



ROB DE GROOF

WORKING WITH STAFF

In this ebook Rob will teach you the secrets that enabled him to travel the world teaching hypnosis and still own a successful business.



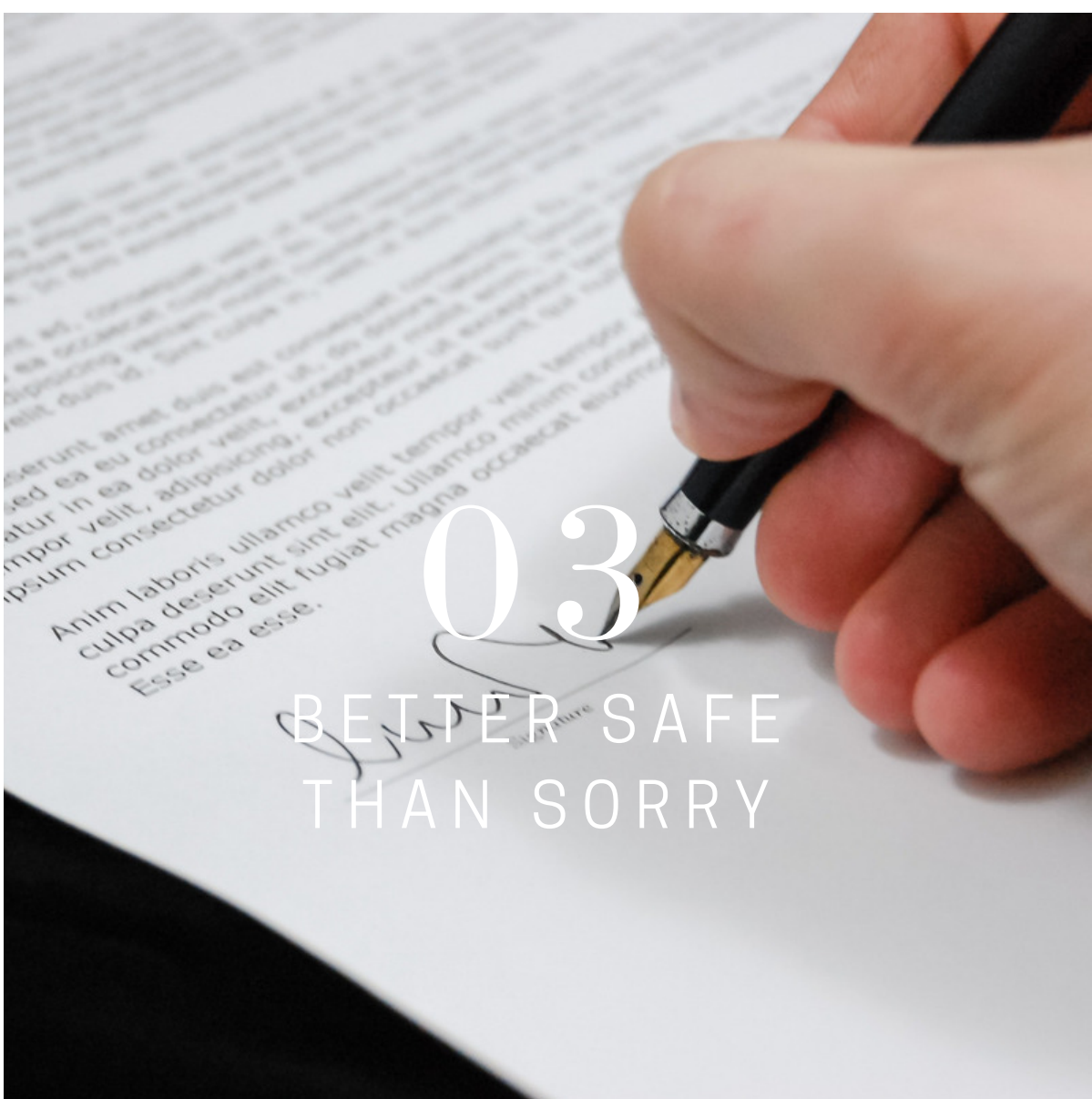
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This ebook was drawn up as a supporting document for my lecture Working With Staff, which was given 4 May 2019 at HypnoBiz New York.

