

Describe the physical
and psychological
aspects of hypnosis



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In order to get a clear understanding of what hypnosis is we will first look at the history of hypnosis and the different concepts which have emerged over the years from as early as the 1700's to modern day. We will start from the grandfather of hypnosis, Franz Anton Mesmer (1766) continuing onto others such as Abbe Faria (1814), Freud (1873).

Once having looked at the history of hypnosis we will go onto looking at the physical and psychological aspects of hypnosis giving reference to Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta waves, the four different brain waves indicating an individual's mental state, which brain wave comes into play during hypnosis and its relevance. It will also be discussed the condition the physical body needs to be in for the best results of hypnosis and the role of relaxation in getting the body to the right physical condition.

The physical and psychological aspects of hypnosis will be looked at in reference to, the different brain waves the mind journeys between and the brain waves, which come into play during a state of hypnosis. There will also be reference to the discovery made by Edmond Jacobson (1929) on the effects of muscle contraction between his patients and the benefits of relaxation leading to the role of relaxation in hypnotherapy today and the use of Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique.

It will be shown that there is no clear cut answer for what hypnosis is? But in order for hypnosis to take place it is important that the physical and psychological state of an individual is in the right state to give access to the subconscious and relaxation does have a big role in helping the client to achieve this state.

What is Hypnosis?

Throughout the centuries there have been many concepts of hypnosis dating all the way back to the 1700's. In order to come to an accurate understanding of what hypnosis is, it is important to have an understanding of its history first. The earliest notion in the 1700's came from Franz Anton Mesmer (1766) who eventually became known as the grandfather of hypnosis and came to develop the theory of animal magnetism. Mesmer (1766) believed that every human being had a cosmic fluid flowing through their body and ill health was the result of the disturbance of this flow in the body. Mesmer (1766) believed that his own body was what he called 'animal type' of magnet and that he could use his own body to block a patient's flow of fluid helping them to heal from their illness. His belief of the power of his own body came after he witnessed an exorcism by a priest. Unlike the priest, he did not believe that people were possessed. His theory of animal magnetism stemmed from his belief that the metal crucifix the priest used for his exorcisms magnetised people. It was Marquis de Puysegur (1784) who was brave enough to reject Mesmer's theories on magnetic fluid and came to soon realise that he was able to communicate with people in hypnosis asking questions and getting replies from his patients.

The next development, which we see in hypnosis and mimics our understanding of hypnosis today came from the 1800's by Abbe Faria (1814). He believed that Mesmer's success of healing through his theory of animal magnetism was in fact due to suggestions put forward by the practitioner.

As time progressed more people began investing an interest in hypnosis and applying them to different situations. Dr James Esdaile (1845) began using hypnosis in his operations in India but it was Dr John Elliotson (1838) who bravely went on to demonstrate the use of hypnosis to British Medicine where his theories were not welcomed and were instead rejected.

While Sigmund Freud (1873) invested a brief interest in hypnosis where he came to believe that humans have powerful hidden mental processes and at a later stage it was Pierre Janet's discovery of the benefits of relaxation on the hypnosis process which brought about the application of relaxation to hypnotherapy.

Throughout the years there have been many more concepts of hypnosis and many people who have tried to define hypnosis: a form of sleep (Liebeault, Vogt, etc), activation of the memory system (Spiegel), a goal-directed, and role-playing fantasy (White, Spanos, Sarbin and Coe).

In today's society there are still people who have different definitions of what hypnosis is and many have been influenced by the media. There are still some who are sceptical about hypnosis, some who relate hypnosis to what is seen on TV. It is widely believed that the use of a pocket watch comes into play when hypnotising another and then putting thoughts into individuals minds causing them to do actions such as dance like a chicken or bark like a dog. There are those however who are not fooled by what they see on TV and have an understanding that hypnosis is an induced mental state which allows you to access your subconscious. This theory seems to be the closest to defining hypnosis however, with so many thoughts, theories and research

throughout the years it is not surprising that you are perhaps left wondering if there is an easy answer to What Hypnosis is? Throughout the years many have struggled in defining hypnosis. Everyone has a different way of defining hypnosis. Perhaps no one really knows what hypnosis is.

The Physical and Psychological aspects of Hypnosis

In modern society hypnosis is practised with the intentions of opening up the subconscious and placing suggestions within to help the subconscious to relearn something already learnt such as smoking, the need for it or perhaps a fear of say dogs due to an incident much earlier on in life. But before starting to place these suggestions the physical and psychological side of an individual must first be positioned in the right place. There needs to be preparation to allow the mind and the body to be open to the experience and to the suggestions. Being aware of these factors and having the right setting will help get the best result from the therapy. It is also important for the client to be open to the experience and the therapy. This will help in preventing a client from conforming to what they believe the therapist may be expecting from them.

