

Profile

Edwin Yager, Ph.D.

Psychologist makes it his personal mission to tell the world about the power and effectiveness of ‘subliminal therapy’

BY ARTHUR LIGHTBOURN
Contributor

These days, at 85, soon to be 86, local psychologist Edwin Yager, is making it his personal mission to spread the word about the effectiveness of what he considers to be “the treatment of the future” — subliminal therapy.

Subliminal therapy, Yager posits, is a technique that permits the patient guided by a therapist to tap into mental abilities that the patient probably doesn’t even know that he or she has [the ‘unconscious’ or ‘higher self’] and then use those abilities to halt the problems that the patient is experiencing as symptoms.

“You can get down to the root cause of the prob-

lem so you can actually resolve the problem,” he said, “not just wrestle with the symptoms.”

Not everyone agrees.

Although the theory of the unconscious mind as a repository of forgotten memories has been around for centuries, some professionals still question its scientific validity and even whether the unconscious mind exits at all.

Yager, however, says he has employed subliminal therapy in his private practice successfully for the past three decades to treat a wide range of disorders, some strictly mental, such as phobias and compulsions; and others psychogenic, with physical symptoms, such as

migraine headaches, insomnia, pain, gastro-intestinal and sexual problems, even asthma.

“These often seem to be the consequences of earlier life experiences,” he said. “When you can uncover those experiences and ‘re-frame them’ and understand them in a different way, the effect changes and the symptom ceases to be there.

“The key, the focus element that’s involved here, is teaching people to use abilities they don’t know they have,” he said.

In addition to his private practice, Yager, a former engineer-turned-psychologist, is a clinical professor at UCSD School of Medicine, where, since 1975, he has taught an elective course in clinical hypnosis. He holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the Professional School for Psychological Studies, San Diego.

We interviewed Yager in his office off Balboa Avenue in San Diego’s Mission Bay area.

Yager is a tall Texan, who attributes his good health and longevity to three things: “The woman I married, stopping smoking and going to the gym.”

Yager was “born in a little town called El Paso, Texas.” His father was a welder. “But I never knew him very well, he died when I was a little kid.” He was raised by his widowed mom, a school teacher. “That was during the Depression, a time when a lot of people were doing a lot of hurting,” he said.

Growing up, Yager discovered he had knack for things technical and mechanical. When he was 12, he landed a job repairing radios.

During World War II, when he turned 18, he joined the Navy (1943-45), and served as an electronics technician aboard the light cruiser USS Detroit.

“The Navy never sent me to school,” he said. “I learned mostly by osmosis, from other people and just by doing it.”

After the war, he studied electrical engineering at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, began working as an engineer, earned a bachelor’s degree in



Edwin Yager, Ph.D.

PHOTO: JON CLARK

current technology at Texas State Technical Institute, subsequently moved to San Diego where he worked as a group engineer with Con-vair for 20 years, retiring in 1973.

A pastor at a church that Yager attended in Pacific Beach learned of Yager’s interest in clinical hypnosis and asked him if he would serve as a pastoral counselor to some of the church members — which he did and discovered “This is for me. This is what I wanted to do.”

In preparation for his retirement and transitioning eventually to a second career as a psychologist, he earned a master’s degree in counseling in 1972 from United States International University, and another master’s in technical education in 1973 from National University.

In 1975, he began teaching an elective course in the clinical applications of hypnosis at the UCSD School of Medicine, initially as an instructor, then as a clinical assistant professor, and, since 2005, as a clinical professor.

His work as a clinical hypnotist subsequently led him to become a leading practitioner of subliminal therapy.

In 1982, he earned his Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the Professional School for Psychological Studies, San Diego.

His mission these days, he said, is to teach therapists from around the globe the subliminal therapy technique. He recently conducted a two-day workshop on

“Transcending Traditional Therapy” at the 16th International Conference for the Association of Psychology and Psychiatry in Athens, Greece; and is scheduled to conduct workshops in New Orleans, Phoenix and Canada.

“Subliminal therapy is clearly and distinctly different in many ways from hypnosis. The classical understanding of hypnosis doesn’t apply. Hypnosis is an element of subliminal therapy, but only an element.

