Client-Centered Parts Therapy

C. Roy Hunter  
B.A. (USA), M.S. (USA), C.Ht. (USA), FAPHP (UK), NGH (USA), ACHE (USA), NATH (USA)

Abstract:  
In this article I overview the concept of parts therapy and its variations (ego state therapy, voice dialogue, subpersonalities, etc.). Experts have spent years employing similar techniques based on the concept that we all have various personality parts. Charles Tebbetts based his parts therapy on Paul Federn’s work, but evolved it into a client-centered approach and combined it with deep hypnosis in order to help clients resolve inner conflicts. I define the “client-centered” approach and explain why it is different from most variations of parts therapy.

Key words:  
Parts therapy, client-centered, hypnosis, inner conflicts, ego state therapy, Charles Tebbetts,

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Introduction
How often do people experience inner conflicts that inhibit successful attainment of important goals? Counselors and hypnotherapists often use proven techniques to help their clients change undesired habits and/or to achieve desired personal and professional goals. Yet, in spite of the best efforts of both client and therapist alike, unresolved inner conflicts often inhibit clients from attaining their ideal empowerment.

Often smokers, after rejecting both direct and indirect suggestions to quit, can finally attain inner resolution through parts therapy or one of its variations. Likewise, numerous clients attempting to control eating habits often gain important insight about themselves after experiencing hypnotic inner conflict resolution. Parts therapy, or one of its variations, can also help resolve other inner conflicts even after clients fail to respond to more traditional techniques.

What Is Parts Therapy?
Parts therapy is the process of calling out and communicating directly with any and all parts of the subconscious involved in helping a client achieve a desired result. It is based on the concept that our personality is composed of a number of various personality parts, which are aspects of the subconscious, each with their respective jobs or functions of the inner mind. Increasing numbers of therapists around the world are discovering the benefits of parts therapy and its variations to help clients get past personal barriers, and it continues to grow in popularity.

The late Charles Tebbetts taught me his methods of employing parts therapy in 1983, even before writing his hypnotherapy book (Tebbetts, 1985) that is now out of print. He believed that we all have various aspects of our personalities, which he called ego parts. My former instructor openly admitted in the classroom that he originated parts therapy from the work of Paul Federn, and borrowed aspects of parts therapy from other therapists and researchers. Federn worked with the id, ego, and superego (Federn, 1953; Erskine, 2002). Tebbetts privately practiced his own variation of Federn's work for many years before teaching it to others, evolving parts therapy into a technique that effectively helps clients resolve inner conflicts. Over the years, I have updated his work to an even more client-centered approach than the one Tebbetts taught in 1983. However, before defining "client-centered" parts therapy, let's explore its variations.

Variations of Parts Therapy
Therapists have employed variations of parts therapy for decades. I will briefly discuss several of them in this article, starting with my favorite variation: ego state therapy.

Ego State Therapy
Pioneered by Dr. John Watkins and Helen Watkins over a number of years (Watkins, 1979), ego state therapy has spread throughout the therapeutic world. Watkins wrote about ego states in several publications and books back in the 1970's. Gordon Emmerson takes ego state therapy into the 21st Century at warp speed with his excellent book, Ego State Therapy (Crown House Publishing, 2003), which is now required reading for my hypnotherapy students.

Emmerson takes the work of Watkins and Watkins to another level. He believes that we use five to fifteen ego states throughout a normal week (Emmerson, 2003), and that we have more ego states available when needed. He goes beyond the use of ego states therapy for resolving inner conflicts, providing other therapeutic benefits as well. In my professional opinion, Emmerson's book is a "must read" for anyone practicing parts therapy or any of its variations. Besides calling out the ego states for inner conflict resolution, Emmerson helps clients create a map of their own ego states.

I believe that therapists who facilitate ego state therapy as practiced and presented by Watkins (Watkins, 1979) or Emmerson (Emmerson, 2003) should enjoy a high success rate. Emmerson believes that hypnosis makes ego state therapy more powerful, which validates the teachings of Charles Tebbetts (Tebbetts, 1985).

