

HYPNOTHERAPY TODAY

Association For Solution Focused Hypnotherapy

Edition 41, Winter 2024

Brain waves

Their significance in Hypnosis

Also in this issue:

The importance
of boundaries

ChatGPT in the
therapy room

Validating our
clients' stories

AfSFH.com



Association for
SOLUTION FOCUSED HYPNOTHERAPY

All about you!

AfSFH Fellowship nominations reopen in February!

We are pleased to announce that nominations for AfSFH Fellowship status will shortly reopen. If you know someone who has shown 'significant commitment and contribution to SFH, the AfSFH and the Hypnotherapy profession', you may submit your application to ceo@afsfh.com between 1st and 28th February 2024. You can find full details of the Fellowship on page 13 of Issue 35 of *Hypnotherapy Today*, but the necessary criteria are:

- The HPD qualification
- Qualified to Level 5; this can be through qualification as a Supervisor or Advanced Hypnotherapy Diploma
- Qualified as a SFH for a minimum of 10 years
- Have been a member of the AfSFH for at least the last five consecutive years
- Also, if still in practice, they must be able to evidence the professional requirements for Supervision and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for the last 12 months.

To nominate an individual, please submit a 500-word written statement highlighting their significant commitment and contribution to SFH, the AfSFH and the wider Hypnotherapy profession. Each nomination will be considered on its own merits and subject to final, majority Executive Committee vote. The Executive Committee also reserve the right independently to nominate an individual that they feel meets the criteria for Fellowship.

Membership developments

The Executive continue to prioritise giving our members the best possible resources and experience as part of their subscription. To that end there is now a downloadable CPD and Supervision log which you can access from the 'Quick Resources' section when you sign in to your account on the website. Now you can record those important details in a clear, easy format – no more scrolling back through emails or calendars to check the last time you attended Supervision or a CPD!

Another key project progressing behind the scenes is a complete overhaul of the online membership process, starting with new members, so watch this space for updates.

Trevor and Sally continue to produce bi-monthly *Talking Solutions* podcasts. August's guest was women's health specialist Sophie Fletcher; October's was Adam Eason focusing on sports motivation. In December we discussed how to survive the various stresses and strains people can experience at Christmas – including suggestions which are useful all year round! Our February guest will be Andy Workman talking about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), so be sure to look out for it around the beginning of the month. The best way to get the word out about the podcasts, and indeed the AfSFH, is to like, comment and share, so please get busy to help spread the word! Thank you.

Help us continue to spread the SFH word!

Follow us:

Twitter: [@afsfh](https://twitter.com/afsfh)

Instagram: [@afsfhofficial](https://www.instagram.com/afsfhofficial)

LinkedIn: [Association for Solution Focused Hypnotherapy](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Association-for-Solution-Focused-Hypnotherapy)

Or follow us on the public-facing Facebook page – we often publish items that you can share on your own FB business pages. Just search for: **Association for Solution Focused Hypnotherapy** on Facebook or scan the barcode here to join:



If you are a Registered member, or a Student in your 8th month of training, you can also join the closed AfSFH Facebook group at: www.facebook.com/groups/Afsfh/. Once we receive your request to join, we will verify your membership and add you to the group!



Thank you to all contributors and people who have helped make this publication possible. The AfSFH was established in 2010 to represent the practice of Solution Focused Hypnotherapy as a distinct profession in its own right. Membership is open to those practitioners who have appropriate qualifications and experience within the field.

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A Message from the Editor...

Hello, and welcome to our winter edition of *Hypnotherapy Today*. Here's hoping you've had a wonderful festive break, and that you are greeting the New Year with best hopes for a successful 2024!

Here at the Association, we start the year with a change to the team. After seven years of loyal service, our wonderful Head of Finance, Sacha Taylor, has made the decision to step down from the AfSFH Executive Committee and refocus her energies on her family, and building up her client work. Sacha has worked tirelessly over the years to keep our finances in order, keep the Committee in order, and perform many other important tasks behind the scenes, too, so I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking her for all her hard work and wishing her all happiness and success in the future – we'll miss her!

Sacha has played a key role in appointing her successor, and the Committee are excited to introduce our new Head of Finance, Sarah Coward. Sarah graduated from CPHT Bristol in 2023 and has some great skills to bring to the role – you can find out more about her on page 10. Welcome to the team, Sarah!

We've the usual broad range of articles for you this time around, with plenty of information to help and inform you, both as a therapist and as a business owner. We're also

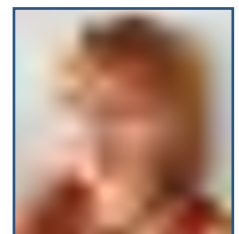
pleased to announce that nominations for Fellowship of the AfSFH will reopen throughout February. You can find out more in *All about you*, opposite, and we look forward to receiving your nominations for our 2024 cohort of Fellows.

I'm always pleased to hear from potential contributors to the Journal, so if you have an idea for an article then do get in touch at comms@afsfh.com. Pieces should be around 500-1,800 words long and aimed at our professional membership. They can be about anything you think will be of interest to your fellow SFHs, so do get creative! You can find more details on the website at [afsfh.com/publications-journals/](https://www.afsfh.com/publications-journals/). If you have an idea for a contribution but aren't sure if it's appropriate, or how to take it further, do get in touch. I'm more than happy to advise and support you to turn that spark into a published piece for a future issue of *Hypnotherapy Today*.

Happy reading!

Sally

Sally Hare,
AfSFH Head of Communications





Super support!

Super supporter:
Karen Dunnet, AfSFH Supervisor

In this feature we continue to get to know some of our fabulous Supervisors. All quotes printed with kind permission. Details of all our AfSFH Supervisors can be found in the Supervisor Directory at afsfh.com.

What do you feel are the greatest benefits of attending Supervision?

Supervision is an essential part of our professional tool kit and, also, our self-care. It is so important to have someone in our corner, especially when we are newly qualified and perhaps lacking in confidence. We have all felt 'imposter syndrome' at times, and it is great to talk it through with a Supervisor who will help us to recognise our own skills and strengths, and dispel that self-doubt! One-to-one Supervision can be better for some people and some situations; you may not always want to share everything with a group and it may not always be appropriate.

However, I feel that group Supervision is also incredibly important for so many reasons, not least in that it keeps us connected with our colleagues. It can be quite an isolating profession, especially as our business requires client confidentiality. Supervision provides a safe, supportive, and understanding space in which to discuss successes as well as concerns. It is a space in which we can all speak freely, while maintaining confidentiality.

