

ABOUT HYPNOTHERAPY

The aim of Hypnotherapy is to bring about beneficial changes to certain problems that have their origins in the mind.

In order to allay some of the fears and misconceptions about hypnosis, it is important to stress that what takes place under hypnosis is safe, natural, non-magical, and produces very predictable results. There is absolutely no question of being controlled or manipulated, or even induced into a hypnotic state against your will.

There are many branches of hypnotherapy and hundreds of uses. Probably the most widely known use is to help people to stop smoking. However, hypnotherapy is also used to break many other habits, and to strengthen self-control.

Hypnotherapy is used to overcome stress – and stress related ailments. It is very useful for calming nerves, and overcoming fears and phobias – and it is wonderful for general confidence boosting.

Where the problems are more complex and there are deeper psychological indications, Hypnotherapy can be used in an analytical capacity, to give an insight into the subconscious triggers which can cause many unexplained symptoms.

More specialized branches can even deal with pain relief. You may have heard of Hypnosis being used as a natural anaesthetic in surgical operations, or to help with childbirth.

Most Hypnotherapists cover a wide range of subjects, but Individual therapists will supply you with a list of the specific problems they treat. Occasionally, individual therapists may specialise in certain areas that are of particular interest to them.

WHAT IS HYPNOSIS?

Hypnosis (hypnotic trance) is an altered state of consciousness in which it is possible to communicate with the subconscious mind. You may be surprised to know that it is a very common state which everybody automatically drifts in and out of from time to time.

You know how it is when you get thoroughly lost in a beautiful piece of music, or a good book, or a daydream. Your attention is completely captured and everyday reality fades into the background as your mind carries you away to a different world of the imagination. You are still conscious, but your consciousness is temporarily altered. Well believe it or not, that is a form of trance. In fact we all go through a similar phase just *before* we go to sleep.

When you are being hypnotised, you are guided by the Hypnotherapist into this same kind of trance state somewhere *between* being asleep and being awake, and this is called a hypnotic trance. It is a very pleasant feeling of calmness and deep relaxation. Contrary to popular belief, when you are hypnotised you are not asleep or unconscious. You will normally have your eyes closed, but you can still hear and feel and even speak. Indeed, your concentration and awareness actually become heightened.

Different people can experience hypnosis in slightly different ways. Some people may notice that they feel rather heavy, whilst others may feel light and 'floaty.' Often the closed eyelids can flutter a little here and there, or there may be a slight tingling sensation in various parts of the body. However some people experience nothing at all, other than a feeling of deep relaxation. The experience of hypnosis is a very personal thing, but basically, it is just a very calm and pleasant feeling – rather like being in a daydream. The main requirement to enter hypnotic trance is relaxation, and for most people this is a very gradual process.

For some people, entering hypnosis can be rather disappointing because they expect to suddenly 'go under' some strange spell and feel extremely *weird* - but it isn't like that at all. For most people, there is no sudden feeling of 'going under' hypnosis. Sometimes individuals may doubt that they are actually being hypnotised at all because they do not experience the sudden loss of consciousness they expected. It is quite important that your expectations of hypnosis are realistic, and you understand that it is a gradual, drifting process.

It is important you should understand this because during the induction into hypnosis, if you are mentally interfering all the time by constantly thinking that you are not 'going under'; this in itself can disrupt the whole process of gradual relaxation. All you need to do is to let yourself go, and concentrate on your Hypnotherapist's voice so that he or she can help you to relax. When the body and the conscious mind have been sufficiently relaxed, the normal barriers to the subconscious part of the mind also become relaxed, and the subconscious becomes receptive to positive suggestion.

WHAT IS POSITIVE SUGGESTION?

A positive suggestion is a positively worded statement or command, which is given (or suggested) to the subconscious mind.

In the relaxed state of hypnosis, the subconscious mind becomes receptive and can accept and store the positive suggestion, and subsequently act upon it. For instance, a smoker can have it suggested to him that s/he is now a non-smoker, and that suggestion is then left in the subconscious mind, so that the person no longer wishes to smoke. However, for the suggestion to be properly accepted into the subconscious mind, it is important that the smoker really wants to give up the habit. In brief, positive suggestions can re-programme the mind to bring about beneficial changes.

WHAT IS THE SUBCONSCIOUS (sometimes called the UNCONSCIOUS) MIND?

Your mind consists of two parts; the CONSCIOUS and the SUBCONSCIOUS. The CONSCIOUS mind inhabits the surface level. This part of the mind is where you do all your everyday conscious thinking.

At a deeper level, we have the SUBCONSCIOUS mind, and this part of the mind deals with your unconscious actions – the things you do automatically.

In the subconscious you keep your habits, and also your habitual fears - and from here all your automatic responses are triggered. The subconscious also stores your memories – and all the things that have had a hand in making you who you are today.

HOW IS A HYPNOTIC TRANCE INDUCED?

There are several ways to induce hypnosis, and different Hypnotists will use their own favourite methods. Stage Hypnotists and Hypnotherapists may employ different methods.

STAGE

Stage hypnotists select their subjects, then use a 'quick' induction – their audience would get very bored if they used the slower 'relaxation' techniques used in therapy which are often needed to calm and relax people ready for the hypnotic, therapeutic process.

