

# Hypnotism research paper



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When most hear the word hypnotism, they think of a mysterious, suited figure waving a pocket watch back and forth in front of someone's eyes.

Most picture this ominous man guiding his subject into a semi-sleep, zombie-like state with absolute ease. Once hypnotized, the subject effortlessly moves and speaks and acts as if they are on an invisible leash guided by the hypnotist. We believe the subject is compelled to obey any command, no matter how strange or unreasonable, muttering, " Yes, master. " This popular representation is what is shown of hypnotism in movies and television, but in fact, it is so much different. People have been pondering and arguing over hypnosis for more than 200 years, but science has yet to fully explain how it actually happens. Hypnosis involves the subconscious mind taking over and can be used for shows and entertainment or psychiatric hypnotherapy. Present day hypnotist, Cody Horton has been referred to as " The World's Most Spell-Binding Stage Hypnotist.

" She is the author of several motivating, self-help books, and self-hypnotism audio books that can help you solve just about any problem you may have. On Hypnotism," a book written by the famous hypnotist, James Braid in 1860, helps to explain the origin of hypnotherapy and correct many of the historical misconceptions that have developed regarding the actual meaning of hypnotism. Our understanding of hypnosis has enormously advanced in the past century, but the phenomenon is still considered a mystery. Figuring out how hypnotism works is just a small piece of a much larger puzzle, how the human mind works. Scientists are unlikely to arrive at a definitive explanation of the mind in the foreseeable future, so it is a good bet that hypnosis will remain very close to a mystery. Psychiatrists do understand the

general characteristics of hypnosis, and they even have a model as to how to work. We can easily see what a person does when they are under hypnosis, but it is not clear as to why they do it or what makes them do it.

Hypnotism is considered a trance state where the subject is easily suggested into doing things, relaxed, and has an extremely heightened imagination. It is often compared to daydreaming or “ the feeling of losing yourself in a book or a movie. ” (Harris, 2010) As you watch a movie you become engrossed in the plot, and most worries about your job, family, etc. fade away, until all you're thinking about is what's up on the screen. Though it is sometimes compared to sleeping, that is not valid because the subject is alert the entire time and fully conscious. You become focused intently on one object, thought, or action and nearly exclude every other thought or stimuli around you. Milton Erickson, the premier hypnotism expert of the 20th century, contended that people hypnotize themselves on a daily basis.

He believed that in our everyday trance of a daydream or movie, an imaginary world becomes incredibly real to us, and can even create real fear or happiness. Hypnotherapy: an Exploratory Casebook, 8-11) Being in this sort of self-trance fully engages our emotions and can cause us to react to things differently than we normally would. In conventional hypnosis, the hypnotist causes their thoughts and suggestions to become the subject's own ideas and emotions. In this “ reality,” if the hypnotist suggests that your tongue has swollen up to twice its size, you'll feel a sensation in your mouth and you may have trouble talking. If the hypnotist suggests that you are afraid, you may feel nervous and even begin to sweat. When the hypnotist tells you to do something, you'll probably embrace the idea completely because

in this state the subject is highly suggestible. But the entire time, you are aware that it's all imaginary and that is why hypnotists cannot get their subjects to do anything they don't want to do.

In this mental state, people feel uninhibited and extremely relaxed, which causes them to tune out all worries and doubts that normally keep people in check. (Harris, 2010) Hypnosis directly involves a person's subconscious mind. When you're awake, your conscious mind works to evaluate a lot of your thoughts, make decisions and put certain ideas into action. It also processes new information and relays it to the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind takes care of all the things you do automatically, like breathing. The subconscious mind processes the physical information your body receives and actually lets you solve problems, create conversation and put together plans and ideas. But when you're asleep, the conscious mind gets out of the way, and your subconscious has free reign.

Psychiatrists theorize that the deep relaxation and focusing exercises of hypnotism work to calm and subdue the conscious mind so that it takes a less active role in your thinking process. In this state, you're still aware of what's going on, but your conscious mind takes a backseat to your subconscious mind. Effectively, this allows you and the hypnotist to work directly with the subconscious. It provides an especially convincing explanation for the playfulness and uninhibitedness of hypnotic subjects. The conscious mind is the main inhibitive component in your makeup -- it's in charge of putting on the brakes -- while the subconscious mind is the seat of imagination and impulse. When your subconscious mind is in control, you

feel much freer and may be more creative. Your conscious mind doesn't have to filter through everything.

