

What is hypnosis essay



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What is hypnosis? Hypnosis has amazing benefits and can enhance people lives in many ways. In modern times, it is unfortunate that Hypnosis is seen as a method of entertaining people instead of it being respected for its true aspects. In reality, hypnosis bears little resemblance to these stereotyped images, as it can improve focus and general well-being mentally and physically. It is a cooperative interaction in which the participant responds to the suggestions of the hypnotist. It can also be described as a sleep like trance state or better expressed as a relaxed creative mind, focused by the individual.

Despite stories about people being hypnotised out of their consent hypnosis requires voluntary participation on the part of the patient. Furthermore, a hypnotist cannot make a person do actions that are against their morals or values. In the beginning as far back as Egyptian times Hypnosis was used and in theory not much has changed in that it is a phenomenon that is complex. Hypnosis was first discovered as far back as Ancient Egyptian. There are Egyptian paintings drawn on papyrus in which it is believed that people are performing Hypnosis.

However, to base an historic foundation, these theories are said to be weak. (Hidden depths, Robin Waterfield pg 43). To the contrary, there are lots of helpful hypnosis formulas and techniques in Egyptian medical text. Ebers Papyrus is the first written record of hypnosis techniques. Ebers Papyrus was written in 1500 BC, however, this is said to have been copied from earlier texts dating as far back as 3400 BC ([www. wickapedia. com](http://www.wickapedia.com)). So, this is a much more solid foundation to believe that Hypnosis has been used in a medical sense for centuries.

Moving forward to the early decades of the nineteenth century Franz Anton Mesmer was known as the “ Grandfather of hypnosis” he was born in 1734 and died in 1815. Mesmer believed that he could cure people of sickness and disease without medicine or surgery, and he had a magnetic force which produced a flow of magnetic fluids and could then produce a cure. This was called animal magnetism. “ Mesmer found that he could ‘ magnetize’ other substances – paper, glass water etc. – so that all these things could act just as effectively as magnets themselves as conductors of a magnetic fluid and as instruments of healing. (Hidden Depths, Robin Waterfield. Pg 71).

His belief was that illness was caused by a blockage of magnetic fluid, to cure the illness he had to free the blockage. James Braid (1795 – 1860) was known as the “ Father of hypnosis” and is a major figure in the history of hypnosis, he moved it into the nature of trance, taking it from the shadows of mesmerism and coining the word hypnosis. Hypnosis itself is derived from the Greek mythology where hypno is the personification of sleep. Braid was thought to be the first “ hypnotherapist” as he used hypnotism to successfully treat a wide variety of conditions.

Being the first person to use the terms, hypnotism, hypnotise and hypnotist he moved hypnosis into the modern sense referring it to a psycho – physiological theory rather than the supernatural themes of magnets. In the Twenty first century we understand that hypnosis is not magical and it is highly respected for its true aspects in the medical profession. Looking at hypnosis in the physical sense we can now understand the development of electrical activity in the brain. This is due to the development of science.

The method is called electroencephalography and it was first recorded in 1929. This is known as electrical activity in the brain known as brain waves. There are four types of brain waves, the highest frequency is known as Beta Waves and this would describe a person in active activity and this is around 15 – 40 cycles per second. In modern life we produce these waves in abundance. Alpha Waves are slower than beta waves to around 9 – 14 cycles per second. This is present after we have done an activity or when we are in our creative mind, relaxing and calm.

This would not be present if we were angry or upset. Theta Waves are present during meditation and day dreaming. These are around 4 to 8 cycles per second. Theta waves are associated with a much deeper calmness and serenity. This is where a person can access their intuition and their gateway to learning. Interestingly, while driving along a route that we know very well we can go into Theta waves, if suddenly another car came towards us in a dangerous way we would suddenly go straight into Beta Waves so that we can drive safely.

The reason we do this, is when we are engaging in activity we know so well we can mentally disengage and indulge in creativity. The last frequency which is the slowest is around 1 – 4 and this called Delta Waves. This state is complete rest and detached awareness. It can be described as a very deep hypnotic state and sleep. We can never go down to zero as this would mean we are brain dead and as we fall asleep we go from beta, alpha, theta waves and then delta. When we wake up we do the same in reverse as we cannot jump from one to the other.

This is the state that allows us to access our subconscious mind therefore, we can perform hypnosis successfully. The psychological aspects of hypnotherapy are associated with people's behaviour. Two of the most recognised psychologists are Stanley Milgram and Solomon Asch. Solomon Asch constructed a series of studies of social influence known as conformity and obedience in psychological terms, conformity refers to an individual's tendency to follow the unspoken rules or behaviours of the social group to which he or she belongs ([www. psychology. about. com](http://www.psychology.about.com)).

