

# Hypnotherapist helps Sonoma residents overcome emotional, mental, and health problems

*Lindi Gallagher, a certified clinical hypnotherapist and cognitive behavioral therapist, has been helping Sonoma Valley residents overcome a variety of emotional, mental, and health problems since opening her business, Sonoma Hypnotherapy, within the past year.*



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Hypnotherapist Lindi Gallagher pauses for a moment in her Sonoma Hypnotherapy office in downtown Sonoma on Thursday, Aug. 7, 2025. She has been offering sessions for a variety

of emotional, mental and health issues since opening the business within the past year.  
(John Burgess / Press Democrat)

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Jennifer Blackwood had an acute fear of flying for more than 30 years, causing her to avoid it — until she sought help from Lindi Gallagher, a hypnotherapist who opened an office in downtown Sonoma during the past year.

“When I did fly once last year, it was excruciating and terrifying,” Blackwood said. “I literally cried for the first half-hour and had to keep my eyes closed. I was a mess. Fast forward to last spring, when I anticipated a flight to Portland in June: I had a flash of insight to find a hypnotherapist for my phobia, thankfully, and found Lindi.”

Blackwood said that her sessions with Gallagher “helped immensely.”

“After just two sessions, I felt my fear of flying start to subside, to lose its charge,” she said. “After a few more sessions, I found that I could look up at a plane in the sky and not feel trepidation or catastrophic feelings. With each session, I felt less concerned about the round-trip flight coming up in June and even almost excited — something I never thought I would feel!”

On the day of the flight, she had no anxiety.

“While I desperately hoped the sessions with Lindi would help, I couldn’t imagine how much they might, nor how I would feel,” she said. “The sessions dismantled all the fear stories I had about flying, and what was usually difficult, like taking off

and looking out the window, was much less charged for me. It's hard to describe what it feels like when a severe phobia is handled, but it almost feels like a shadow or distant memory."

While some people still think of hypnosis as a trancelike spell induced by a magician waving a watch in front of their eyes, due partly to Gallagher, many other Sonoma Valley residents have recently realized that it actually can be used as a meditation-like, therapeutic process that can help treat a wide range of mental and physical issues.

Gallagher, a certified clinical hypnotherapist and cognitive behavioral therapist, is offering in-person appointments at her business, Sonoma Hypnotherapy, on West Napa Street in Sonoma, and online video sessions. Each session costs \$140 to \$180, depending on what the client is experiencing and how long it has been an issue.

"For emotional and mental well-being, hypnotherapy can help resolve anxiety and depression, let go of anger, increase self-confidence and motivation, and release fears and phobias," she said. "In terms of physical health and healing, it can reduce chronic pain, relieve PMS, restore fertility and address insomnia." She said hypnotherapy can also support lifestyle changes, such as losing weight naturally as well as ending addictions and unwanted habits.

The American Psychological Association and American Medical Association have recognized hypnotherapy as a valid procedure since 1958, and the National Institutes of Health has recommended it to treat chronic pain since 1995.

Gallagher explained how she conducts a hypnotherapy session.

"Specific blocks or obstacles are not always known — neither to the practitioner nor the client," she said. "For this reason, suggestions are not made. Instead,

clear, gentle instructions are given, allowing the fantastic inner mind to do what needs to be done to reach the intended goal.

“The process allows inner wisdom — that incredible intelligence within — to naturally resolve issues, problem solve and overcome challenges on every level: physical, mental and emotional. It is a gentle way to unlock the natural ability to heal and thrive.”



Rachel, who has been a client of Gallagher for eight months to address her anxiety about financial issues, lauds her approach.

“Her fantastic ability to listen, be patient and let the process flow even if it does not initially end up where we expected, is one of her best qualities,” she said.

“She helped me tremendously. I have found a level of inner peace that I did not

even know had been missing for decades. Even though my goal was in one area, I saw benefits ripple through many other areas — including a huge decrease in anxiety about wildfires, which I had not mentioned to Lindi when we talked about our goals.”

Gallagher explained the limitations of hypnotherapy, saying that it is one way to tap into the power and intelligence within the mind and body.

“It is not a replacement for appropriate medical or psychological care when needed,” she said. “It is not appropriate for all health conditions, by any means, especially those involving severe psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, psychosis or certain personality disorders.”

She said that there are several common misconceptions about hypnotherapy, including that it may involve discomfort.

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“That’s not so,” Gallagher said. “Through this unique method of hypnotherapy, healing can be easy and calming, and a session feels more like a soothing spa for your mind. The method I use is trauma-informed practices. The clients’ healing takes place with warmth, positivity and calm, all without creating new feelings and emotions — and possibly mental blocks — about the past.”

Gallagher said that another misconception about hypnotherapy is that the patient loses control or is under the hypnotherapists’ power.

“In reality, this is simply not true,” she said. “Stage hypnotists have used hypnosis in this way, but it is not how I practice. During hypnotherapy, the individual remains fully in control, aware of their surroundings, and can choose to emerge from the state at any time.”



Another commonly held belief is that hypnosis means “being asleep” or “being unconscious.”

“Despite ‘hypnosis’ being derived from the Greek word for sleep, the state is one each of us moves in and out of all day long,” Gallagher said. “It is one of deep relaxation and focused attention, much like daydreaming or being completely absorbed in a book or movie ... In hypnosis, a person is highly aware, just focused internally.”

She said some people falsely believe hypnotherapy is a “magic bullet” or quick fix.

“While it can be remarkably effective and often brings about rapid change, it is not a magic wand,” Gallagher said. “Success requires willingness, engagement and often a commitment to the process.”

Lastly, she said that it isn’t true that only certain people can be hypnotized and benefit from it.

“You do not need to be imaginative or have the ability to visualize to move into a state of hypnosis,” she said.

Gallagher was born in upstate New Jersey and lived there until her family moved to Paradise, California, when she was 8 years old. She received a bachelor’s degree in organizational communication from California State University, Sacramento in 1982 and a preschool/kindergarten teaching diploma from North American Montessori in 2007.

Her job experience includes lead teacher at Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District in California and early learning program specialist for Community Resources for Children in Napa.

Gallagher began practicing as a hypnotherapist in 1998 and earned a certificate in hypnotherapy from the California School of Healing Arts & Sciences in 1999.

She moved to Sonoma in 2017 with her husband, Mike Gallagher — a sales employee for a local mortgage company — and two children.

She requested to share a closing message with the Sonoma Valley community.

“Healing doesn’t have to be prolonged or painful,” Gallagher said. “I work with many individuals who have had great loss, and extensive time has gone by while continuing to experience an unwanted habit or mental block. Hypnotherapy is genuinely a safe and gentle way to heal and arrive at a new place in life — to have a calm mind and a clearer, more relaxed perspective. The intelligence within each of us is phenomenal and makes wonderful healing shifts.”

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