

# Hypnosis research paper

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## **Hypnosis**

One's perception of hypnosis often includes the idea of people charmed to do things while under a state of trance which can be either comedic or appalling in nature. This perception is often fueled by media titles with themes like sci-fi, fantasy, and even horror as these themes would show how hypnosis is done to remove one's free will or bring one into a state wherein he finds himself in his own world while his body performs mechanically.

While these media descriptions of hypnosis is somehow true given hypnosis' definitions, many are left unaware as to the true nature of hypnosis and how beneficial it is to the public in terms of therapy and understanding how the mind works under a trance-like state. Although there are still people who are skeptic with the capacity of hypnosis to put the mind in a trance, hypnosis improve one's state of mind and brain capability, and aid in treatment.

Hypnosis, according to Feldman (2011), pertains to the procedure wherein people undergo a trancelike state, which makes the mind vulnerable to suggestions and at the same time, improve his mind and body's capabilities.

From the ancient civilizations up to the present, the very essence of what hypnosis is has not varied. In the ancient civilizations, hypnosis, as stated by Jain (2006), was used for cults, early religions, and societies for rituals, faith-healing sessions and even prayer as the trance-like state it brings enables people to be 'cured'. As the years progressed, several respected figures in psychology had developed their own brand of hypnosis and coined the various procedures hypnosis can be done at the present time. Experts have seen that hypnosis expounds on the power of thought while under a trance. The term itself, 'hypnosis', came from the Greek word, hypnos, meaning

sleep; coined by James Braid (1795-1860) in the 1840s. Braid had been regarded as the ‘Father of Hypnosis’ as his study revealed that patients or people tend to become mesmerized through eye fixation, enabling them to become hypnotized only to the item brought before them. His discovery also enabled other psychologists to understand the concept of thought and suggestion as he reported cases wherein patients acted differently under hypnosis, implying that there is more to one’s mind than meets the eye. Aside from Braid, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) had also contributed in the development of modern hypnosis as he used it to treat hysteria, a neurological disorder that causes people to feel excessive fear that would entail losing self-control. Charcot, and his school “Salpetriere School”, observed that people with hysteria or those with mental disorders and disease are susceptible to hypnotism. Sigmund Freud had also divulged into hypnosis, but he was unable to apply it successfully to his principles, making others believe that if he had managed to apply hypnosis in his own findings, there is a high possibility that psychiatrists and psychologists today would be using hypnosis in a more precise level. Another known figure in the history of hypnosis is Milton Erickson (1959), who introduced an induction method that would result into a fairly effective trance-like state that would easily be influenced by very slow and subtle suggestions given. Erickson’s technique had been a revolutionary discovery in hypnosis development as suggestions formerly used in old hypnosis techniques were often commanding and fast. Erickson had also pioneered the importance of ideomotor and ideophysiologic signaling in hypnosis, which entails a person attributing an image or thought to an automatic reaction .

With psychologists showing the capacity of hypnosis to target the mind and ‘suggest’ activities to the person, people are weary over the process especially as to how the media portrays hypnosis. According to the study done by Capafons, et al (2008), people who do not know friends or acquaintances who have undergone hypnosis sessions often hold misconceptions over its nature, procedure and effect. Some argue that hypnosis would alter one’s consciousness, disabling them from recognizing suggestions and eliminating chances of consciousness from stopping such trance to occur. Others also argue that hypnosis would only trigger people’s minds to remember horrific events or things that they would not try to remember. Sentiments of patients forgetting what transpired throughout the session is also raised because the person is unaware of his surroundings or of himself throughout the whole process. Hypnosis can also be used to force people to tell the truth regarding themselves or others which they would not usually confess or share. For medical practitioners and some psychologists, they also do not see hypnosis as a viable alternative for treating ailments or improving a person’s attitude towards treatment. Culture and traditions have also influenced how people see hypnosis as some cultures and traditions see hypnosis as witchcraft and magic .

