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# Clinical Hypnosis



British Society of Clinical Hypnosis

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## A Little History

Hypnotic or suggestive therapy is one of the oldest of all healing techniques. From the Sleep Temples of Egypt through the histories of ancient Greece and Rome various forms of hypnosis have been an intimate part of the culture.

In the Middle Ages, healing through faith and prayer became the major way of treating disease. In the 18th Century - when it was believed that illness was caused by the magnetic influence of astral bodies - Franz Anton Mesmer would induce people into a trance-like state by what he believed to be Animal Magnetism. Although Mesmer's theory was soon discredited, it continued to be used even after his death as it often produced 'miracle' cures.

When Dr James Braid re-examined Mesmerism in the 19th Century he discovered that simple suggestion was just as effective as Mesmerism or any other method to induce trance-like states. It was he who coined the term 'Hypnosis' and hypnosis began to develop into a scientific technique. Dr. Esdaile then undertook many surgical operations using only hypnosis to control patients' pain and much research began into the phenomenon. However, the new scientific discovery of chloroform was soon to curtail these experiments.

By the early part of the 20th Century hypnosis was used almost exclusively by stage hypnotists, thereby projecting a hopelessly distorted view of this very powerful therapeutic tool. However, in 1955 the British Medical Association endorsed the practice of hypnosis in Medical School education, since when it has become a valuable addition to conventional medical treatment.

Modern research and practice over the last fifty years has fashioned Clinical Hypnosis into a flexible technique with which to effect beneficial changes.

## Theory

The theoretical basis of hypnotherapy is grounded in the bicameral nature of the human brain / mind system. Broadly speaking the mind is composed of two halves, the right side and the left side, or the conscious aspect and the subconscious aspect. The right side is the domain of imagery and dreams, long-term memory and rhythmic control while the left side is the domain of reason, logic and the critical faculties. Basically the right side (or subconscious side) holds all learned experience and accepts all information uncritically which is why our sleeping dreams seem so real, even when they are plainly absurd. When we are awake our left side is alert and censoring all information that appears to consciousness before accepting it into the right side - unconscious mind. Many problems are due to experiences during formative years (before the critical faculties are fully developed) or by extended repetition, as with the formation of a habit. Our aim in using hypnosis is to revise the information held in mind that controls feelings, habits and behaviours.

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## What is Hypnosis?

It may surprise many to learn that we experience trance states often during the course of our day. Even passing into ordinary sleep involves a kind of trance state. The experience of hypnosis is similar: neither asleep nor awake and a little like daydreaming, with a pleasant feeling of deep relaxation behind it all. Hypnosis is a different state of consciousness which you can naturally enter so that, for therapeutic purposes, beneficial corrections may be given directly to your unconscious mind.

In this way hypnosis is an effective way of making contact with our inner (subconscious) self, which is both a reservoir of unrecognised potential and knowledge as well as being the unwitting source of many of our problems.

Therapeutic hypnosis is a state of purposeful co-operation.

## A Typical Treatment

The hypnotherapist will initially take a case history to become familiar with the patient's mind-set, personality type, presenting problem and desired outcomes.

With this information the therapist will then tailor a therapy session to suit the particular requirements and objectives and will spend time creating scripts (word patterns) and strategies that will lead to a successful outcome.

## Benefits

Providing the presenting problem originates from experiences or trauma from the patient's past, from repetitive learned behaviour (as with habits) or from performance related stress then hypnosis may be used to give successful treatment. It has been used to treat the following:

- Changing unwanted habits (e.g. smoking, substance misuse, bed wetting, nail biting, stuttering)
- Obtaining relief and often remission from symptoms such as: emotionally based breathing problems, irritable stomach conditions and nervous problems, tinnitus, phantom pains
- Some skin problems and nervous rashes
- Pain control for minor surgery, dentistry, arthritic pain and general neuromuscular aches and pains
- Hypnosis can help the individual from phobias, compulsions, emotional problems, sleeping problems, inhibitions, guilt feelings, jealousy, and many of the worries and anxieties of everyday life
- Sexual problems such as, premature ejaculation, frigidity and others
- The use of Self-Hypnosis can help deal with the stress and tensions caused by modern living, reducing the risk of heart problems and blood pressure.