I hope this ebook is helpful to you and you enjoyed attending my talk. Feel free to follow European Hypnosis Academy on Facebook and Twitter, or tune in to the blog on our website

europeanhypnosisacademy.com/latest-news.

YOU SNOOZE, YOU LOSE

Do not confuse a long waiting list with a successful career

I am aware that many hypnotists get a kick out of making their clients wait. It makes them seem as if they are highly valuable, wanted and popular. However, those days are past us. You have to put yourself in service of the client, not the other way around. Sometimes I hear so-called “success stories” of making clients wait on a booking for three weeks or even up to eight months. If you have that many bookings, that is wonderful for you .. for now. In the long run, it will turn sour. I do not believe that putting clients on hold is what is best for them.

In my opinion, clients should be able to book a session within two weeks. Why? Because it keeps their spirits lifted. You see, their mindset is everything. The moment they decide to tackle their problem: that is the sweet spot you need to join in on. Do you know what makes the optimal mindset for creating positive change? Motivation + understanding. I will shortly explain why both are important.

Firstly, motivation. We have all experienced first hand how determined we feel when we first decide to take action. How many of us have not fallen into the trap of buying a gym membership, trying a new dietary fad, purchasing expensive vitamins, or decided to get up at 5 A.M to “get things done”? This moment, this spark is what you need to take advantage of.

Do not let your clients excitement deflate. If you leave them hanging, their motivation or will to change will either drop or lose importance, and you will receive a totally different client in the therapy room than the one who first booked the session. After all, they woke up one day and decided hypnosis is the key for overcoming their obstacles. Take it from our office manager: Monday's are busiest in terms of bookings, because "I will start on Monday" is a thing!

Secondly, understanding. Clients are looking for an alleviation of their situation, and some of them are really struggling. Reaching out for help is often the most difficult step. If you have to tell someone who is fighting this battle within that you will be happy to see them in a month, then they might give up the fight entirely. How often we have had clients crying over the phone because we are able to help them, their children or their loved ones next week! The client feels understood and will thus be loyal to the process of change.

If the waiting time transgresses fourteen days — or even several months, then chances are their mindset has changed for the worse. A myriad of reasons could come up during this period — some internal and some external factors — as to why their motivation will drop. They could experience stress in the workplace, break up with their significant other, suffer a loss, book a vacation, or worse: see another therapist. And your chance of succes will suffer from it too.

WORKING WITH STAFF

When is hiring staff the right decision ?

Are you considering to hire a staff member? Think deep and ask yourself:

1. Do I want to expand my business?
2. Do I want to reduce my own sessions with clients?
3. Am I willing to organize and lead a team?
4. Can I handle a challenge?

How far are you willing to go? If you would rather work with your own clients and help them achieve their goals, then working with staff is probably not for you. You will spend a lot of time organizing and leading a team, if you are not willing to make that sacrifice then expanding your business with other therapists might not be the way to go. Besides, working with others is always a challenge. You need to keep a firm grip, steer them in the direction you want, and you have to pay them. For me, working with staff is perfect. I need to change things up from time to time, I am an entrepreneur and I enjoy a challenge. I also don't mind reprimanding my staff from time to time. If you intend to be best friends with your team: think again. You might laugh at reading this, but trust me: the day will come when you start counting the grey hairs on your head.

Who will you hire and why ?

The first and best advice I can give you is: hire someone from the opposite sex. You would be amazed at how many clients prefer either a male or female hypnotist. For example, women will be more open to consulting a female hypnotist regarding issues of trauma or sexuality. Teenage boys will feel more comfortable around men, especially when they feel their issue is “embarrassing”.

Where will you find them ?

A great way to find new staff is by teaching hypnotherapy classes. However, I advise against going for the most promising student in the room. After all, you are looking for a staff member and not an extra entrepreneur. Look for someone who has a real passion for helping people, someone who is less interested in doing administration, marketing and other — in their opinion — “annoying” tasks. You do not want to hire somebody with the ambition to own their own flourishing business. This might sound strange to you now, but think about it: it is better to select a student who is a total beginner, so that you can train them from the start, instead of someone who is only there to learn the skills and ends up stealing your ideas. I will come back on this later and explain how you can avoid this.