While these misconceptions dissuade the public from seeing the real essence of hypnosis, for those who have undergone the process, they state that hypnosis actually improves one’s state of mind and body, allowing them to be fully aware of their surroundings and at the same time, enable them to relax to bring out their potential. There are at least four steps on how hypnosis can be done. First, a person is brought into a quiet and comfortable

location by the hypnotist. After the person is comfortable with the environment he is in, the hypnotist explains the entire procedure and describe how the person would feel like while under trance. Once the person has understood, the hypnotist would then direct the person to concentrate on one image or object, while helping the person relax his body. The image may be something tranquil or visible in the room. Once the patient has achieved his relax state, the hypnotist would then start making suggestions for the person to interpret. While many would perceive this stage as the time wherein the person is vulnerable to the hypnotist, the person actually is aware of the entire situation .

Contrary to popular belief, according to Schacter, et al (2011), not all people are vulnerable to hypnosis as it would depend on the person's traits and capacities. Some may find themselves mildly hypnotize while others would be entirely affected. Judgment is seen by experts as the greatest indicator on whether or not a person can be susceptible to hypnosis. It is discovered that people with active imaginations and those who can concentrate on one activity are more vulnerable to hypnosis. As for the impact of hypnosis to patients, psychologists have argued that many tend to speculate that those they see on stage and media hypnotism stunts are the actual effects of hypnosis. The extravagant claims like performing extraordinary stunts and the capacity of the person to regress their ages while on trance disables people from understanding the actual impacts of hypnosis. Psychologists argue that people under hypnosis would only do superhuman capacities because of social pressure and the suggestion from the hypnotist to fake it. As for age regression while hypnotized, there are reported cases that those

patients requested to act like a child or an adult while in the trance do not truly regress to these ways of thinking after the trance is done.

While the claims of hypnosis' effects is still debatable even in the present generation, psychologists have discovered that hypnosis is capable of reducing pain while on trance or hypnotic analgesia. In a 1977 study, volunteers placed under hypnosis while being induced with pain report that they did not feel anything while on trance. In another study done in 1994, people under trance had also been able to control their impulses when it comes to pain through surgeries and dental procedures, making experts see it as a viable alternative to anesthesia. Since hypnosis is in a different state of consciousness, the person does not easily recognize pain as his control is more focused under hypnosis due to the fact that both his sensory and emotional components attached to pain is redirected. Kalat (2013) had also pointed out that hypnosis can aid in both acute and chronic pains, redirecting a patient's concentration from his pain towards the suggestion implied by the hypnotist. Since the patient does not concern himself over the pain he has experienced, it would allow medicine and therapy effective and accelerate healing. One's state of mind and his brain activity also benefits from the use of hypnosis. When it comes to the state of mind of the patient, hypnosis, through posthypnotic suggestion, can help patients overcome their phobia, improve their self-esteem and aid patients to reduce stress.

Suggestions may be done by hypnotists to break the stress or worries felt by patients as it would enable patients to channel these negative thoughts into energy that would enable the patient to relax and be positive of his capacity and self-worth . Finally, hypnosis improves brain activity as the suggestion

directed to the patient causes the brain's anterior cingulate cortex to regulate their impulses. A study done in 1998 through a PET scan showed that patients under hypnosis show signs that their anterior cingulate cortex registered the voice they heard the recorded voice of the hypnotist, implying that the suggestion is real .

Although people still possess misconceptions and believe the extraordinary claims attached to hypnosis, it is undeniable that its use, benefit and presence opens more possibilities on how people can understand their mind's capacity. Throughout history, hypnosis has proven how the mind can be stimulated through suggestions and images. While many still see the possibilities of hypnosis to remove one's control over their actions, studies have proven that patients undergoing hypnosis retains their active control over their actions despite the trance is visible. Hypnosis, when used, also helps in treatment as it enables the mind to redirect the impulse to feel pain to other things, as well as improve one's state of mind and brain capacity. In this end, it is crucial to remain open-minded when it comes to hypnosis as one's mind holds endless possibilities that can be unlocked through hypnosis.

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