Voice Dialogue
Hal Stone, Ph.D., and Sidra Stone, Ph.D. (Stone, 1989) promoted another variation
of parts therapy called voice dialogue. The client, in a manner that could compare with Gestalt therapy, plays the role of each part by changing chairs or positions (although changing chairs is optional). The therapist facilitates the dialogue and proceeds accordingly (Stone, 1989). The Stones label the ego parts as selves or subpersonalities, providing labels for the various other subpersonalities such as the protector/controller, the pleaser, the perfectionist, etc. Additionally, they provide some interesting discussion regarding the origin of subpersonalities, including the possible origins of disowned selves, which they also call demonic energies.

Miriam Dyak promotes the work of the Stones (Dyak, 1999). She presents a particular method of facilitating voice dialogue, with a systematic guide for those who wish to practice her approach. She worked closely with Hal and Sidra Stone, and offers training programs.

My primary concern about voice dialogue is the absence of a formal induction into hypnosis. With little or no trance state, an analytical person may resist permanent change. I know this from personal experience as a client of voice dialogue in 1989. The facilitator thought that he successfully helped me attain resolution to a concern as I moved from chair to chair; but I found my own conscious mind interfering greatly in the process. The benefits were temporary (lasting less than a week), and I believe the absence of hypnosis was the primary reason for my analytical resistance. Both students and professionals alike have reported similar experiences with voice dialogue over the years.

Inner Child Work

John Bradshaw praised the work of Hal and Sidra Stone; but he considers the selves (or ego parts) to be developmental stages that remain intact. He labels them as an infant, a toddler, a pre-school and school age child, as well as an adolescent (Bradshaw, 1988). Bradshaw facilitates a group exercise where he has a person close his/her eyes while others in the room give positive affirmations, with gentle music playing in the background. Does this sound like hypnosis? It is! He encourages his clients to meditate with inner imagery, and to love the inner child. He then takes his clients through all the “developmental stages” to find out whether the needs were met in each stage. Suggestions for positive change are given to each stage (or part of the inner child), and he gets results.

Subpersonalities

John Rowan presents the concept of subpersonalities in the very first paragraph of his book, Discover Your Subpersonalities (Rowan, 1993). He states that we all have several little people inside us, all wanting different things. Rowan also claims that we have more than one centre within ourselves, and that our minds are divided into portions and phases. Although this book is somewhat analytical, Rowan wrote it for the novice. It is easy to read, with much useful information. It also contains numerous exercises, along with some questionnaires for self-awareness. I especially like his history of the variations of parts therapy covered in the 22nd and 23rd chapters of his book (Rowan, 1993). That alone is sufficient for the serious student of parts therapy or its variations to invest in this book.

Other Variations

Nancy J. Napier, a nationally known marriage and family therapist, also wrote about her work with a variation of parts therapy (Napier, 1990). She gives examples of the origins of various personality parts, calling them “protector” parts and “resource” parts; and she provides some self hypnosis scripts for identifying, cleansing and healing our various parts. She has researched through extensive written resources to back up her work.

Some facilitators use a variation of parts therapy called conference room therapy (Quigley, 1999). Although similar to parts therapy in many ways, they use the imagery of a conference room. There are others who assume that subpersonalities are attaching entities that a therapist must release rather than potentially productive parts that can be integrated or given new jobs (Baldwin, 1995). In addition, Kevin Hogan, Ph.D., employs and teaches a variation of parts therapy that is similar to what I teach (Hogan, 2001). While all variations of parts therapy should
prove to be effective with many clients, some variations work better than others do. Personally, I prefer the client-centered approach.

**What Makes Client-Centered Parts Therapy Different?**

The best way for me to define “client-centered” parts therapy is as follows: the facilitator remains objective (like a mediator), and empowers clients to discover their own resolutions simply by asking the right questions. We can best accomplish this during a deep state of hypnosis, which will reduce the risk of analytical interference from the conscious mind (Hunter, 2005). The hypnotic state makes it easier to communicate with each part, free of analytical resistance.