There are four different brain wave activity stages, which we go through every day at different points in the day and during different activities through the day. First is Beta, being the fastest wave of the four going through 15-40 cycles during activities such as teaching or during conversations, second comes Alpha going between 9-14 cycles which comes into play after an activity when you sit down to take a rest, thirdly there is Theta which goes between 4-8 cycles and appears during dreaming or medium to deep hypnosis and lastly we have Delta going between 2-4

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cycles, the slowest wave, which is present in the deepest state of rest and deep hypnosis. Delta waves are produced in the subconscious.

When someone is under hypnosis dependant on how deep the hypnosis is individuals may fluctuate from Theta to Delta. Hypnosis therapy is usually conducted to help access the subconscious so as to help it relearn certain habits, fears as explained earlier but in order to do this it is vital to enhance the mental concentration of the client.

The steps taken during hypnosis help with this, in heightening the concentration of the subconscious but in order to produce this result from the mind it is important to first ensure that the body is fully relaxed to help clear the mind of all thoughts.

We have roughly about 400 voluntary skeletal muscles in our body and they either contract or they don't. When they are not contracted this is when the body is fully relaxed and when they are completely contracted this is when there is a lot of tension build up in the body. A doctor named Edmond Jacobson (1929) noticed the effects of muscle contraction among his patients and found that when his patients were fully relaxed and their muscle were not contracting then this improved the physical, mental and emotional state of the patient. This led to the Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique (PMR).

The Role of Relaxation in Hypnotherapy

Prior to beginning the therapeutic nature of the session and embedding suggestions into the individual it is important to ensure that the client is fully

relaxed and in a state of stillness. This can be done through the Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) Technique.

In today's society everything is rather rushed, everyone is always busy and worrying about one thing or another. The stress of life today builds up tension in the body and can cause ill health. Stress can be the cause of heart attacks, migraines and headaches, which can sometimes be the result of a build up of tension in the head. In order to achieve the goals desired during hypnotherapy by the client it is important for the client to first release all tension in their mind and body and to empty their mind of any stress related thoughts so as to heighten their concentration and allow access to their subconscious.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation can be done through a screed, which is more or less a script to help guide the hypnosis session into getting the client into the right state of mind physically and psychologically. A Screed can be altered and adapted to the individual client. This technique can cause a number of different feelings and experiences within the client but varies from one to the next. Some may feel very light and may even feel like they are floating, some may see colours or feel a rush of warmth pass through the body.

The screed will help to release the tension progressively down their body and then in order to heighten the concentration of the mind and open the subconscious normal practice will show the therapist guide the client to finding a special place to them either in a memory or in their imagination.

Relaxation has many benefits physically, cognitively and emotionally and helps to release tension, encourage warm comfort and relieve tiredness with the use of positive suggestions being put forward by the therapist progressively down the body from head to toe.

Conclusion

We have looked at and explored many different views and ideas put forward by various psychologists on what hypnosis is. However, no two people have the same definition. The work and notions put forward by people like Abbe Faria (1814) has been built from the ideas of previous psychologist in the field of hypnosis such as Mesmer (1766) the grandfather of hypnosis but they have expanded on it with their own concepts and viewpoints. We can however see the progression in hypnosis gradually through the 1700s to modern society where many have tried to explain what hypnosis is.

We have also looked at and explored the physical and psychological aspects of hypnosis through brain ways and briefly touched on the work of Edmond Jacobson (1929) as well as the role of relaxation in hypnotherapy using the Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) technique and its benefits.

To conclude, there is no one single way of defining what hypnosis is. Many will give you different definitions, which are dependent on their opinions, education and culture but the premises hypnosis is practiced in is passed on the notion that hypnosis is a therapy, which helps open up the mind, giving access to the subconscious allowing the mind to relearn things such as habits or to deal with fears that may have developed through childhood experience.

In order for the subconscious to be open to these suggestions the clients physical and psychological state must first be in the right frame to allow for the experience, to heighten the concentration of the mind and for the therapy to be effective. Having seen the different brain waves and cycles the mind journeys between we have established that Theta and Delta are the two waves which come into play when someone is under hypnosis. Which one is present during hypnosis depends on how deep the hypnosis is. The physical and psychological state of an individual can be achieved by using the Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique (PMR).