

Clinical Hypnotherapy

Hypnosis (or hypnotherapy) is a procedure during which a health professional suggests changes in sensations, perceptions, thoughts, or behavior. The hypnotic context is generally established by an induction procedure. Although there are many different hypnotic inductions, most include suggestions for relaxation, calmness, and well-being. Instructions to imagine or think about pleasant experiences are also commonly included in hypnotic inductions.

People respond to hypnotherapy in different ways. Some describe their experience as an altered state of consciousness. Others describe hypnosis as a normal state of focused attention, in which they feel very calm and relaxed. Regardless of how and to what degree they respond, most people describe the experience as very pleasant.

Some people are very responsive to hypnotic suggestions and others are less responsive. A person's ability to experience hypnotic suggestions can be inhibited by fears and concerns arising from some common misconceptions. Contrary to some depictions of hypnotherapy in books, movies or on television, people who have been hypnotized do not lose control over their behavior. They typically remain aware of whom they are and where they are, and unless amnesia has been specifically suggested, they usually remember what transpired during hypnosis. Hypnosis makes it easier for people to experience suggestions, but it does not force them to have these experiences. In fact, hypnotherapy cannot make you do anything against your beliefs. Stage hypnosis, done for entertainment, is not clinical hypnotherapy.

Hypnotherapy is not a type of therapy, like psychoanalysis or behavior therapy. Instead, it is a procedure that can be used to facilitate therapy. Because it is not a treatment in and of itself, training in hypnosis is not sufficient for the conduct of therapy. Clinical hypnotherapy should be used only by properly trained and credentialed health care professionals who have also been trained in the clinical use of hypnosis and are working with in the areas of their professional expertise.

Hypnotherapy has been used in the treatment of pain, depression, anxiety, stress, habit disorders (including addictions and eating disorders), obesity, sports performance, and many other psychological and medical problems. However, it may not be useful for all psychological problems or for all patients or clients. The decision to use hypnosis as an adjunct to treatment can only be made in consultation with a qualified health care provider who has been trained in the use and limitations of clinical hypnosis.

(This definition and description of hypnotherapy is an adaptation and faithful restatement of the definition established by the Executive Committee of the American Psychological Association, Division of Psychological Hypnosis. I have replaced the Committee's use of the term hypnosis with that of hypnotherapy to further distance it from any perception that it is at all like the kind of hypnosis used for entertainment or used by those who have no license).

Additionally, consider the following:

"Hypnosis can help adult patients control other forms of pain, relieve gastrointestinal problems, stimulate weight loss, clear up skin problems, and accelerate the healing of bone fractures and surgical wounds." - Consumer Reports, January 2005

A growing body of research supports the ancient practice as an effective tool in the treatment of a variety of problems, from anxiety to chronic pain." - Newsweek, September 2004

"Hypnosis is not mind control. It's a naturally occurring state of concentration; it's actually a means of enhancing your control over both your mind and your body." - Dr. David Spiegel, Assoc. Chair of Psychiatry Sanford University School of Medicine, - Jane Pauley Show, September 2004

American Health Magazine reported these findings from a comparison study.

Psychoanalysis: Creates a 38% recovery after 600 sessions
Behavior Therapy: Creates a 72% recovery after 22 sessions
Hypnosis: Creates a 93% recovery after 6 sessions

On September 13, 1958, the Council on Mental Health of the American Medical Association recommended: "In view of our increasing knowledge, hypnosis instruction be included in the curricula of medical schools and post-graduate training centers." With your signature below, you certify that you understand what clinical hypnosis is and what it is not. You understand that it is not a kind of therapy, like psychotherapy, but rather it is a procedure that facilitates understanding, enhances motivation, and helps to facilitate other forms of therapy. It is not meant to diagnose nor be a means of treatment of physical or mental disorders that have been diagnosed or have yet to be diagnosed.

_____ (Print name)

_____ (Your signature)

_____ (Today's date)