“It’s a technique that makes it possible — and this is why it’s so effective and so efficient time wise — to identify the cause of problems and resolve the problem at that level. Then the symptom, which is the presenting problem, ceases to exist.

“The patient has to be intelligent enough to understand these concepts, intelligent enough to recognize that he or she has a problem and has to be open to new ways of thinking about things maybe.

“I give credit to my engineering training, my engineering way of thinking, to the totally rational, logical, step-by-step process that subliminal therapy is. Every step is determined by the outcome of the previous step.”

How long does a therapy generally take?

“It’s the briefest of brief therapies that I know of,” he said. “A patient typically comes in with multiple problems. To solve any one of those problems, is probably not going to take more than an hour maybe two after an hour of introduction and training.”

However, some disorders take longer.

He has one patient with multiple personalities — dissociative identity disorder — whom he has been treating for 27 years. With treatment, the patient has led a relatively normal life and has maintained employment.

“The dissociative disorders are classically long term in resolution,” he conceded.

He has had a high success rate, he said, in treating addictive and sexual disorders.

Of all the disorders, he said, the toughest to treat successfully is obesity.

Asked if he has used some of these techniques, including self-hypnosis, to overcome any of his personal issues, he said: “Absolutely.”

Such as?

“I had hay fever, to a devastating degree, as a child. No longer a problem” Also sea sickness, smoking and nail-biting, no longer problems.

Any others?

“Public speaking. That was a biggie. I didn’t solve that until I was in my 40s.”

Asked if it’s necessary for a subliminal therapy patient to undergo hypnosis, Yager said: “No. There is no formal trance induction or anything of that nature implied, but, it is also true that during the course of employing subliminal therapy very commonly a patient will slip into what I identify as hypnotic trance, but it’s spontaneous.”

Asked what has surprised him most in his years as a psychologist, he replied: “The key thing, if I wanted to isolate one thing, would be the malleability of the human psyche...We learn limitations, we learn values. We are conditioned creatures...and most of that conditioning comes from life experiences.

“That’s the way problems come in; that’s the way all the good things that we enjoy come in; and even though we may have problems now, we are still malleable and knowing how to do some reconditioning, we can change. We can eliminate that limitation. We can alter almost any aspect of our experience.”

Demonstrating how he would work with a patient, he said he would be using the word “Centrum” to speak directly to the patient’s unconscious. (He thought up that name Centrum before it was adopted by a brand of multivitamins.)

Speaking in a slow monotone, he said, “I’m going to pretend for the moment that you’re my patient. Okay?”

Okay.

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Quick Facts

Name: Edwin K. Yager, Ph.D.

Distinction: UCSD School of Medicine clinical professor Edwin Yager is a leading practitioner in the use of clinical hypnosis and subliminal therapy to treat a wide range of disorders, addictions and illnesses.

Born: El Paso, Texas, 85 years ago

Education: Ph.D. in counseling psychology, Professional School of Psychological Studies, San Diego, 1982; M.T.E. (Masters in Technical Education), National University, San Diego, 1973; M.A. in counseling, United States International University, San Diego, 1972; B.T. (Bachelor of Technology), Texas State Technical Institute, Waco, Texas, 1969; studied electrical engineering, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 1946-49.

Family: He and his wife, Gwen, have been married 35 years. “I had one practice marriage before this one and raised seven children, including four stepchildren, between the two marriages.”

Military service: U.S. Navy, electronics technician, 1943-45.

Interests: Family, woodworking, river cruises

Writing: He is the author of “Foundations of Clinical Hypnosis: From Theory to Practice,” considered a “must read” by fellow psychologists. He is currently working on a book on subliminal therapy.

Recent reading: “Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America,” by Robert Whitaker

Favorite TV: Every summer, he and his wife, re-watch all the episodes of their favorite TV series, “The West Wing.”

Favorite film: “The American President,” 1995 comedy, starring Michael Douglas and Annette Bening.

Philosophy: “People. I’m not tired at the end of the day. I’m energized by the people I work with.”