It is nearly five years since I qualified as a Supervisor, and my groups have developed into a wonderful mix of people at different stages in their careers. Some qualified very recently, and others have several years of practice under their belts. We also have a couple of people who didn't train as Solution Focused Hypnotherapists; this brings a different and interesting dynamic to the group. Between us all, we have a wealth of experience which we are happy to share with one another.

It is also an opportunity to share new research, refresh techniques, talk about marketing and business development, and share resources. We discuss CPDs that we have attended, and books and articles that we have read. I like to keep everyone updated too. As a tutor with the Solution Focused Training Academy (SFTA), I can pass on the latest developments in the field of SFH.

Recently, I asked my supervisees what they enjoyed most about Supervision and here are some of their comments:

'Hearing everyone's news and progress ... it's a safe and supportive space to talk and discuss things that we're unsure of ... we cheer each other along and none of us are frightened

of putting a question out there to the group ... chilled-out vibe in sessions, space to ask any questions to people with valuable knowledge and understanding ... such useful resources to use with our clients and build our knowledge ... a lovely mix of people with differing levels of experience, all willing to help and share ... really welcoming, I remember feeling that I'd known people for years after the first session ... it's incredibly reassuring to know that I can contact you and you'll be the knowledgeable voice of reason and support if I've got any worries over a client.'

What do you enjoy most in your role as Supervisor?

I love being a Supervisor. I can remember how I felt when newly qualified as a SFH, and how much I enjoyed getting together with my classmates every couple of months. I feel privileged to be the one offering that to others now. I love to see how people develop, and to be a part of their journey.

Being a Supervisor does not mean that I have all the answers, I most certainly don't! The joy of the solution-focused approach is helping people recognise their own strengths, to identify what works and do more of it. That is the Supervisor's role too, to bring out the best in their supervisees and help them to be confident, competent therapists.

We all know how it feels when we see our client 'get it', that 'penny-dropping' moment. It is exactly the same with a supervisee. When someone comes with a problem, whether it's feeling unsure of how to proceed with a particular client, or wondering what to do next in terms of business, talking it through and asking those solution-focused questions helps them to clarify the next steps. It's not about telling them what to do, we all know how much we humans like that! When they leave a session, whether it is one-to-one or a group, having come up with an answer, a way to move forward, is a fantastic feeling for everyone, including me.



About the writer:

Karen has her own practice in Skipton, North Yorkshire. Until recently she was a senior tutor with CPHT in Preston but is now a senior tutor with the SFTA, also in Preston. She offers group and one-to-one Supervision on a face-to-face basis in Skipton, but mainly on Zoom or telephone, as well as telephone back up between sessions.



Putting your 'garden' to bed

By AfSFH Head of Professional Standards, Nicola Taylor

I often hear people talk of 'putting their garden to bed' at this time of year. It's an active process that involves tidying, weeding, leaf sweeping and pruning, and allows the garden to rest over the colder months, ready to emerge stronger in the spring. This annual ritual also affords the opportunity to reflect. Which plants thrived this year? What needs moving to a spot that will help growth? What to plant where next year?

We can think of our business as being like a garden, and this time of year can provide a similar opportunity to reflect; to put the previous year to bed before the new one begins. Whether you feel as though you spent your first year of practice sowing seeds, or your experience means that it's all about maintenance, there are always jobs to be done!

One thing I have come to appreciate from working with so many of you as I complete my annual audit, is that no two gardens are alike. When we qualified, we all left our training with the same set of tools, but with plans to use them in different ways. Some of you work full time as SFHs, others combine Hypnotherapy with other disciplines, and there are those who practice alongside a part-time or even a full-time job. No matter whether you are tending a window box or landscaping a couple of acres, there are some fundamental aspects of practice that we all share.

Perhaps the first thing to consider are those basics that underpin everything we do. Insurance is an essential tool. Without it you cannot practice and it's easy to continue with the same provider – perhaps you have been with your insurance company for years. Is it worth taking time to consider what else might be out there? Is your provider meeting your needs? Are there better/cheaper options? A little research could help save money or find a better product.

Supervision is undoubtedly one of the most valuable tools we can access for growth and, although our minimum requirement is 6 hours per annum, I know that many of you spend far more time getting support from your Supervisors. Your Supervisor is your 'Monty Don', so even if you have very few clients and your garden is looking a bit bleak, bare and forlorn, your Supervisor is there to help. Reflecting on each Supervision session and recording what you have learned is excellent practice, and

means that you will be ready with all your information if you are selected for audit. It could also be a good opportunity to look back over the Supervision you have received this year. What has been most useful and valuable? How has it helped you grow? Perhaps you may even be inspired to train as a Supervisor yourself in the coming year.

Another essential activity is continuous professional development (CPD), and it is through reading, podcasts, courses and workshops that we hone our skills, sharpen our tools and expand our knowledge. I am frequently amazed at the variety of activities carried out by our members. Many of you go way beyond the minimum 15 hours to gain knowledge, specialise and become experts.

Just like reviewing our garden, it is easy to forget how many hours we spent weeding and planting, so perhaps take some time to look back on everything you have done this year. What was the best book you read or course you attended? How did your practice change or improve as a result? There may be that inspirational workshop that you attended but never got around to building on what you learned. Take some time now to utilise what you gained and think about where you will plant these new skills, how you will nurture them – then enjoy watching them grow.

Whatever life has in store for your garden in the coming year, as your Head of Professional Standards, I look forward to continuing to celebrate with you, support you and provide reassurance when storms threaten and life in your garden becomes tricky.



