

Hypnosis

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Hypnosis can be a powerful tool to help people overcome the psychological problems caused by life stresses or to overcome addictions, manage pain, increase confidence, give a general sense of well-being, and many other applications.

Some people confuse therapeutic hypnosis with what they have seen in stage performances and therefore would not have a bar of it!

If you would like to know more about how clinical hypnosis works and what it feels like, then this article is for you. Some of the most common questions people ask are answered here.

What is hypnosis?

Hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness. Examples of other states of consciousness are sleep, or daydreaming. When we are asleep we are experiencing a different state of consciousness than when we are awake. Similarly when we are awake we can sometimes lapse into a daydream and be unaware, or only partly aware, of what is going on around us. This is also an altered state of consciousness. In therapeutic hypnosis the client, with the therapist's guidance, enters into an altered state of consciousness. When a person is experiencing hypnosis they are said to be in a trance state. The trance state can be induced by using various techniques. Often it begins simply by the client listening to the therapist giving instructions about how to relax more.

How Does it Work to Help a Person Change?

It is believed that hypnosis allows greater access to subconscious thoughts and beliefs. That is, the thoughts we are having, or beliefs and motivations we hold, that we are not readily aware of. For example, a person may want to lose weight, yet subconsciously hold beliefs about eating, or body image, that hinder them in achieving their goal of weight loss. If skillfully used, hypnosis can unlock such blockages, and enlist the subconscious to support the desired changes. This in turn strengthens and empowers a person to achieve their objectives.

Be aware that while hypnosis can be a powerful aid to therapy, it does not, on its own, produce miracles!

Will I Know What is Happening?

There are various degrees of depth of trance. In a light trance state a person will hear the therapist, be able to respond freely, and will remember later what was said. In a deeper trance the client may hear only the voice of the therapist and not be aware of much more. Sometimes after coming out of a deep trance state the client may not recall what the therapist said. It is believed that, even if the information cannot be consciously recalled, it is retained at a deeper level in the mind.

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As therapeutic hypnosis is used to change habits of thought and behaviour by encouraging new ways of thinking and behaving, it is often useful for the client to be aware of what is happening while under hypnosis and to be an active participant. For example, when teaching relaxation and ego strengthening, it is important that the client learns and remembers how to do this himself or herself whenever he or she wants to. In other situations, like stopping smoking for instance, changes can take place while the client is in a deep trance. He or she may not necessarily remember what was said but later notice how they have changed the way they think and behave.

Will I Lose Control and be Told to Do or Think Things I Don't Want to?

Most people initially have a fear of losing control. This is in fact a misconception. When experiencing trance, people become even more sensitive than in their normal waking state. Anything said that a person does not agree with, will be likely to result in a fairly powerful response. A client can and will spontaneously come out of trance if he or she hears something they do not agree with. Even under hypnosis a person will not do things that are against their value system. Therefore it is important that a client has confidence in their therapist and that they both agree on what they want to achieve from the session. The client and therapist work cooperatively to do what is best for the client.

What Does it Feel Like to Experience a Trance State?

In a trance state people feel very relaxed and peaceful. They may have body sensations like a floating feeling or, conversely, be unaware of what their body is doing. Often the person is unaware of time passing. They may have visual images, seeing colours or pictures. At the conclusion of a session clients feel many different things like being very relaxed, a general sense of well-being, and are far more optimistic of achieving their goals.

When asked what it was like, people have said things like "I have never been this relaxed before". Or if asked if there was anything they would have liked to have happened they say, "yes, more please!".

Can Anyone be Hypnotised?

It is believed that anyone can be hypnotised if they are in agreement with the process. It is unlikely that anyone could be hypnotised against his or her will. If a person is stressed or anxious about anything to do with the process they will not allow themselves to enter a trance state. Hypnosis is a mutual process undertaken with the cooperation of client and therapist.

Are There Any Dangers I Should be Aware of?

It is important that the techniques used suit the client. The therapist needs to know of any medical problems or past experiences that need to be considered in planning the session. A responsible therapist will listen to what

is happening in the client's life, find out what they want from the session, take a history and discuss the process with the client before undertaking hypnosis.

Whenever we enter into a relationship with someone else we open ourselves to possible influence. In the therapeutic relationship this is particularly so. Therefore it is important to choose a well-trained and qualified practitioner.

What is Therapeutic Hypnosis Used for and When is it Appropriate?

Hypnosis can be used as an adjunct to therapy for many different problems. It is one tool in a counsellor's tool kit. It is most effective to release a client from feeling in a stuck position over some issue. It can speed up the therapeutic work by producing results in a short time. The following are some of the many issues that respond well to hypnosis: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Insomnia, Pain control, Quit smoking, Reduce or stop drinking.

How Do I Find Out More?

If you would like to find out more about how hypnosis might help you, phone EASA for an appointment with a qualified psychologist trained to use hypnosis. You can receive advice and discuss with the therapist what type of help you would like. You will find you will be listened to and your opinions will be respected.