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“And I’m teaching you the skill and I’m going to guide you to use the skill to make the changes you want to make. My role in subliminal therapy is strictly as a guide. A source of information sometimes, but I don’t have to be involved in the content of the problems that you address. I can even do this work, a therapist can, not just ‘I’, any clinician trained in this, can even do this work without even knowing what the patient’s problem is.

“So, you’re my patient and you came in with some problem.... And I have to be able to communicate with your ‘centrum.’”

He asks the patients to create in his conscious mind’s eye, the image of a chalkboard or computer screen, upon which Centrum can write.

“So I ask that you create that imaginary chalkboard right now. Got it?”

Okay.

“I ask your Centrum to indicate willingness to communicate this way by writing the word “Yes” on the chalkboard.

“Tell me when the word “Yes” is there.”

It’s there.

“Now you might reasonably at this point ask, how do I know that came from Centrum? A reasonable question. And at least part of the answer to that question is that if, in fact, Centrum writes on the chalkboard, in all probability, you will not be able to erase it consciously.”

“Is the word ‘Yes’ still on?”

Yes.

“I invite you to try to erase it. Still there?”

Yes.

“Centrum, please erase the word ‘yes’ and replace it with a different word. I ask, Centrum, that you select a word and write it on the

chalkboard.

Write a word, Centrum, that will surprise you, consciously...Centrum, please write the surprise word now on that chalkboard. Got a word?”

Not yet.

“Okay. Be patient. Got it?”

Okay.

“Are you consciously satisfied that you didn’t think that word up and put it there?”

I don’t know.

“You question that you did. Okay. Centrum, erase that word and please reach out somewhere and select a different word that truly will be unexpected and truly will surprise you consciously. Got that word?”

Yes.

“Are you satisfied consciously that you didn’t think that word up and put it there?”

Yes.

“At this point, if you were my patient, I would start interacting with Centrum....You’re job now, as we work together, would be to tell me what Centrum writes on the chalkboard.... The moment you tell me your conscious opinion in lieu of what Centrum writes, at that moment, we start spinning wheels. So here’s a little guiding rule, anytime I preface a question with the name ‘Centrum’, the next words I hear from you, I hope, will be the words on the chalkboard.

“You may get answers that don’t make sense. And you may get answers you don’t agree with. You may strongly disagree. And that’s all okay as long as you’ll tell me what those answers are as opposed to what you think they should be.... No other psychotherapy I know approaches it this way.”

We just went through a little hypnosis, didn’t we?

“You did,” he said. “It was not a deliberate induction on my part. Not everybody goes into trance, but most people do.”

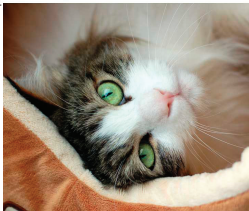
Woodward Center Pet of the Week

This special guy is not just good looking, he is sensitive and sweet! Neil is a handsome 6-year old altered male who is looking for a loving home with older children. Fall into Neil’s amazing green eyes and give him a chance to fill your home with love. His adoption fee is \$75. (plus a \$40 microchip fee) All pets adopted from Helen Woodward Animal Center have been spayed or neutered, have up-to-date vaccinations and microchip identification.

Helen Woodward Animal Center; 6461 El Apajo Road in Rancho Santa Fe.

For more information call 858-756-4117, option #1 or log on to www.animalcenter.org

*From now until October 31, 2011 receive a complimentary pair of Sea World passes with your adoption.



AUTHOR

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people in Venice, California, at a Moth Story Slam, I won. This was one of the most thrilling nights of my life because there were comics and screenwriters also on stage – the competition was fierce. There were 10 of us.

I had the best story that night. Not surprisingly, music was the subject. At the semi-finals, I brought out the big guns with “It Sucks to be Vain and Poor,” which I later recorded on my CD of “Wince-Worthy Tales” – an embarrassing story that was worth the telling as it garnered me second place and showed me how much pleasure a story could provide for an audience. In the moment of the telling I felt as though I knew them and they knew me, as though we were truly seeing each other.

There is vulnerability in storytelling. Storytelling is a means of reaching out and connecting, of sharing our humanity. And when it is done in the oral tradition, there is no wall between the teller and the audience – the connection is direct. In this age of electronic communication, when we often miss out on the warmth and nuance of direct communication, storytelling events are a last vestige of that direct human connection.

