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## **Ericksonian hypnotherapy for individuals with agoraphobia: A Hero's Journey**

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Living with agoraphobia can cause serious suffering. The standardised list of symptoms and clinical criteria given in diagnostic manuals center around the observed features of patient's presentations but fail to reflect the internal experience of helplessness and distress.

Treatment of agoraphobia with medications and cognitive behavioral methods include techniques designed to alleviate somatic symptoms and facilitate exposure to previously avoided places and situations. Symptomatic reduction is an important aspect for functional improvement, yet patients find that with medical and behavioral interventions the execution of actions often involve inner struggle and effortful deliberations.

More than symptom reduction is called for. A new determination to create and develop flexible plans is needed in order to become the agents of their desired experiences.

A core element of the naturalistic approach to Ericksonian hypnotherapy is the expectation that the most ideal change comes from within. Assuming a metaphorical perspective, the therapeutic process for individuals with agoraphobia may be represented in terms of the mythological concept of the Hero's Journey. As their journey begins, patients struggling with agoraphobia must take a series of steps to overcome their obstacles and make positive transformations or change.

In this workshop we explore the strengths and difficulties that agoraphobic patients take as they face the challenge to overcome their obstacles in each step of treatment. Case descriptions will be used to illustrate the application of conversational hypnosis and metaphor in effective Ericksonian interventions. An experiential exercise in small group will be used to create a story to strengthen the self image of having the required resources available and accomplishing triumph over the challenge that appeared in the initial step.