Chances are that you do not run your own class or training, in that case you might want to get in touch with the person who trained you. Ask them if they could keep an eye out for promising students located in your area. Keep in mind that this selection process might take a bit longer, because you will not have the advantage of seeing them or getting to know them during your own training week.

If the person who trained you is no longer in practice or you pursued your training abroad, then you could start looking for hypnotherapy trainers in your area. Make sure to look for someone whose approach is mutable to yours, because it is necessary that your staff operates the same way you do. Of course you can offer them additional training, however someone who has had different training from you will struggle to adapt to your way of thinking and working.

How will you train your therapists ?

As many of you know, I host and teach many hypnotherapy classes myself. When I work with new students, I train them in the Jeffrey Stephens Protocol. This protocol forms the foundation of my own hypnotherapy business. It is only logical that this protocol is one of the most important things my students acquire during their training.

When I select new staff, the first thing that is required of them is to videotape several sessions. I review these sessions, providing feedback as well as tips and tricks. Secondly, they are asked to sit in and watch one of the more experienced team members, or myself, perform a session with a client. This way they can really get the gist of our company structure and our therapeutic practices. Especially in a bigger team, I recommend the new staff member sits in on sessions with different therapists. This way, they are able to experience first hand that, although we use the same protocols, no two therapists are alike and everyone has their own unique style. Within certain boundaries, my therapists are free to conduct their sessions in their own way, they do not have to copy anyone.

The moment you feel they are ready to see their first clients, ask them to videotape their sessions as well, or at least record the audio. Most clients do not take issue with this, we always explain that the recordings are strictly for personal review.

Keep in mind that you are their trainer and employer at all times! You have to be there for them and support them. Whether they have a question or they are uncertain on how to treat a client or tackle a certain issue, make sure they know you are there for them. Be prepared to cheer them up sometimes or encourage them if they receive negative feedback from a client. Believe me, in the beginning there will be much uncertainty, and they will receive negative feedback more often than you or your more experienced staff. They still need to learn and grow. Do not lose your temper with them, remind yourself that you too went through this experience once.

Follow up is crucial

1. Following up the client

In my therapy center, each client receives an automatic email three weeks after their appointment, asking for their feedback. In the email, we ask them how they are doing and what changes they are experiencing. Their reply is returned to our company's inbox so that we can access clients' reactions. You might have experienced yourself that especially unhappy clients have a tendency to reply, whereas positive feedback is much more rare. Perhaps it differs from country to country, but in Belgium it's not that normal to send your therapist a long thank-you-note.

Any negative feedback we receive — for example if the client is unhappy because they feel changes have not occurred or changes did not last or they doubt whether or not they have been in hypnosis — is forwarded to that client's therapist. Our staff knows they have to respond the very same day, because negative feedback requires a quick and friendly response. Our staff is required to put me in blind copy so I can follow up on their answer.

When you hire a new staff member, make sure to guide them in the way they should communicate with dissatisfied clients. You can show them examples of how you would like them to respond, or even draw up a template with your house style, or fixed replies they can copy paste and adapt to the specific issue. Your therapist should know how you would like them to respond. Ask them to always put you in bcc so you can follow along. This feedback ensures your therapist does not make any mistakes, respond crudely or make false promises.

2. Following up the team

Never lose sight of your (new) therapist. You need to keep tabs on them and follow up on how they treat the clients and what their results are. Make sure they follow your company rules and that they know how they are supposed to operate.

Your company rules, style and mode of operandi should be very clear to your staff. If your staff feels safe with and heard by you, they will touch base with you regularly. If you keep them informed and give them feedback they will settle in and not begin to freewheel.

I experienced the latter with one of my therapists. She started incorporating different types of therapy and approaches into her practice. For example, she handed weight loss clients a list of what they could and couldn't eat. That was a totally different approach from the rest of our staff, we never ask the subconscious mind to stop people from eating specific things. After all, the weight loss program was never intended to be restrictive or feel like a diet. We found out through our clients, because we treated several clients of the same family. Family members reported that they were being treated differently from each other, because each was treated by a different therapist. I had a very long talk with said therapist and I asked her not to do this again. The therapist agreed, again operating within our company's program. However, a few weeks later I found out she was using her own approaches again and I decided to stop working with her.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Take legal precautions

Upon joining the team, my therapists are required to sign a contract drawn up by my lawyer. It involves a “no competition” clause. This means that they are juridically bound to our agreement: whenever they cease to work for us, they cannot practice hypnotherapy in Belgium for a period of two years. There are, of course, exceptions here. If I can no longer guarantee them enough sessions — for whatever reason — or I no longer wish to work with them, they are free to start working on their own. However, when they themselves decide to stop working for me, I cannot allow them to act as my competition for at least two years in Belgium.