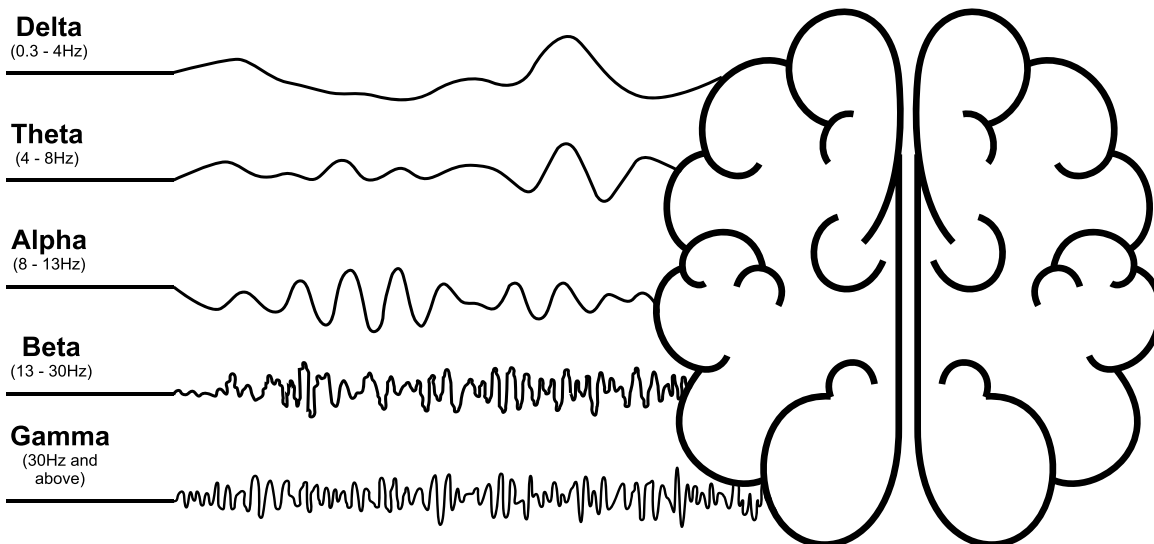
About the writer:

Nicola qualified as a SFH in 2017 and as a Supervisor in 2020. She runs her Hypnotherapy practice in Abergavenny.



Brain waves

By Jane Pendry



The human brain functions through a complex interplay of electrical signals. These signals are called brain waves – tiny oscillating electrical voltages. Brain waves play a vital role in the efficacy of Hypnotherapy.

In addition to our Initial Consultation, a basic understanding of brain waves can help us further de-mystify Hypnosis. Talking about brain waves can reassure the kinds of clients who have concerns about Hypnosis, for example those who have faith-based concerns, have been alarmed by stage Hypnosis, or fear losing control in some way.

The different frequencies of brain waves, in life and the therapy room

Let's start with the most common brain waves observable in the active, waking state – **BETA** waves. These waves have a frequency range of 12 to 30 Hertz (Hz) and are associated with focused mental activity and logical thinking. In Hypnotherapy, beta waves play a role during the Initial Consultation, when the client is conscious, focused and actively listening. Our clients discuss the issues they want to resolve, their hopes and aspirations, and ask any questions or express concerns. They do all of this in the beta brain wave state.

ALPHA waves have a frequency range of 8 to 12 Hz, and are present when we are relaxed and calm, in a state of creative flow or doing something we are familiar with and find relatively easy. We may access this state when we paint, play a musical instrument, or brainstorm ideas. The sights and sounds of nature – watching waves break against the beach, or hearing the wind gusting through the leaves – contributes to creating the relaxed alpha brainwave state. That's exactly why we include this kind of imagery and sensory description in our Hypnosis sessions.

The alpha state is often called a 'hypnogogic' state, because in it we can spontaneously experience mental imagery. Alpha states are the gateway to meditation and trance. As clients ease into alpha rhythms, they become more open to new ways of perceiving and experiencing the world, finding it easier to discover new solutions to old problems.

THETA brain waves, with a frequency range of 4 to 8 Hz, move more slowly. These rhythms help us access our unconscious during Hypnotherapy. They are associated with deep states of meditation, spiritual experiences, and higher states of consciousness. This ordinarily transitory state only feels extraordinary if a highly stressed client has not been able to access these feelings naturally for a long time.

This theta brain wave state can be accessed spontaneously when we are deeply relaxed, and allow our mind to wander. We can all think of a time when a sunset moved us, or the sound of the sea eased us into transcendental calm. We experience theta waves when we meditate, and just before and during light sleep. We all know that these theta rhythms are active during REM (rapid eye movement) dream sleep, when we experience vivid dreams, and process complex emotions and recent stressful events through metaphor and visual images.

Artists, musicians, writers, and inventors can experience moments of inspiration and 'aha' insights when their brain waves shift to the theta frequency. That's when they come up with their most innovative ideas and creative solutions. We also hear athletes talk about 'being in a state of flow'; they are describing the theta wave state in action.

Our clients enter the theta brain wave state when they become immersed in vivid, calming mental imagery, with descriptions of soothing sensations. These visualisations, and the accompanying theta wave state, open the mind to accepting helpful suggestions, changing unhelpful patterns of thinking, breaking old habits and imagining and embedding new healthier patterns of behaviour. Our clients' core values and beliefs, of course, stay the same.

How we experience the theta brain wave state can vary in intensity and depth from person to person. Some people are better able to visualise than others; some have more prominent theta waves during waking hours (perhaps those who are pursuing creative or sporting careers). Others may need to learn and practice specific techniques to enter this state.

With regular Hypnotherapy, our clients can cultivate their ability to access theta brain wave states and learn to tap into their subconscious minds to find potential new solutions, generate creative ideas or solve problems.

We know our clients move between the alpha and theta brain wave states during Hypnosis, hearing some things we say and not others. Sometimes clients ease down close to sleep – even fall asleep. In this light sleep state they can still absorb our suggestions and are still in a theta brain wave state.

DELTA waves have a much slower frequency range, typically below 4 Hz. They are mostly observed during deeper sleep and are associated with restorative processes, physical healing, and rejuvenation. Many clients fall into a deep sleep during Hypnotherapy, indicating they are extremely stressed and exhausted, possibly close to burn out. It's not a bad thing, as it enables clients to get the restorative sleep they need.

GAMMA waves are in the highest frequency range, typically above 30 Hz. They appear to be playing a role in states of heightened concentration and awareness, with increased gamma wave activity observed in elite athletes, ambitious high achievers and advanced meditators.

We use a variety of relaxation techniques, visualisation exercises, and soothing auditory cues gradually to shift the client's brain waves from beta to alpha, and down to theta waves.

Interestingly, increased gamma wave activity has also been observed during hypnotic trance states. The role they play is not yet fully understood. What we do know, is that gamma waves are associated with bursts of insight and high-level information processing which may partly explain why Hypnotherapy can result in significant changes in thinking and behaviour. Further research may one day explain exactly what part gamma waves play in both Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy, but until then we can only speculate.

MU waves are rarely discussed. They fall in the range of 8-13 Hz and arise from large groups of neurons in the brain. Recently they have been associated with mirror neuron activity. Perhaps our empathy and compassion for our clients impacts these waves, but this doesn't appear to have been researched yet.

