



THE CONCEPT OF PRIORITIES

In therapy, I often ask clients to do 'Homework' between consultations. Some clients agree to do this homework, but many don't.

Homework consists of listening to a CD, reading a book, making a change to their behaviour, taking a risk, performing a task etc. The reasons (excuses) for not doing what they agreed are many and varied – 'I forgot', 'the battery of my CD player was flat', 'I couldn't find the time', 'I didn't understand what you wanted me to do' etc. the reality is that they didn't give the tasks a **high priority**. A more honest and helpful answer could be – 'I didn't do it because other things were more important for me and the tasks you asked me to do were low on my priority'. By saying this they are taking responsibility for their actions, rather than blaming a flat battery or the clock. We can then discuss how to increase their priorities so that the homework will be done the following week.

This concept in no way involves blame or guilt or criticism. I am suggesting that discussing priorities is a helpful way of taking responsibility, focussing the mind and learning alternative behaviour.

We are continually assessing priorities otherwise we would have great difficulty making decisions from the myriad of choices that are available.

One of the most important indicators for success in therapy is **the motivation** of the client. The most motivated clients make their therapy a high priority in their lives. Others believe they play only a passive role in getting better and it is solely the therapist's responsibility. People come to see me for hypnotherapy with the belief that they will close their eyes and wake up healed!

Compliance is a word used to describe clients' response to tasks given by the health profession whether it is exercises from a physiotherapist or tablets prescribed by a doctor. A compliant client puts time and effort to follow the therapist's advice. They choose to do the exercises prescribed rather than watch TV. They make the choice to make health the priority even though it is a difficult and often an uncomfortable decision.

There is a group of people who are very compliant – those suffering from cancer. They will travel great distances to seek help, take very unpleasant drugs and spend a great deal of time looking at ways to get better. It is very understandable why these people make their health top of the priority list.

As you will have read to the end of this article, you must have made it your priority. Well done!