Why is it that people on stage behave in an “apparently” bazaar way and appear to be under the control of the hypnotist? Let's explain how this works. Then we can relate this to therapy, and then to the individual client.

Let's suppose that Fred and Joe decide to volunteer to take part in a stage show. The hypnotist would put them both into deep trance. Now, remember that Fred and Joe are two completely different people with their own unique personality and codes of ethics. The hypnotist could now go to Fred and say, “as soon as I click my fingers, you will be a chicken”, Fred thinks to himself, “there is no way I am going to make a fool of myself in this theatre”, the hypnotist clicks his fingers and nothing happens! (Fred rejected the suggestion. However, he remains in hypnosis)

The hypnotist then says to Joe, “as soon as I click my fingers, you will be a chicken”, Joe, who has a different personality to Fred thinks “ok, its Friday night, lets have some fun, I trust this hypnotist and its only harmless fun”.

THERAPY

Hypnotherapy is hypnosis used in a therapeutic way. Some Hypnotherapists like to start with some form of fascination. They may ask you to concentrate on a revolving spiral, or some other object. But don't be disappointed if this technique is not used, as it is just a variation, not a necessity. Honestly, not many people ask you to gaze into their 'piercing eyes,' or stare at a swinging watch these days. That sort of thing has more to do with old-fashioned Hollywood movies than modern Hypnotherapy.

Most Hypnotherapists use relaxation techniques, and you are also likely to be asked to concentrate on certain things. For instance you may be asked to focus your attention on your breathing, or to imagine various things.

During the induction, the therapist is likely to speak to you in a particular way, and at a particular tempo, which is designed to gently slow down the brainwaves. This will help you to gradually drift into the pleasant state of hypnotic trance, in which you will experience feelings of relaxation and well being.

Words like “relax,” “deeper,” and “sleep” or “sleepy” are often used in the induction. However, these words are not intended to send you to sleep. They are merely calming words which send special messages to the brain to help you to become very relaxed and tranquil.

Hypnosis is not a state of being unconscious, but merely of having your consciousness altered – indeed your mind remains clear and focused, and you are likely to remember most of what was said to you.

Some people are very easy to hypnotise, whilst others take longer. Most people remain in a fairly light state of hypnotic trance, whilst a very small percentage naturally go to much deeper levels. Sometimes people drift in and out of lighter and deeper states. All this is perfectly normal. Deep states of hypnosis are not required for successful therapy.

A FEW COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COULD I BE HYPNOTIZED AGAINST MY WILL?

No, your co-operation is required at all times.

CAN ANYBODY BE HYPNOTISED, OR DO YOU HAVE TO BE WEAK MINDED?

On the contrary, you need a reasonable amount of intelligence in order to be hypnotised. The people who respond best to hypnosis are those who are capable of concentration, imagination and mental dexterity.

Most people can be hypnotised. The exceptions are those who are mentally subnormal, young children, or those who are 'high' on drugs or alcohol. Everybody else (who properly co-operates with the process) can be hypnotized. Obviously, if somebody cannot understand what is required if them, or if they are resisting for some reason, they will have difficulty entering into hypnosis.

WILL I LOSE CONTROL OF MYSELF and COULD I BE MADE TO SAY OR DO ANYTHING AGAINST MY WILL OR NATURE?

No. You will know what is going on and you will retain your intelligence and your self-control. Hypnotherapy requires the client and the therapist to work together in a spirit of co-operation, in order to help you to control your own mind.

For Hypnotherapy to be successful, you need to be comfortable with what is going on in the session. If any suggestion was given to you with which you did not agree you could reject it. If anything were suggested to you that went against your beliefs or moral code you would be shocked out of hypnosis.

IF YOU DON'T LOSE CONTROL, WHAT ABOUT THOSE STAGE SHOWS WHERE PEOPLE DO ALL SORTS OF SILLY THINGS?

Successful stage hypnosis requires willing volunteers. These people obviously have a desire to join in the show and perform, or they wouldn't volunteer to go on stage in the first place. Hypnosis merely helps them to lift the inhibitions which they may ordinarily have against performing.

Please do not confuse Stage Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy. The aims are very different.

IS HYPNOSIS DANGEROUS and ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

Hypnotherapy is not dangerous. In skilled hands Hypnotherapy is a proven therapeutic aid. NO drugs should ever be used, and there are no unwanted side effects.

WHY DOES HYPNOSIS WORK?

The answer in one word is *suggestion*. We know that the mind is open to receiving suggestions. When we are born, we all have a blank mind and a brain like a sponge. We have no experience. Apart from the fear of falling and a fear of loud noises, babies are virtually free of all fear. Apart from food, babies have no desires, or compulsions or phobias.

When we are born, we do not know what a cigarette or a spider is. We have no fear of the dark, no fear of open or enclosed spaces. We are born without any prejudices. We do not hate and we do not love. As we go through life's experiences, so the pages of our diary are gradually filled in so who you are today is a result of all your accumulated experiences from the day you were born right up to this very minute. And in ten years from now you will be a different person again.