The moment you start hiring other therapists, I advise you to talk to your lawyer and have them draw up a contract that is juridically sound in your country. Each country is different in terms of legislation, so the details might vary for you. You might be startled at the financial cost of such a contract, however it is better to be safe than sorry.

I contracted my lawyer to do this because I experienced first hand how sorry you can be. A few years ago, I owned an entertainment business. It was one of the biggest entertainment companies in Belgium at the time and I employed a number of different artists, performers and entertainers. After a while, I started to notice that the only reason they wanted to work with me was because I was so successful.

They started prying: how I did my marketing, how I ran my business, where my success came from. They watched, they learned, and eventually they stole my ideas and left. When I established my hypnotherapy business, I was not going to make the same mistake twice. That is why I decided to work with a strict contract.

Be careful though, or you might appear tyrannical by pushing this type of contract under your new therapist's nose. You need to give your staff an incentive to sign this type of contract. The incentive in our company is that they can attend certain trainings for free or for a reduced price. For instance, many international trainings are hosted in our European Hypnosis Academy headquarters in Belgium. As host, I always have one free enrollment my therapists can make use of. If several of my therapists are interested, they split the free space and everyone pays less. Additionally, they are welcome to attend all of the trainings I personally host for free, no matter the number of therapists present.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

What are my tasks ?

As owner of my hypnotherapy business, my tasks are varied but also never-ending. My to do-list has not been empty in over five years. This is why I mentioned earlier that you have to be willing to expand your business and put in the work. My number one task is to make sure my therapists have clients and that they receive leads on people interested in hypnosis. For this, I have delegated the workload onto several outsiders. I will briefly sum them up below.

1. Marketing

With seven therapists based in three different cities, our business is quite large and so is our marketing budget. We spend around € 2.000 each month on marketing. Within this budget is included:

- * A company that organizes our marketing on Facebook and Google AdWords;
- * The advertising costs for those two platforms.

2. Customer service

2.1 Incoming calls

Due to the number of therapists and available slots, our phone is ringing constantly. Some are clients willing to book a session, others have questions concerning hypnosis or trainings. That is why I contracted a company to answer our phone. Nowadays, I also have two extra staff members on board who intermittently pass the phone duty between them, so it is manned from Monday through Saturday. Additionally, my contract with the telephone company remains. This way, the phone is always answered during office hours. I cannot stress enough the importance of this, and it is something I had to learn as well. In the infant years of my hypnotherapy business, one of my therapists answered the phone. However, when she was in session the phone could not be answered straight away. I noticed then that we lost a lot of leads. The reason being that people hate talking to a voice mail. I would like to refer again to chapter one of this e-book: if you leave your clients hanging, their mindset shifts and their motivation drops. When people are struggling with an issue and they are looking for change, they need the phone answered by a human being.

I can assure you, having this service reels in a bunch of extra clients, because they don't have to go through the disappointment of being redirected to voice mail. Also, they do not have to go and look for another therapist who does answer the phone the moment they are calling: there is always someone on the other end of the line. Of course, that someone is not always a therapist, but it is someone who is able to answer certain questions. Such as questions on availability, appointments, general information and some doubts. If the caller requires more elaborate information or they wish to speak to a therapist, the telephone company will make sure the therapist gets in touch with the caller as soon as possible. Why is this so important? Because by then, the caller feels heard and assured that someone will contact them. They do not feel the need to call another hypnotist in your neighborhood to receive the information they are after. This way, your lead becomes your client. Their request has been handled professionally, and they think highly of your practice and services. Think of this as a prepping exercise.

The above all stands or falls with you following up on your therapists to make sure they indeed process incoming leads as soon as possible. Our company uses CRM software to monitor this, because my therapists can get a bit lazy and postpone their leads, especially when their schedules are nice and full.