Conclusion

During a Hypnotherapy session, we use a variety of relaxation techniques, visualisation exercises, and soothing auditory cues gradually to shift the client's brain waves from beta to alpha, and down to theta waves (and perhaps gamma and mu in parts of the brain). This transition helps the client enter a safe, natural, deep state of relaxation and receptivity, where the subconscious mind can be accessed, and positive suggestions can be absorbed.

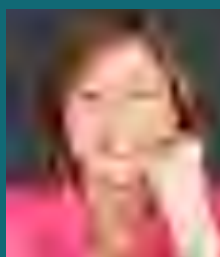
Whether it's inducing alpha waves for relaxation, or exploring the depths of the theta wave state for emotional healing and changing negative patterns of thinking, understanding brain waves helps us to explain what's actually happening in the brain during the Hypnotherapy process.

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About the writer:

Jane Pendry is a trained and accredited SFH who specialises in emetophobia and other complex phobias. She also has extensive experience with trauma resolution and other anxiety-related disorders.



I hear you ...

Validating our clients' experiences while staying solution focused

By Carol Overend

How do we help them to move past their past without sounding dismissive or even rude?

As Solution Focused Hypnotherapists and psychotherapists, we understand and accept that our past is gone, and so too is any opportunity to change it. Although this makes perfect sense to us as therapists, from a client's perspective, it doesn't just make it go away. This is something I often hear my clients say, and they are right: it doesn't. So how do we help them to move past *their* past without sounding dismissive or even rude? After all, this can often be part, if not all, of the reason they are seeking our help. I wish I had a definitive answer, but I don't, and the reason I don't is because just like every therapist, every client is different and every client's past is different, both in content, magnitude, and impact on their current daily lives.

Whilst I don't encourage dwelling on the past in a negative or unnecessary way, I do recognise the relevance of why, in some cases, the client may feel the need to give me an insight on their history. It may even be the first time they have spoken openly to anyone! So, it is important to me, as their potential therapist (at this point), to make them feel heard. This is why I choose to use the Initial Consultation as an ideal opportunity, not only to explain the workings of the brain, but also to gauge when and why using their past might benefit the client as a catalyst for positive future change.

When your past Shadows your present Build a future That is brighter

My experience suggests that clients often fall into one of two personality types – those who spend their lives trying to build a future, and those who spend their lives trying to rebuild the past. It is our job to ascertain into which category each of our clients fall, in order to put together the most effective therapy plan to suit their needs. After all, we will struggle to achieve results if we swim against the tide!

We need to gain the trust of our client, which for me, simply doesn't happen by being dismissive of their past, no matter how nicely we do it. Personally, I feel it is important to gain an understanding of my client's past, and as I referred to earlier, it is often the reason, or part at least, as to why they are seeking our help in the first place. Let's be honest with ourselves here; at this point they are probably so focused on why they are there, and wanting to tell us why they are there, they are not going to shift their focus suddenly to listening or concentrating fully on what we are saying anyway. So, before I launch into

an explanation of the workings of the brain, I address the elephant in the room and ask them to give me an overview of what's brought them to me. The suppressed anxiety is, to a degree, alleviated, usually with an audible sigh, and the client can then relax into the freedom of speaking openly about what that they are struggling to let go of, and why they are still allowing it to encroach on their present-day life.

The answer often boils down to something quite simple: they don't know how to experience life in any way other than in the shadow of their past. This can often stem from a very early age and vary from: physical, sexual or mental abuse; drug and/or alcohol abuse by the parents, resulting in neglect/abuse of them as a child, possibly leading to drug and/or alcohol abuse themselves; bullying at school, or a behavioural/emotional disorder. It could also be something that has developed in later years: marriage or relationship breakdown; the death of a loved one, or a job loss which has led to financial difficulty etc. There can be many contributing factors impacting their current daily lives, and although we don't need to dwell or fixate on them, by offering our validation, at least, we go some way to connecting with our clients and conveying our empathy and support towards what can be extremely deep-rooted emotional pain.

I remember one of my clients saying that it was the first time they felt like they had been listened to and, more importantly, heard, so I know first-hand that active listening can be all it takes for clients to put their trust in us and commit to working towards finally letting go and exploring new ways of thinking. At this point I can begin to explain the wonders of the brain and all the amazing possibilities stretching ahead of them.

Of course, it isn't all plain sailing, and there will always be those clients who keep referring back to their past, those who don't want to let go, making it difficult to encourage positive thinking and see the possibilities of a different way forward. That's not to say we're flogging a dead horse, it just means we need to practice patience, persistence and encouragement. Yes, it might take a bit more time, but we can still achieve the desired outcome, and the 'penny-drop' moment will (in most cases) still happen.

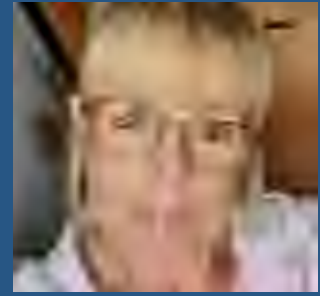
The responsibility to help them feel comfortable and relaxed is directly on us.

***We only experience peace
When we
Speak with sincerity
Give with grace
And listen with humility***

Their life in our hands is a saying we hear a lot in the medical profession, and is one that must be kept in mind in our practice. When a client enters our therapy room, that is exactly what they are doing. Admittedly not usually in a life-or-death situation (although the possibility is always there), but the responsibility to help them feel comfortable and relaxed is directly on us.

The textbook is only the recipe. Every client will bring their own ingredients, and because no two people are the same, those ingredients will vary. So, although the outcome will be *right* for each individual client, how we get there will *differ* from client to client, and from practitioner to practitioner. Our therapy is open to change, our course experience teaches us that, and whilst I don't step *outside the boundaries*, I see no harm in *pushing* them on occasion, when and where necessary.

If the end result is the *desired* result, then, surely that's what innovative interpretation is all about ... isn't it?



About the writer:
Carol is married with two grown-up boys and a Westie called Molly. She had a very varied work life, until, at the 'tender' age of 61, she finally discovered her vocation in SFH. She works from her home clinic on the outskirts of York. She loves what she does but even more, she loves what it can do for people.



Hypnotherapy has helped me to rediscover my own inner resilience, my strength and confidence, and to maintain an intellectual, solution-focused approach to dealing with daily challenges.



Meet the member:

Getting to know the AfSFH Head of Finance, Sarah Coward

Hypnotherapy Today asked Sarah to provide some insights into her work and her role within the AfSFH.