In order to demonstrate the power of conformity, In 1951 Asch conducted the study of a ' vision test' he asked a true participant to take part in a simple line judging test with 7 other people. These people were known as stooges as they were aware of the experiment. They were shown a line segment and then asked to choose the matching line from a group of three other segments of different lengths. At first, the confederates answered the questions correctly, but eventually began providing incorrect answers. The real participant would become anxious and would start agreeing with the rest of the group in order to conform.

However, when asked for the answers privately they would give the correct answer and the incorrect answer would be rare. Stanley Milgram shocked the world with his experiments by uncovering some disturbing truths about human nature. Milgram wanted to know how far humans will go when an authority figure orders them to hurt another human being. This was designed to test obedience to authority. Though his experiments he found out that just ordinary people were coerced into carrying out the most cruel and gruesome acts.

Milgram experiment took place in 1961 and he developed an intimidating shock generator, with shock levels starting at 30 volts and increasing in 15 volt increments all the way up to 450 volts. The “teacher” was ordered to deliver a shock to the “learner” every time they got a question wrong. The “Learners” were very good actors and were not really receiving the electric shock. The “teachers” on the other hand were not aware of this and the majority when instructed to give the shock they would, right until the end this presumed 450 volts.

Milgram’s study had a profound effect on the understanding human nature and discovered people are much more obedient than you might imagine. The power of hypnosis on the physical body and the mind is outstanding. One of its many powers is that when used for psychological aspects it can reduce cravings and addictive patterns. It is used in the treatment of many patients suffering from ailments of stomach pain to quite severe illnesses including cancer, arthritis, strokes and multiple sclerosis. Hypnosis is used to be able to cope with the pain by producing anesthesia in the body.

It had been known that patients can anesthetise their own mouths before a dental procedure or used on patients before surgery to allow the surgery to begin. Hypnosis is a physical as well as mental state of relaxation, an altered state of consciousness into which individuals allow themselves to enter so that desired, beneficial suggestions may be given directly to the subconscious mind. (www.medicalhypnotherapy.co.uk). Another physical aspect is after inducing hypnosis the hypnotist can literally bring on full rigidity of all the muscle groups in the body. The body can then become as still as wood.

This is known as catalepsy. The psychological processes (Hypnotherapy – a practical handbook pg 7) it is described, the positive thoughts and feelings arouse the left hemisphere of the brain this activates the parasympathic system which allows the muscles to relax and the body slows down, this provide a natural state of being, allowing the body to go into a serene inner emotional climate, Improving the mood and the quality of emotions. Furthermore, allowing a much more positive feeling of well being, this giving the person an effective defence of falling ill.

Furthermore, it can also improves physical endurance, many athletes use hypnosis to improve their focus and enhance their performance. The role of relaxation in hypnotherapy is the two components of physical and psychological must be addressed together. Hypnosis is very similar to relaxation and many professionals agree that the role of relaxation in hypnotherapy is to be a very deep state of relaxation where your mind in more focused and the connection between your emotions, thoughts and behaviours are clearer.

Hypnosis provides a very different relaxation experience than sleep and most literature supports the belief that hypnosis is more beneficial and useful relaxation than sleep. When we are asleep we move around a lot and are not in a conscious mind, however, when we are in hypnosis or self hypnosis we are actually experiencing a much deeper form of relaxation. Experiencing the deep relaxation that hypnosis provides makes a huge difference to people's lives.

The reason relaxation is such an important part of hypnotherapy is that it allows our body to go into a trance like state it is that the unconscious mind can process suggestions and can make changes to goals. Teaching yourself hypnosis can enter you into a very relaxed state in the privacy of your own home. Not only will this turn off your stress system and remove anxiety, but it will also strengthen your parasympathetic stress response.

When you strengthen it means that when you are in a stressful situation your body will be able to deal with it much more effectively. Using PMR

Progressive Muscle relaxation this is a technique used to tense and relax the muscle groups and this initiates the parasympathetic nervous system. There are two principle methods of deep muscle relaxation; these methods are known as Jacobson and the Benson method.

In summary, Hypnosis is more about making someone so relaxed that the therapist is able to speak directly to your subconscious mind, which will have a positive effect on your mind when you are fully conscious. Describing the psychological and physical aspects of hypnosis though the ages have not been an easy ride! However, we can now understand that both of these aspects play a part in hypnosis in the here and now. The role of relaxation in Hypnotherapy is a crucial part (though PMR) in being able to access the subconscious mind.