2.2 Incoming emails

Not only is our phone always a-ringing, our inbox is filled to the brim as well. As a company, we answer all general emails. This task is assigned to one of our staff members, so that emails are answered in the same style and within a short time frame. If all of the staff would be able to access the inbox, some people would be forgotten and some would receive three different emails.

If the email is not general, but addressed specifically to a therapist or concerning an issue one of our therapists specializes in, the email is delegated toward said therapist within the CRM software and they are required to answer it within two days time.

3. Administration

The thing we all hate: administration. General administration concerning therapists is carried out by us. Invoices and payment reminders and financial matters are carried out by one of our staff members. Therapists simply inform her which invoices need to be drawn up and she keeps tabs on payments. And I keep tabs on her. Before, I used to handle financial matters, but often things got hazy: who paid when? Did they pay in cash or via bank transfer? Did they buy an extra product? I had other tasks to perform and when I tried to make an overview at the end of the month it was an annoyance. Now everything money-related is processed first thing in the morning every day, and if action needs to be taken it happens more rapidly.

Accommodation & planning

When you are willing to expand your team, make sure there is room for them. You have to provide them with a room of their own. Make sure that the people working for you have a place to hang their certificates. If you trained them, it is a good idea to make them a special certificate without your company logo. If you are accredited by an organization then make sure your therapists are, too.

If you happen to be working as a hypnotherapist yourself and you wish to hire staff but you only have one therapy room, then it is quite simple. The hours you are not working are the hours your therapist has to be able to work. I do advise you to make provisions when you have the chance and invest in a second therapy room. This will make things much easier.

However, try not have your staff work the same hours. Why? When waiting time is short and your staff wishes to work full time, it's better they have different hours. Different hours means more slots to fill means more gain for you.

The moment you start working with staff, make sure that you open as much time slots as possible for clients to book their sessions: daytime, evenings, weekdays and weekends, even holidays. Remind yourself that people are able to come to therapy when they are not working. You might miss out on a lot of revenue when you only hold sessions during office hours. Most of my therapists do not mind working during bank holidays, and they are right: holidays are the busiest days because more clients are free to come and see you without needing to take time off from work.

What are the therapists tasks ?

1. Sessions;
2. Follow-up;
3. Processing leads.

Obviously, therapists are hired to conduct hypnotherapy sessions, but that is not all. As explained above, they have to follow-up their clients and process the leads. The latter is very important but also quite time consuming. When a client decides they want to give hypnotherapy a chance to resolve their issue, it is adamant you pursue this lead. Whenever a lead comes in via any channel — signup form on your website, a direct email, a telephone call — make sure your therapist responds within two days. Especially, in our internet and online shopping culture, people hate to be kept waiting. If the lead is not immediately picked up, then they will look elsewhere and you lose a potential client.

I have to keep stressing this to my therapists: we can give you as much leads as you want, but if you do not follow up, answer or call in time, we lose the client and all of our marketing efforts are for naught. Marketing is expensive: so make the most out of every single lead.

S A M E O L D , S A M E O L D

Why is it important for your staff to work with the same protocols ?

To me, it is imperative that all my therapists use the same protocols and techniques. Sometimes my staff needs to refer their client to their colleague. If that colleague utilizes totally different methods, they will do poorly in taking over the client.

As I mentioned before, the cornerstone of my company is the Jeffrey Stephens Protocol. Another protocol we employ is Sheila Granger's Virtual Gastric Band, of which I am also a trainer in Belgium and the Netherlands. I know that no two therapists are alike, so they give their own spin to things, however the basics should remain the same. If a client needs to be taken over by myself or another therapist, a quick glance at our colleagues' notes should be sufficient to pick up where they left off.

Some of my therapists are specialized in certain protocols or specific issues. In that case, it is only natural for them to use their own methods or the methods they learned from an external trainer, but only after I give my approval.

As your team grows, it is a good idea to let a particular therapist specialize in an explicit issue. For example, subjects such as working with children, pain relief or sport hypnosis can be handed over to a specialist in their field. The more common programs such as weight loss or smoking cessation could be executed by everyone.

AUTOMATION

Using an online booking system

Our company relies on automation, including clients' appointment bookings. Naturally, clients can pick up the phone and call our office. Sometimes they are redirected to the phone service. Clients also have the option to simply visit our website and book their appointment online. Everyone in our team, including the phone service, has access to the online booking system. This way, bookings can be made by everyone and the overview is concrete to me and my team.