How do you see your role as Head of Finance for the AfSFH?

It's a huge privilege to be given this opportunity to head up finance at the AfSFH. I see my role as very much part of the collaborative efforts of the wider Executive Committee, helping the organisation to grow and helping to provide great value to its members. I'll be keeping good, accurate financial records and helping keep the finances of the organisation on track. I'll be hoping to provide support to the whole Executive Team, and will be looking for opportunities for financial growth and 'best value' for the Association wherever possible.

What attracted you to work as a Solution Focused Hypnotherapist?

I've always had the desire to help other people, and September 2022 was a point of significant evolution for me. I decided to retrain as a SFH after experiencing for myself the positive effects of Hypnotherapy – it greatly benefitted my own mental health after I'd been going through a tough time with high anxiety whilst one of my children was repeatedly hospitalised over several years.

Hypnotherapy has helped me to rediscover my own inner resilience, my strength and confidence, and to maintain an intellectual, solution-focused approach to dealing with the daily challenges that come with now parenting a young adult with a chronic illness. Using Hypnotherapy and applying the knowledge I have gained about its principles and techniques, along with an understanding of the workings of the brain, enables me to maintain hope and resilience.

The chance finally to do some work that makes a real positive difference in the lives of others is the main reason and motivator for me and why I'm absolutely loving this work, and wish I'd trained sooner!

Why is the AfSFH important?

To me the AfSFH is very important as it's a source of support for its members (both students and qualified therapists) at each stage of their SFH journey and career. It's an association that helps develop the skills and interests of its members and helps raise awareness about SFH. The Association helps to educate the public about SFH and what they can expect when undertaking this type of therapy, and of course it's very helpful for me to be featured in the Therapist's Directory, or to take the opportunity to write an article for their website. As a SFH myself I like to think it helps give me some professional standing and

helps to 'keep me on track', knowing that it's a professional governing body helping to ensure I adhere to 'best practice'. It gives my clients more confidence that I'm highly qualified and monitored, and that I'm 'up for the job'; that they are in safe hands when they come to see me.

What is your background?

Prior to retraining I've worked for over 25 years in senior marketing management, communications and administrative roles in both the public and private sectors for many companies in the southwest of England including Bristol Evening Post, Alexandra Plc, Bristol Zoo Gardens, and Mortgage Style, and I've previously run my own digital and direct marketing consultancy. I'm also a busy working mum of three sons.

What motivates you?

Looking after and helping to provide for my family is a huge motivator for me. Helping others, caring for others and being known as a good friend who others can trust and rely on for fun, comfort and support is a huge part of my make up. Being the best I can be at anything I set my mind to is also a huge motivator. I'm definitely inspired to help wherever I can, and I have a very deep sense of community having lived in the same village for over 16 years; I really appreciate the old saying that 'it takes a community to help raise a child'. Seeing positive change in my clients and their own increasing confidence and self-esteem, seeing them 'move up their scale' making small steps of change in their own lives, has also been a huge motivator for me in recent times.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I love to get out into the fresh air and be outdoors – any excuse! I love woodland walks, swimming in the sea, playing tennis or family bicycle rides down the Strawberry Line which is near to my home village of Yatton, North Somerset. I also love to read and I'm part of an active book club which I founded over 11 years ago. I love spending time with my family and going out for meals together. I spend a lot of time planning and 'getting people together' and I love to organise a good holiday, party or fundraising event – especially for mental health charities. Getting people together and planning happy memories is my favourite pastime!

What have been your highlights as a Solution Focused Hypnotherapist so far?

There have been many highlights since deciding to train as a therapist; meeting new friends on the CPHT course in Bristol as a starter – friends that are supportive. We keep in touch and collaborate to help each other develop and grow as therapists. Finding a job which motivates me on such a deep level and fits my personality and own personal mantra of life has been wonderfully life affirming and joyful for me. I've always been someone who 'leaves the past behind me' and likes to focus on the here and now with an eye on the positives life has to offer, and have a mantra that things will and do and can get better given half a chance and a good night's sleep! Finding my first therapy room to practice from 'face to face' with clients has also stood out as a highlight, and spending the past 5-6 months fully immersed in this SFH world has been fantastic. Taking on new clients and seeing the positive difference SFH is making to their lives – it just blows me away! My own confidence has grown and just putting into practice what I now tell my clients also helps to keep me balanced and manages my own anxiety levels better than in the past. Getting my first 5-star Google client review for my new business *Your Best Mind Hypnotherapy* also stands out as a huge source of pleasure and sense of achievement.



Finding a job which motivates me on such a deep level and fits my personality and own personal mantra of life has been wonderfully life affirming and joyful for me.



Using ChatGPT in the therapy room

By AfSFH Fellow and Head of IT,
Trevor Eddolls

How do you feel about the possibilities offered by Artificial Intelligence? Excited? Bewildered? Downright worried about what the future holds? As someone with a background in the written word, I have strong opinions on the subject, but however you feel about AI, one thing's for sure: it will have an increasing effect on the way we live our lives. Here, Trevor Eddolls takes a look at one of the most popular engines, and how it might be used by SFHs today.

You've probably all heard of ChatGPT and how it and similar Artificial Intelligence (AI) engines can replace scriptwriters on TV and films. You've also probably heard about students using AI to write essays for them. So, if they are so powerful, why aren't we using them to write scripts (language patterns) for our Hypnotherapy sessions?

Everyone graduating from CPHT schools has been given a few scripts that they are encouraged to use over again with clients. Many SFHs have bought books of metaphors that they either use as is, or to borrow ideas from, for their sessions. Some therapists write their own scripts. Some people even go completely off piste and take the Erickson approach, making up what they say as they go along, reflecting back the client's own words and ideas. Whatever the case, a few more script or script ideas wouldn't go amiss, would it?

What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is an advanced natural language processing model developed by OpenAI that is designed to generate human-like responses to prompts or questions. To access ChatGPT, go to the OpenAI website (<https://www.openai.com>) and locate the 'GPT-3 Playground'. Once you're on the playground, you'll see a text box where you can interact with the model.

Begin by entering a prompt in the text box to start a conversation. The system will generate a response based on the context and information provided. The prompt can be a question, a sentence, or a statement that guides the conversation.

One key feature of ChatGPT is its ability to maintain continuity across multiple messages. To achieve this, precede your input with a user or system name followed by a colon (':').

For example:

User: What's your favourite colour?

Or:

Assistant: How tall are you?