Tell us a bit about the event here in Encinitas?

I have been asked to hold a storytelling event for a teacher retiring from La Costa Canyon high school. This is a private evening with friends and colleagues sharing stories. However the educator has been to many of my storytelling events, and she is actively looking for a spot to hold a monthly “Wince-Worthy Tales” event in her area, Encinitas.

How can people find out more about you, your books, and your storytelling events?

All kinds of information about me, the books, and the events can be found at www.marianawilliams.com.

Support your favorite businesses — go to the Review’s Web site to vote for ‘Best of North Coast’

New on the web this week is the ballot for this year’s “Best Of North Coast.” You can vote on a number of categories from best restaurant to best lawyer, and everything in-between. Go to rsfreview.com/best-of-2011 or scan the barcode to submit your ballot. The contest period ends at 8 p.m. on Aug. 15, so submit your ballot today. The winners of each category will be announced in a special section of the Sept. 29 edition of the Rancho Santa Fe Review. Spread the word, vote for your favorite hang out before it is too late.

RSF Republican Women event featuring Congressman postponed

RSF Republican Women’s July 18 breakfast reception featuring Congressman Allen West had to be postponed. The group received a phone call from West’s office that Speaker of the House John Boehner had called Congress back into session for July 18 to discuss the “Debt Ceiling.”

The Congressman is hoping to reschedule a California trip in October and when a date is confirmed the event will be rescheduled. Anyone who had paid to attend the breakfast reception will be refunded. If you’d still like to donate to the Allen West campaign, please send your check to: Allen West for Congress, PO Box 1028, Deerfield Beach, FL 3344-1028. For questions, please contact Kathy, Kathimac42@gmail.com (preferred).



MUSTANGS

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the days of cowboys and Indians.

“We have a sexy history and I want to capture this,” she said.

The ranch has been transferred to the foundation’s ownership, she said, and all proceeds from the operation will go back into furthering the nonprofit’s goals.

While her plan has drawn the ire of cattle ranchers who want to continue allowing their herds to graze the federal lands, as they have for decades, others in northeast Nevada support her plan because of its potential for generating tourism dollars, according to a December report in the Wall Street Journal.

Pickens said she has invested a sizeable sum of her own money into the foundation, but declined to discuss specific numbers. “This is my passion,” she said.

In April, Pickens testified before members of the House Interior Appropriations Committee, urging them to support the creation of an eco-preserve for wild mustangs.

Her foundation has also held galas, organized letter-writing campaigns and used public appearances — such as bringing the horses to opening day at the Del Mar racetrack — to get the word out.

Pickens said those who are interested in supporting the plan can log on to the foundation’s website at www.savingamericasmustangs.org, to register to receive updates and find out how they can become involved.

The campaign has made a difference, she said, and has caught the attention of officials at the federal Bureau of Land Management, which oversees the public lands where Pickens wants to establish the refuge for wild horses.

“It’s time for a change,” she said, both in the way wild horses are treated, and in the mentality of cattlemen and ranchers who don’t want to provide roaming land for the mustangs.

“All we are saying is leave the horses alone, and they can’t handle that,” she said.



Non-Fairbanks Ranch residents can board horses at the Fairbanks Riding Club.

RENOVATION

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It’s very peaceful and serene,” agreed Ellner. “Time stops here.”

In addition to peaceful riding, the club also offers quality instruction. Lena Nordlof-Davis, a USDF (United States Dressage Federation) gold, silver and bronze medalist, handles dressage training and care, and new addition Kelli Di Gioia-Bautista brings her championship experience in hunter jumper training.

Summer Pony Camp is now running with daily riding and bathing of ponies, arts and crafts, and nature hikes. For more information, contact instructor Sarah Powell at (858) 449-3317.

The club is also hosting a dressage clinic on Aug. 9 and 10 with Olympian Charlotte Bredahl-Baker. To register, call Lena Nordolf-Davis at (760) 822-7483.

For more information on boarding opportunities, call (858) 756-0321 or visit fairbanksridingclub.com.