more recent book, "Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis: A Journey to the Center" (2021).

7. How would I find someone who does hypnotherapy? Would it be important for them to know something about VCFS?

The website of the American Society of Hypnosis, www.asch.net, provides a listing of accredited professionals who can provide hypnotherapy. Also, you might check out Psychology Today Online, www.psychologytoday.com, which provides a list of professionals who provide many forms of psychological therapies, including some of them who provide hypnotherapy.

Most healthcare professionals who can offer hypnotherapy likely will not know much about VCFS. For that reason, I encourage you to have a potential therapist contact the Virtual Center for VCFS to receive information about this condition.

Fortunately, the hypnosis approaches that are applicable to people with VCFS are like those used with other conditions.

8. Can hypnotherapy be done even if someone is also receiving other forms of therapy or medication?

Hypnotherapy can be used as complementary therapy alongside other forms of therapy and medications. In fact, often it is essential that people with VCFS receive more than one form of therapy. For instance, some people become so anxious that they cannot think clearly enough to use their imaginations to get into a hypnotic state. When they are treated with medication, they can become calm enough for hypnotherapy to work.

9. How can you tell if someone is a good candidate for this therapy?

People who do very well with hypnosis tend to have very good imaginations and can picture things easily and in detail in their mind's eye. They tend to lose track of time when they are engaged in reading a good book or watching a movie. In fact, when they read or view a movie, they can feel that they are part of the action.

People who do well with hypnosis can respond very easily to hypnotic suggestions such as appearing to fall asleep when they are told to do so or be unable to separate their hands when it is suggested that the hands are glued together. This is why stage hypnotists choose such people as volunteers for their shows.

With all that being said, almost everyone who wants to use hypnosis to help themselves can gain at least some benefit.

10. How did you get into using hypnotherapy? According to your biosketch on the Virtual Center web site, you are a pediatric pulmonologist...isn't that all about the lungs?

I became involved with hypnosis when I encountered a young man with asthma and a terrible allergy to milk, who could bring on an asthma attack just by imagining that he was eating a cheeseburger.

When I witnessed this patient's reaction I wondered, "If you can think your way into a disease, can you think your way out?" That was my dramatic introduction to the world of hypnosis. I tell a lot more of what I learned through my work in hypnosis in my book, "Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis." And by the way, the answer to my question is, "Yes. You can think your way to better health."

When I realized the potential of hypnosis to help people in a unique way, I dedicated much of my career to providing hypnotherapy and spreading the word about how every person with chronic disease should be offered an opportunity to learn how to help themselves.



**WHERE DO OUR REGISTRANTS COME FROM?
ANSWER: FROM EVERY CONTINENT (EXCEPT
ANTARCTICA) AND 36 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES
(AND COUNTING).**