By maintaining the user and assistant distinction, the model can better understand and respond to the conversation's context. Iterative conversation allows you to engage in extended interactions and improves the model's understanding of the intended conversation flow.

To guide the model's behaviour, you can provide high-level instructions. These instructions help shape the response based on the desired outcome. For example, you can specify:

Assistant: Answer the question as if you're a Shakespearean character.

You can control the length of the generated response using the 'Max tokens' setting. The more tokens you allow, the longer and more detailed the response will be. However, increasing the token limit also affects the model's response time. Adjust this setting based on your preference and the desired level of detail.

Training the model to generate precise responses requires providing it with clear instructions. If a response is not satisfactory, you can use examples to illustrate how you want it to be improved.

For instance, you can mention previous correct or desired responses during conversation. This helps ChatGPT understand the desired output, leading to better performance and more accurate replies.

Instructions will improve the quality of generated responses. You can try different prompts, lengths, system instructions, or even restructuring your conversation to achieve better outcomes.

Remember, refining prompts and iterating through conversations will help you discover the best approaches to obtain the desired results.

You'll not be surprised to learn that I asked ChatGPT to write the preceding information! Although, I have changed it a bit.

It's also worth noting that prompts really need to be specific to get a good response. You can ask ChatGPT to act in a particular role (eg customer support or HR manager), and you can ask it to perform a task (eg writing a job description or responding to a complaint). You can specify the format (eg bullet points or a flow chart), and you can get it to use a particular tone (eg engaging or serious). Also, you need to specify the objective.

How useful is ChatGPT to SFHs?

So, can ChatGPT write Hypnotherapy scripts? I asked it: *Act as a therapist and write a Hypnotherapy script. The tone is engaging, and the objective is to help someone to feel more confident and relaxed.*

The result was a short script that was direct in tone. Next, I told it to be indirect – again in the Erickson manner. I also suggested the number of words (Max tokens). Here's the script it produced:

Cultivating unshakeable confidence and deep relaxation

In this tranquil space, allow yourself to connect with the innate confidence that resides within you. Picture a radiant light at the very core of your being, shining brightly and filled with unwavering self-assurance. See this light growing stronger, expanding throughout your entire being, reaching every corner of your body and mind.

As this light of confidence intensifies, recognize that you have the ability to embrace any challenges that come your way with ease and clarity. Visualize yourself engaging in various situations that may have previously evoked nervousness or self-doubt. Notice how effortlessly you navigate these scenarios, feeling an unshakeable sense of confidence and deep relaxation.

Imagine yourself stepping into a social gathering without any hesitation or apprehension. Observe how you engage with others naturally and authentically, expressing your thoughts and ideas with calm assertion. Feel the presence of others responding to your confidence, admiration and respect shining in their eyes.

In this sanctuary of confidence and relaxation, repeat affirmations silently within your mind. Feel the words resonate with your deepest self, reinforcing your beliefs and strengthening your inherent confidence.

'I radiate confidence in every aspect of my life. I am calm, centered, and at ease in all situations. I embrace challenges as opportunities for personal growth and development. I am deserving of success, and I trust in my innate abilities. I choose to relax deeply, releasing any tension or stress that arises.'

As you continue to embrace these affirmations, imagine yourself in a variety of scenarios that typically test your confidence. See yourself delivering a presentation with ease and poise, captivating your audience effortlessly. Picture yourself engaging in conversations, expressing your thoughts with grace and clarity, feeling a profound sense of ease in social situations.

Notice how confidence and relaxation intertwine within you, forming a harmonious state of being. Observe the physical sensations that arise as you imagine these situations—feel the ease in your body, the relaxed state of your muscles, and the peacefulness that pervades your entire being.

Embrace this state of deep relaxation and unshakable confidence as an integral part of who you are. Allow it to become your new default mode of being, accessible to you at any time you choose. Know that you are worthy and deserving of self-assurance, tranquility, and success.



Conclusion

Well, what do you think?

ChatGPT is what's called a Large Language Model (LLM). It is basically like the predictive text on your phone. It chooses the next likely word to write based on the previous words. If I were giving the script a score, it would be six out of ten. There are parts of it that seem perfectly fine. However, in my opinion it lacks any kind of personality. Also, I don't know how much of the script it produced was taken from scripts that it was trained on, or scripts that other people have typed in for ChatGPT to improve.

If I were to do it again, I would train ChatGPT on a few of my favourite scripts, so that it knew the kinds of thing I like. Why, I might even train it on the scripts that I have written, in order to make the result sound more like I'd written them.

I'm not suggesting in any way that everyone rush out and get ChatGPT (or Bard from Google, Copilot from Microsoft, or any other AI – lots are available) to write their scripts for each client session. What I am saying is that AIs like ChatGPT are going to become more and more common, and that knowing about them ensures that we, as Hypnotherapists, can offer our clients the best experience possible. Using this technology may not be commonplace at the moment, but it surely will be in a few years' time.



About the writer:

Trevor regularly contributes to the Journal and the website. He runs his Hypnotherapy practice in Chippenham, runs CPD sessions, and offers one-to-one Supervision sessions over Zoom.



The power of personal boundary strengthening

By Melanie Cook

Personal boundaries help us maintain a sense of safety, self-respect, and emotional well-being.

In today's busy and interconnected world, it is more important than ever to establish and strengthen personal boundaries. The Cambridge Dictionary defines boundaries as the limit of what someone considers to be acceptable behaviour, and our personal boundaries serve as a protective shield, ensuring that our mental, emotional, and physical well-being are preserved. Personal boundaries define who we are, what we stand for, and what we are willing to accept. By setting and reinforcing personal boundaries, we take control of our lives and create healthier relationships and a more fulfilling existence.

Understanding Personal Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the invisible lines that we establish to protect ourselves from emotional, physical, and psychological harm. They are the limits we set for ourselves in terms of how we allow others to treat us, how we expect to be treated, and how we interact with the world around us. Personal boundaries help us maintain a sense of safety, self-respect, and emotional well-being. Personal boundaries allow us to say 'no' to what no longer serves us, to identify and express our own needs in a safe and nurturing environment, to recognise where we are giving our power away to others.

As human beings, personal boundaries are essential for us to maintain a healthy balance in life, to be selective in who or what we choose to focus our energy on. This comes naturally to many, but for a considerable number of individuals these boundaries were compromised in some way, or destroyed

completely, at an early age, and a faulty program then persists. This seems to be particularly prevalent in the caring professions, with individuals tending to gravitate into roles which expect us to put others before ourselves.