(Harris, 2010) Hypnotized people do such bizarre things so willingly, this theory holds, because the conscious mind is not filtering and relaying the information they take in. Of course, your subconscious mind does have a conscience, a survival instinct and its own ideas, so there are a lot of things it won't agree to. The subconscious regulates your bodily sensations, such as taste, touch and sight, as well as your emotional feelings. When the access door is open, and the hypnotist can speak to your subconscious directly, he or she can trigger all these feelings, so you experience the taste of a chocolate milkshake, the satisfaction of contentment and any number of other feelings. Additionally, the subconscious is the storehouse for all your memories. While under hypnosis, subjects may be able to access past events that they have completely forgotten. Psychiatrists may use hypnotism to bring up these memories so that a related personal problem can finally be resolved.

Since the subject's mind is in such a suggestible state, it is also possible to create false memories. For this reason, psychiatrists must be extremely careful when exploring a hypnotic subject's past. In numerous studies, researchers have compared the physical "body signs" of hypnotic subjects with those of unhypnotized people. In most of these studies, the researchers found no significant physical change associated with the trance state of hypnosis. The subject's heart rate and respiration may slow down, but this is due to the relaxation involved in the hypnotism process, not the hypnotic state itself. There does seem to be changed activity in the brain, however.

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The most notable data comes from electroencephalographs (EEGs), measurements of the electrical activity of the brain.

Extensive EEG research has demonstrated that brains produce different brain waves, rhythms of electrical voltage, depending on their mental state. Deep sleep has a different rhythm than dreaming, for example, and full alertness has a different rhythm than relaxation. In some studies, EEGs from subjects under hypnosis showed a boost in the lower frequency waves associated with dreaming and sleep, and a drop in the higher frequency waves associated with full wakefulness. Brain-wave information is not a definitive indicator of how the mind is operating, but this pattern does fit the hypothesis that the conscious mind backs off during hypnosis and the subconscious mind takes a more active role. Researchers have also studied patterns in the brain's cerebral cortex that occur during hypnosis. In these studies, hypnotic subjects showed reduced activity in the left hemisphere of the cerebral cortex, while activity in the right hemisphere often increased. Neurologists believe that the left hemisphere of the cortex is the logical control center of the brain; it operates on deduction, reasoning and convention.

The right hemisphere, in contrast, controls imagination and creativity. A decrease in left-hemisphere activity fits with the hypothesis that hypnosis subdues the conscious mind's inhibitory influence. Conversely, an increase in right-brain activity supports the idea that the creative, impulsive subconscious mind takes the reins. This is by no means conclusive evidence, but it does lend credence to the idea that hypnotism opens up the subconscious mind. Whether or not hypnosis is actually a physiological

phenomenon, millions of people do practice hypnotism regularly, and millions of subjects report that it has worked on them. Hypnotists' methods vary, but they all depend on a few basic prerequisites. The subject must want to be hypnotized, they must believe he or she can be hypnotized, and the subject must eventually feel comfortable and relaxed.

Depending on the person's mental state and personality, the entire hypnotism process can take anywhere from a few minutes to more than a half hour. Hypnotists and hypnotism proponents see the peculiar mental state as a powerful tool with a wide range of applications. In the hypnotism shows of Las Vegas, as well as the traveling hypnotism demonstrations on the college circuit, hypnotism is used primarily for entertainment purposes. It's an amazing experience watching somebody turn ordinary people, perhaps your friends or family, into outrageous performers. The power of suggestion and imagination, and the lowering of inhibition, does make for a fantastic show. But these demonstrations only scratch the surface of what hypnotism can do -- all the suggestions are intentionally frivolous, to ensure that nobody gets hurt. The hypnotist uses his or her access to the unconscious mind only to play with the subject.

More involved hypnotism uses this access to affect long-term changes in the subject. The most widespread example of this hypnotic behavioral modification is habit-control hypnotic treatment. In this application, a hypnotist focuses on one particular habit that is embedded in your unconscious (smoking or overeating, for example). With the "control panel" to your mind open, the hypnotist may be able to reprogram your subconscious to reverse the behavior. Some hypnotists do this by connecting

a negative response with the bad habit. For example, the hypnotist might suggest to your subconscious that smoking will cause nausea. If this association is programmed effectively, you will feel sick every time you think about smoking a cigarette.