Besides using deep trance, another difference between my methods and that of most variations is that I do not label the ego parts. Instead, I ask each emerging part to give me a name or title, which often provides important insight regarding a part’s purpose. Additionally, this is more client-centered than looking for a specific part (such as a controller part or protector part), which might cause parts to emerge that may be irrelevant to resolving the inner conflict.

Client-centered parts therapy is ideal for helping clients resolve inner conflicts, which occur when we have two different parts of the subconscious pulling us in opposite directions. While a smoker might have a strong emotional desire to quit in order to have more energy (or better health), another part of the subconscious provides pleasure in lighting up after meals (or at other times). Every year countless numbers of smokers make New Years Resolutions to quit, only to find their resolutions literally going up in smoke. This is only one example of many types of inner conflicts, which are also common with people wishing to control their weight. How many people do you know who are determined to go on a diet, only to gorge themselves at a party or social event?

The use of parts therapy for inner conflict resolution normally involves mediation between the two primary parts in conflict, which I call the conflicting part and the motivating part. As mentioned above, however, I ask each part to provide me with a name or title for me to use. Many of my sessions involve calling out only two parts, but other parts do exist...and occasionally I call out more than two parts during a session.

This process is described in detail in my book from Crown House Publishing (Hunter, 2005), with an 11-Step Process. Here are the steps:

1. Identify the part
2. Gain rapport (compliment the part).
3. Call out the part.
4. Thank it for emerging.
5. Discover its purpose.
6. Call out other parts as appropriate.
7. Negotiate and mediate.
8. Ask parts to come to terms of agreement.
9. Confirm and summarize terms of agreement.
10. Give direct suggestion as appropriate (only after terms of agreement, but NOT before).
11. INTEGRATE the parts! (The formal parts therapy process is completed.)

Several chapters are devoted to explore all eleven steps in-depth, with sample scripts to help the facilitator along the way. Common detours sometimes appear, and I discuss them - along with possible ways of getting past these detours.

This 11-Step Process is based on the discipline taught by the late Charles Tebbetts (Tebbetts, 1985), and updated through my years of professional experience. Tebbetts often engaged in what he called a “Great Debate” with what he called the offending part (which I call the conflicting part), and he referred to the facilitator as an arbitrator (Tebbetts, 1985). Although Tebbetts got results in the classroom, witnessed by me and other students, my major update of his work is to encourage the facilitator to act as a mediator instead of an arbitrator, and to avoid engaging in debates with any of the parts. When I shared this update with Tebbetts in 1990, he agreed with my reasons for the update; but he passed on before putting it in writing. He was a pioneer, and I believe that Charles Tebbetts made one of the most profoundly beneficial contributions to hyp-
notherapy in the 20th Century. Additionally, Tebbetts taught that we should treat each ego part with respect, just as though the part was a person. This helps the facilitator to maintain rapport with each part, making it easier to help the conflicting parts come to terms of agreement. Emmerson also encourages the therapist to treat each part as though it is a person (Emmerson, 2003).

I also emphasize the importance of avoiding inappropriate leading, and encourage my clients to avoid having any pre-conceived opinions before employing hypnosis...as any preconceived opinions can influence what emerges from the subconscious, whether said opinions come from client or facilitator. This is true whether the therapist employs a variation of parts therapy (Emmerson, 2003), or regression therapy (Durbin, 1999). Inappropriate leading can often result in false memories (Sheflin & Shapiro, 1989), taking both client and therapist alike down the wrong path, with costly consequences.

When Is Parts Therapy Appropriate?

A client experiencing an inner conflict is an ideal candidate for parts therapy. The obvious clue would be evident by a client saying: "A part of me wants to get rid of this weight while another part wants to keep on eating!"

The ego part desiring to be attractive is in conflict with the inner child (or some other ego part) wanting to enjoy eating sweets, etc. Parts therapy usually will uncover the cause(s), so that the facilitator may facilitate inner conflict resolution through a process similar to mediation.