I love my life today and feel very fortunate and appreciative of what and who it has taken to get here. However, I appreciate my past, too: the people in it over the years, and the lessons learned from their, and my, mistakes. I do not resent my caretakers. I am grateful for their presence in my life, and understand that they did their best given their own circumstances and upbringing. I also do not resent the alcoholic art teacher at secondary school who shouted me down in front of the whole class, obliterating my creative spirit in one foul-tasting bitter sweep. I thank him too.

The Importance of Strengthening Personal Boundaries

1. Enhancing self-confidence

Strengthening personal boundaries fosters a sense of self-assurance and gives us the confidence to say no when needed. It allows us to assert our needs and desires without feeling guilty or obliged to please others.

2. Nurturing healthy relationships

Establishing personal boundaries helps create healthier relationships by setting clear expectations and standards. It prevents us from being taken advantage of, or allowing toxic

behaviours to persist. It also promotes open and honest communication, fostering trust and mutual respect.

3. Reducing stress and burnout

When we have well-defined personal boundaries, we can more effectively manage our time, energy, and emotions. We learn to prioritise self-care and prevent burnout by avoiding excessive commitments and unhealthy relationships that drain our resources.

4. Improving self-awareness and personal growth

By defining our boundaries, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our needs. It allows us to identify our limits, triggers, and values, leading to personal growth and self-improvement. We become more in tune with our emotions, desires, and aspirations.

5. Encouraging self-advocacy

Strengthening personal boundaries empowers us to advocate for ourselves and stand up for what we believe in. It helps us set appropriate limits in personal and professional situations, ensuring our needs are met and our rights respected.

It is interesting that as I write this, I am thoroughly living it. A large part of my own healing since 2002 has been 'morning pages'; Julia Cameron Lee's method of writing three stream-of-consciousness pages first thing every day, pioneered in her seminal 1992 book *The Artist's Way*. By showing up for myself every single day before anything else, writing freehand three A4 pages of whatever comes, purely for my own benefit, putting myself first, on every line, on every page, in every breath, transforming myself, unravelling, re-setting, recalibrating, nursing the program of renewal, I can give the best of myself from the inside out. This is what works for me, and what instigated my own healing process many years ago. Committing to the morning pages takes prioritising the self, every day, having the ability to say 'no', every time, to anything that seeks to get in the way. This is my connection to source, to the stars, the earth, the universe, to myself, my higher guidance. Because of this, everyone in my life benefits.

Deep healing to a place where we can resurrect our personal boundaries can be messy and complicated. When my faulty program of people-pleasing, co-dependency, addiction, trauma bonding and lack of self-worth finally started to lift, a healthier alchemical balance started to emerge. I recognise now when my own



Deep healing to a place where we can resurrect our personal boundaries can be messy and complicated.

limit is in sight and can steer away from burnout into a safe time and space for self-healing. This vital process ensures that I can be back on form again within the required timescale to continue to give to others. It is of course an ongoing re-evaluation process as needs, family circumstances and workload fluctuate.

As Solution Focused Hypnotherapists we can be challenged to hold a safe space for this deep transformative work with our clients. I have noticed over the years that the depth of the solution-focused conversation before the client goes on the couch has a direct connection with depth of the 'bucket emptying', or clearing, that happens, both during trance and in the time between sessions. Patterns repeat themselves until we change the course, weaving in new connections, new pathways and new destinations. New dreams. How magnificent it is when we bring this into our practice, helping clients to see the benefits of reclaiming their power, their dreams, their direction in life. Enabling them to visualise the next steps towards creating this new reality: what it will look like, feel like, who will be there. What will they notice, how will this make a difference to them and to the world around them.

Strategies for Strengthening Personal Boundaries:

1. Self-reflection

Engage in introspection to identify your values, limits, and non-negotiables. Understand what feels comfortable and uncomfortable for you and what aspects of your life require stronger boundaries.

2. Communicate assertively

Learn to express your boundaries calmly and assertively by using 'I' statements. Practice effective communication to convey your needs without blaming or being overly passive.

3. Practice saying 'no'

Saying 'no' can be challenging, but it is a crucial skill to strengthen personal boundaries. Remember that saying 'no' to something that does not align with your values or puts your well-being at risk is an act of self-care, not selfishness.

4. Seek support

Surround yourself with individuals who respect and support your boundaries. Talk to trusted friends, family members, your Supervisor or another SFH who can guide you in navigating difficult situations and offer encouragement.

5. Continuously reassess and adapt

Personal boundaries are fluid and may require adjustments as circumstances change. Regularly evaluate your boundaries to ensure they continue to align with your evolving needs and values.

Often those of us in the caring professions are raised with people-pleasing tendencies and/or co-dependency, either in relationships, where we put others before ourselves to avoid focusing on our own stuff, or in jobs that seem to require this. As we all well know, this is unsustainable and ineffective, and enables abusers or bosses to carry on taking advantage of the 'good little girl/boy' syndrome that may have been instilled in us from a young age. The blocks to healing continue until the cycle is eventually recognised for what it is, and broken.

Boundary setting is the first step towards bringing this to light. Even if, for some clients, it is initially that single hour's safe space a week with you, their SFH, holding space for reflection and calm, for processing and for re-evaluation of those personal boundaries. Therapists and Supervisors not only require clear and strong boundaries to be able to hold this safe space in an authentic and reassuring manner, but also to hold the client's/ supervisee's safe space energetically, too. This in itself is tremendous work for an empath, and requires its own support system.

This is why I value reciprocal Hypnotherapy sessions, quality Supervision (1:1 and group, both attending and hosting), continuous boundary regulation, morning pages, my ADHD coaching sessions, yoga, music, dance, walks in nature, magnesium bath soaks, my pets, my family, writing down my '10 good things' each night, listening to Hypnosis audios, journaling, staying alcohol free, and connecting with my chosen support network so much.

Conclusion

Strengthening personal boundaries is vital for maintaining healthy relationships, promoting self-care, and improving overall well-being. It empowers us to take control of our lives, nurture self-worth, and create a balance between our own needs and the expectations of others. By investing in personal boundaries, we embark on a journey of self-discovery and self-empowerment, leading to a more fulfilling and authentic life.

So, *Personal Boundary Resurrection* is currently my most used language pattern. This is why it is so valuable, so necessary, so life giving and so personal, yet also so universal. Every time I read it I see another link, another spark, another client putting themselves first, another child learning how to give back the love to themselves, to break the cycle of abuse, neglect, addiction, trauma, co-dependency, another healing weaved into the network of life.