Alternatively, the hypnotist may build up your willpower, suggesting to your subconscious that you don't need cigarettes, and you don't want them. Habit-control hypnotism is commonly practiced on a mass scale, in day-long seminars held in hotel suites, or through audio tapes or CDs. Since the treatment is not specifically tailored to each subject, and the treatment is rapid, these programs are often ineffective. Even if the treatment does yield positive results in the short term, there's a good chance that the subject will relapse eventually. A related application of hypnotism is psychiatric hypnotherapy. In a therapy session, a psychiatrist may hypnotize his or her subject in order to work with deep, entrenched personal problems. The therapy may take the form of breaking negative patterns of behavior, as with mass habit-control programs.

This can be particularly effective in addressing phobias, unreasonable fears of particular objects or situations. Another form of psychiatric hypnotherapy involves bringing underlying psychiatric problems up to the conscious level. Accessing fears, memories and repressed emotions can help to clarify difficult issues and bring resolution to persistent problems. Hypnotists may also tap dormant memories to aid in law enforcement. In this practice, called forensic hypnotism, investigators access a subject's deep, repressed memories of a past crime to help identify a suspect or fill in details of the case. Since hypnotists may lead subjects to form false memories, this



technique is still very controversial in the forensics world. Another controversial form of hypnotism is medical hypnotherapy.

Doctors and spiritual leaders all over the world claim that hypnotic suggestion can ease pain and even cure illness in some patients. The underlying idea behind this is that the mind and body are inextricably intertwined. When you suggest to the subconscious that the body does not feel pain, or that the body is free of disease, the subconscious may actually bring about the change. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence to support this idea. Using only hypnotic suggestion as an anesthetic, thousands of women have made it through childbirth with minimal pain and discomfort. Countless cancer patients swear by hypnosis, claiming that it helps to manage the pain of chemotherapy, and some former patients credit their recovery to hypnotherapy. The success of hypnotherapy is undeniable, but many doctors argue that the hypnotic trance is not actually responsible for the positive results.

In the general sense, this phenomenon is known as the placebo effect. In numerous studies, people who were given ordinary sugar pills behaved and felt differently only because they thought they should. It's clear that the mind can influence all aspects of the physical body, so it makes sense that a firmly held belief can reduce pain or even help treat a disease. But in the end, this explanation of hypnosis amounts to pretty much the same thing as the trance theory. When you absolutely convince somebody that you've brought about a change in their subconscious, they register this information as a fact. Like any fact, this information will take root in the subconscious mind. So, even if the hypnotic state is nothing more than a figment of the

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subject's imagination, hypnotic suggestions can still reform their deeply held beliefs.

The end result is the same! Modern hypnotist and self help guru, Cody Horton, received her certification in Clinical Hypnotherapy from the National Board of Hypnotherapy and Hypnotic Anesthesiology. With special training in entrepreneurship, meditation and the mind/body connection, she has helped tens of thousands of people achieve incredible inner-transformation -- making the way for wealth, wisdom and success! Cody is known worldwide as one of the most powerful and captivating hypnotists in the world. Her shows have been described as an hilariously entertaining, and intellectually stimulating presentation that starts from the minute volunteers go up on stage. Not only does she put on a humorous and spell binding show, she has written numerous books and has many audio books out. Cody aims to change the public's views of hypnotism because she knows that mostly everyone thinks that they will not be in control while going under. Cody has said, " Allow me to dispel a myth: the belief that while in a state of hypnosis, you are under the complete control of the hypnotist. The truth of the matter is that if any one suggestion feels uncomfortable for you, it will be immediately rejected by your subconscious mind.

" She wants her subjects to feel comfortable and sincerely wants to help people. Her one-on-one hypnotherapy sessions can help with weight management to self confidence to quitting a bad habit and even phobias. Hypnotists such as Cody Horton have helped people all over the world with their problems and have entertained countless crowds during their

unbelievable performances. (Prepare Yourself to Be Mystified, 2010)Works

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