Before proceeding, however, I provide an explanation to the client. I explain it by saying, "We tend to wear different hats as we walk through the path of life. We get into the work mode on our jobs, wearing the hat of a dedicated worker; but the inner child often comes out to play after our work is done. A smoker might have a part of the subconscious motivating that person to quit, while another part is determined to sabotage every attempt..." (Hunter, 2005). One minute of communication can be worth many months of resolution, as I once saw a female client who believed that she had multiple personalities simply because another therapist had previously employed a variation of parts therapy without giving her an advance explanation of the process.

Often the need for parts therapy may not be readily apparent. Practitioners of diversified client-centered hypnosis learn how to fit the technique to the client rather than vice versa, and they do not automatically use parts therapy with everyone. Most of my intake sessions begin with some positive suggestions designed to the client’s specific benefits for achieving a desired goal, because an enjoyable first impression is lasting, and more likely to result in the client keeping his/her next appointment (Hunter, 2000). I also devote a session to teaching self-hypnosis as a way of reducing stress. By the third or fourth session, if the client still resists positive suggestions, I will choose an advanced hypnotic technique that seems appropriate for that particular client. Naturally, when an inner conflict is apparent, I choose parts therapy. When the appropriate technique is not so obvious, finger response questions usually help me to determine how to proceed.

While my primary motive for facilitating parts therapy is to help clients resolve inner conflicts, some trainers and authors use additional applications of parts therapy or its variations even in the absence of an apparent inner conflict. As previously mentioned, Emmerson uses an intriguing "map" of a client’s ego states (Emmerson, 2003), calling out a number of different parts. His approach is also client-centered.

Why Is Client-Centered Parts Therapy Effective?

In my professional opinion, the client-centered approach empowers the client, because the cause(s) and resolution for the problem come from the client’s inner mind instead of from the mind of the facilitator. Rather than clients giving their power away to someone who tells them what to do (or receiving "spells" in the form of hypnotic suggestions), clients discover the best resolution by answering questions asked by the facilitator at appropriate times. The inner mind seems to contain a profound wisdom that is often surprising to both client and therapist alike, because there is a part of the inner mind that observes what happens even during deep
trance (Durbin, 2001).

Several years ago, a psychologist asked me to use parts therapy to help her resolve an inner conflict. Upon emerging from hypnosis, her first words were, “That solution was so simple, I wish I’d thought of it myself!” I quickly reminded her that the resolution had indeed come from her own mind, and not mine. She smiled and agreed, and acknowledged the value of client-centered parts therapy.

The client-centered approach helps clients attain greater empowerment, because the power to change truly lies within the client. The facilitator’s job is to remain objective while helping clients discover their own inner power and to help them use it constructively. Successful client-centered parts therapy provides a greater probability of lasting results, and often provides the side benefit of an improved self-esteem for many clients. This is a win/win.

Contact the Author:
C. Roy Hunter, M.S., FAPHP
2748 Milton Way, #120
Milton, WA 98354, USA
Phone: 1-253-927-8888
Email: alliance@self-empowerment.tv

References:

Masterclass
Hypnosis for Inner Conflict Resolution - Introducing Parts Therapy

Presenter: Roy Hunter MS FAPHP

This masterclass will show you how to deal effectively with clients of struggle with Inner conflicts. Someone strongly desiring to attain a goal, but who also experiences self-sabotage, may be a prime candidate for parts Therapy. Often using different names, such as Ego States Therapy, others emulate this profoundly beneficial technique originally taught and practiced by the late Charles Tebbetts.

Participants will learn....
- What Parts Therapy is
- When to use Parts Therapy
- Why Parts Therapy is best for some clients
- How to use Parts Therapy (complete step-by-step process)
- How to explain Parts Therapy to your clients, and why such explanation is needed.
- Why it is so important to be an objective mediator
- How to avoid inappropriate leading, and the potential consequences of not doing so
- Why Roy Hunter added an important update on the Tebbetts Methods
- How to avoid common perils

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