

Hypnosis Demystified: What You Must Know About Hypnosis

Many are fascinated by hypnosis, while harboring misconceptions about it. Hypnosis seems, at once, to elicit our curiosity and dubiousness. Unfortunately, stage hypnosis, a satirized version of genuine, clinical hypnosis, has served for many as their introductory, if not only, contact with hypnosis.

You might be surprised to learn that hypnosis, essentially, is just a state of mind; moreover, a naturally occurring state of mind. Whenever you are highly absorbed in, or *by*, something (especially where your engrossment is sustained), you are quite likely experiencing a state of hypnosis.

The term “hypnotic trance,” which carries for many a certain exciting, mysterious, perhaps even unnerving connotation, means nothing more than the state, or mindset, of hypnosis. To stress, this mindset—the hypnotic mindset—is characterized by one’s deeply sustained attention to, and absorption in, something. We might describe the level, and quality, of absorption as captivating, or capturing—that is, capturing of one’s full, undivided, transfixed attention.

In hypnotic states of mind, we tend to be deeply focused, whether inwardly, or outwardly, to an extent that precludes our distractibility. We remain in full control of our senses, judgement, and decisional powers. We are as if in a zone, a “mindset” of laser-like, restricted concentration that can feel, sometimes, like a pleasant, undisturbable state of focus.

Hypnotherapy is merely the therapeutic use of hypnosis. The hypnotherapist, or hypnotist, merely guides the client into a state of hypnosis. He does this by means of the “hypnotic induction,” a fancy way of saying that he facilitates, through his language and/or nonverbal techniques, the client’s willing, desirous entry into the state of hypnosis. There are many different ways to guide willing subjects into hypnotic states of mind, each of these ways constituting a hypnotic induction.

Hypnotic states, as might be inferred, are easily resisted. You can resist states of hypnosis no less than you can reject someone’s suggestions to relax. Hypnosis is a mindset that can only be experienced on a voluntary, invited basis. The skill to enter, enjoy, and therapeutically use states of hypnosis is entirely a function of the subject’s receptivity. The hypnotist, it must be emphasized, merely facilitates an experience of hypnosis with a receptive client.

The hypnotic state of mind is typically an open, receptive, imaginative state of mind. As such, it’s a state of mind particularly ripe for absorbing welcome, positive, constructive suggestions. For this reason, states of hypnosis engender a mental culture within which desired changes and goals can be affirmed, visualized, and stamped into the psyche with powerful levels of commitment.

Good hypnotherapy, or good self-hypnosis, utilizes the subject's unique ability to creatively imagine solutions, and alternatives, to situations of concern. Suggestive or self-suggestive language is tailored to invoke the subject's internal problem-solving skills, and to optimize her motivation to make important, desired changes. Thus, the "power of suggestion," which clinical hypnosis uses, is about maximizing clients' imaginative capacities to find new, preferable directions in their lives.

When someone says, "I can't be hypnotized," or "You can't hypnotize me," they are really saying, "You can't control me. I will not let you control me. You can't coopt my mind." They are absolutely right, and with that attitude, they will resist hypnosis and thus certainly find no benefit and satisfaction in it.

The therapeutic use of hypnosis is recognized to be an effective catalyst for habit change. It can help smokers quit smoking; overweight clients reach, and maintain, desired weight goals; reduce stress and anxiety; elevate performance in a great many areas; and effectively treat many pain conditions.

Hypnosis, in the end, is indeed fascinating, if not magical; safe, and quite natural; and therapeutically potent, if not miraculous.

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