Because our whole team has access to the booking system, staff members can manage their own working hours. They can make available and unavailable certain time slots, they can switch locations or by exception work on a certain night, as long as they do not overlap with their colleagues. Because all of my therapists are freelancers, they can decide for themselves when they work and when they take a break or go on holiday. They do not need my approval to book a vacation. However, it is better to ensure there are always therapists available, so that not everyone is away the same week or the same period.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

What about the finances ?

Not to be forgotten: that which makes the world go round.

My company works on a 60-40 basis. For every session conducted, my therapists receive 60 percent of the fee and the company keeps 40 percent. Maybe you are frowning at this point. For some, it appears as if a large part of revenue is kept by the company, but you have to reconsider this. None of my therapists have to spend a dime on administration, marketing, accommodation, energy, water, heating or whatever. They do not even have to hunt for clients. Their only cost is transportation to their workspace and of course their time: running sessions, answering emails, pursuing leads and following up on their client's progress.

Try and find a way to keep a log of sessions that took place, so that at the end of each month your therapist and you both know the correct sum. In our company, all client payments are first collected by us —cash, bank transfer, gift certificates,..— and at the end of the month, the therapist receives his or her share.

Some clients might be hesitant to make a large payment in one deposit. Therefore, we provide different payment plans for our more expensive programs, such as Virtual Gastric Bands. Careful, providing this service will result in extra administrative work.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

Teammeetings and communication

The bigger your team becomes, the more voices feel the need to be heard. Teammeetings are the perfect way to make room for your team members' ideas and approaches to your business. However, make sure you keep in charge. Not all ideas are good, not all approaches fit into your company structure. As team leader, it is your job to keep your company structure, identity and voice the way you intended it to be.

As our team is quite large and we work in different cities, we host our meetings online via platforms such as Zoom or Google Hangouts. In our CRM software, a team chat is also involved so we can communicate with each other on an accessible and professional platform. Do not send your therapists messages on Facebook, WhatsApp or another social media platform. You might think of something you still have to inform them about around 1 A.M, but it is very stressful for them to receive work-related messages in the evenings or on their free days. Before we made use of our CRM software, two of my staff members even deleted the Messenger app on their phones because it caused them stress.

Making use of these types of digital applications (CRM, online booking, chats...) enables me to travel the world teaching hypnosis and still keep tabs on my company. Of course, this is only to keep an eye on everything: I have recently hired a wonderful lady who helps manage our office and school, is in charge of human resources and keeps the content of our social media channels flowing. She even edited this book. Choose your staff with care, and they can help your business flourish so you can focus on the things you really love to do. You should handpick a team who supports you, not one that gives you headaches.

HELLO AND GOODBYE

What if a therapist stops working for you ?

Are you excited to hire staff? Then keep in mind that the day could come when they decide to leave, or you end your collaboration with them. A few things to consider when this happens and you include sessions with lifetime guarantee or programs such as the Virtual Gastric Band.

For example, one of my therapists offers an elaborate smoking cessation protocol with lifelong guarantee. His clients can return for a follow-up session whenever they need one. It is important for you to state in your general terms that this guarantee is given by the therapist, not by your company. Whenever this therapist and I end our terms of agreement, he is responsible for following up his clients.

For programs such as Virtual Gastric Band, the rules are a bit different. The clients pay up front for a number of sessions, however they are not required to use them all immediately. If a client still has unused sessions and the therapist they started working with is no longer available, their sessions are continued with a different therapist and I pay that therapist to finish the sessions. The therapist who already collected his or her 60 percent of the program's fee, is required to return the money for the unused sessions that was paid in advance.

COMPANY STRUCTURE

My team

In this e-book you have read about therapists, administration workers, managers and more. I will briefly sketch our company structure to give you an overview of my team.

Management

Rob De Groof -- head trainer and company owner;

Elise Mans -- office manager, administration, creative operations;

Alan Jan -- technical support, video-editing, livestream and logistics.

Therapists

Shana Roomers

Candice Nuyttens

Fabian Cole

David Kerremans

Michael De Roeck

Katelijne Teugels

External

Marketing agency

Phone company

Bookkeeper

WORKING WITH HYPNOTHERAPY STAFF

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