Strengthening personal boundaries not only carves out time and space to prioritise, pause and reflect, but also gives us time to recognise where there are attempts to sabotage, blame or negate our work, either from parts of ourselves, or from others. It also helps a neurodiverse mind to reroute connections to stay on task for longer. It gives us the opportunity to put the necessary skills into place to overcome issues around our personal boundaries in a healthy and transformative way. All this is powerful behind-the-scenes work in our unconscious, providing solutions when we give it the necessary attention in a safe and encouraging way.



By investing in personal boundaries, we embark on a journey of self-discovery and self-empowerment, leading to a more fulfilling and authentic life.



About the writer:

Melanie Cook has practiced as a full-time SFH since 2010, and a Supervisor since 2020, in Bath city centre, at the Clifton Practice, and at Radstock and Paulton surgeries. Melanie was also a CPHT senior lecturer in North Wales while commuting to the area when caring for her now late father.

It would be a shame to spoil such a perfect afternoon by ending her adventure too soon.

Wandering

A metaphor

By AfSFH Head of Communications,
Sally Hare

This metaphor is a response to the Gestalt theory of 'the fertile void' – a state of both fullness and emptiness which sits comfortably alongside the solution-focused approach. In my experience clients often arrive with a shopping list of urgent 'shoulds' for the future, especially after a life of putting others and their expectations before their own needs. The idea of giving themselves permission not to know what they want for a while, better to understand their own deep desires in their own time, and trusting that this intuition will come, can feel radical. Do adapt for gender, life circumstances etc.

The woman had been strolling in the forest for some time, and knew she was lost. She was warm, she had food and drink in her backpack, and she felt perfectly safe, but she was curious what to do next. She sat down on a mossy, musty log and pondered.

The sun tripped through the canopy of leaves, dancing around her head and shoulders, and birds' particular melodies floated through the lazy afternoon air, delighting her as she took a drink of water and a bite of ripe, tangy fruit.

Feeling refreshed, and being a practical sort, she took out her phone, but knew already that there was no signal this far into the woods to help her find her way. The pictures on her messaging app amused her; tiny photos of friends, family, colleagues, and other loved ones. She imagined – as she had a particularly good imagination – what advice they might give.

'Shout loudly 'till someone comes to help,' said one.

'Find a river and follow it downstream,' said another.

'Wait 'till it's dark and get your bearings from the stars,' said a third.

But she was a quiet sort, and there was no sound of trickling water, and she really didn't fancy waiting until it got cold to find her way, so she smiled, and put the phone back in her bag for when it would be useful.

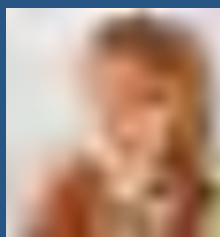
Feeling refreshed, she decided to explore a little more, trusting that the forest was not so big, really, and that she was fit,

and well, and that it would be a shame to spoil such a perfect afternoon by ending her adventure too soon.

She drifted through the many different types of trees, imagining – as she had a particularly good imagination – which might be the oaks, the birches, and the elms. She knelt and closely examined the flowers and fungi thriving on the forest floor. She laughed in delight as a family of deer crossed her path, not remotely startled by her presence. She played with twigs and leaves. The idea of leaving drifted far from her thoughts.

Eventually, just as she began to feel a little tired, she chanced upon a well-worn path in the undergrowth – a path that surely had been created over the centuries by feet, and hooves, and paws. A path to somewhere!

She looked along it one way, which looked dark, and the other, which looked steep. She looked again. Neither route looked very enticing. Then she noticed a tiny track running parallel to the path but diverging off in the direction of the now setting sun. It looked so golden and welcoming she took the track without thinking, and soon, after a few twists, and turns, she found herself in a broad meadow, with a bus stop on the other side of the gate in the far hedge. The timetable showed that the bus home was due in fifteen minutes, and a bus to a town that she had always fancied visiting arrived in ten. A third, going to somewhere she had never heard of, left in five. She smiled, and opened her bag.



About the writer:

Sally Hare graduated from CPHT Bristol in 2020. She lives in central Bristol and is currently building her Hypnotherapy practice there, and online.

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Committee Members



Chair and Trustee: Susan Rodrigues

Susan is the key interface between Clifton Practice Hypnotherapy Training (CPHT) and the AfSFH. As CPHT course co-ordinator, her crucial role allows her to organise key speakers and post-CPHT training to ensure your CPD (Continuous Professional Development) is maintained to the highest standards. She is also a senior lecturer with CPHT and was one of AfSFH's first Supervisors!



CEO: Helen Green

Helen has a background in Psychology and clinical research. She is proud to be the CEO for the AfSFH and wants to continue to raise the public profile of the Association and the work of its members.

Contact email: ceo@afsfh.com



Head of Finance: Sarah Coward

Sarah graduated from CPHT Bristol in June 2023, and has since set up her own busy SFH practice based in North Somerset. Sarah has a background in marketing, PR, proofreading, and business administration, and she loves helping others. She's passionate about SFH and the AfSFH and is delighted to keep the finance affairs for the Association in order.

Contact email: finance@afsfh.com



Head of Communications: Sally Hare

Sally is a graduate of CPHT Bristol and has a background in writing, editing and proofreading. Training and practice experience have enthused her to spread the Solution Focused message to as wide a public as possible.

Contact email: comms@afsfh.com



Head of IT and Social Media: Trevor Eddolls

Trevor, a Fellow of the AfSFH and a regular writer and speaker about Solution Focused Hypnotherapy, has more than 30 years of IT experience and he looks after our website and associated social media (including our Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts). You will probably have seen his posts on Facebook - both the closed group and the public-facing page.

Contact email: it@afsfh.com



Head of Membership: Claire Corbett

Claire oversees all aspects of the renewal and processing of membership applications for the AfSFH. She is passionate about ensuring members are fully supported, and in promoting the AfSFH.

Contact email: membership@afsfh.com



Head of Professional Standards: Nicola Taylor

Nicola has an extensive background in teaching and education. Her goals are to promote high standards and best practice amongst AfSFH members, and to ensure that the Association supports members in achieving these.

Contact email: standards@afsfh.com



Head of Marketing: Andrew Major

Andrew has a professional background in marketing. He is eager to continue the wider promotion and awareness of SFH and the work of the AfSFH and its members.

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