

# Hypnosis 101

The Hypnosis Network upholds the highest professional standards for our products, quality and therapists. We carefully monitor our product list and therapist requirements against the standards of [The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis \(ASCH\)](#), the largest U.S. organization for health and mental health care professionals using clinical hypnosis.

Founded in 1957, ASCH's members are psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, medical doctors, master's level nurses and dentists. Their efforts to support research and set standards for ethical practices of hypnotherapy are respected world-wide, and The Hypnosis Network is proud to meet (and in some cases exceed) their standards.

The following information on hypnosis is taken from the [ASCH's website](#).

## Definition of Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a state of inner absorption, concentration and focused attention. It is like using a magnifying glass to focus the rays of the sun and make them more powerful. Similarly, when our minds are concentrated and focused, we are able to use our minds more powerfully. Because hypnosis allows people to use more of their potential, learning self-hypnosis is the ultimate act of self-control.

Everyone has experienced a trance many times, but we don't usually call it hypnosis. All of us have been so absorbed in thought – while reading a book, or riding the bus to work – that we fail to notice what is happening around us. While we were zoned out, another level of consciousness which we refer to as our unconscious mind, took over. These are very focused states of attention similar to hypnosis.

Ruth Dart, assistant to Dr. Eric Greenleaf who founded the Milton H. Erickson Institute of the Bay Area, has this to say about what hypnosis feels like:

At the end of my first hypnosis session, my hypnotherapist said, "When we're through here you'll be . . . you'll be yourself!" This was prophetic. I would describe all of my subsequent experiences with hypnosis as remembering or discovering parts of myself that were characteristic, and following their lead.

Therapeutic hypnosis has not involved suppressing or discarding any part of me. It has not meant using will power to force behavior changes. Rather, it is a way to allow change to arise inevitably, even joyfully, out of the unique person who has always been present. It is a tool for utilizing what is already there.

Clinical hypnotists do essentially three things with hypnosis. They encourage the use of imagination. Mental imagery is very powerful, especially in a focused state of attention. The mind seems capable of using imagery, even if it is only symbolic, to assist us in bringing about the things we are imagining. For example, a patient with ulcerative colitis may be asked to imagine what her distressed colon looks like. If she imagines it as being

like a tunnel, with very red, inflamed walls that are rough in texture, the patient may be encouraged in hypnosis (and in self-hypnosis) to imagine this image changing to a healthy one.

Another basic hypnotic method is to present ideas or suggestions to the patient. In a state of concentrated attention, ideas and suggestions that are compatible with what the patient wants seem to have a more powerful impact on the mind.

Finally, hypnosis may be used for unconscious exploration, to better understand underlying motivations or identify whether past events or experiences are associated with causing a problem. Hypnosis avoids the critical censor of the conscious mind, which often defeats what we know to be in our best interests.

Some individuals seem to have higher native hypnotic talent and capacity that may allow them to benefit more readily from hypnosis. It is important to keep in mind that hypnosis is like any other therapeutic modality: it is of major benefit to some patients with some problems, and it is helpful with many other patients, but individual responses vary.

### **Myths About Hypnosis**

People often fear that being hypnotized will make them lose control, surrender their will, and result in their being dominated, but a hypnotic state is not the same thing as gullibility or weakness. Many people base their assumptions about hypnotism on stage acts but fail to take into account that stage hypnotists screen their volunteers to select those who are cooperative, with possible exhibitionist tendencies, as well as responsive to hypnosis. Stage acts help create a myth about hypnosis which discourages people from seeking legitimate hypnotherapy.

Another myth about hypnosis is that people lose consciousness and have amnesia. A small percentage of subjects, who go into very deep levels of trance will fit this stereotype and have spontaneous amnesia. The majority of people remember everything that occurs in hypnosis. This is beneficial, because most of what we want to accomplish in hypnosis may be done in a medium-depth trance, where people tend to remember everything.

In hypnosis, the patient is not under the control of the hypnotist. Hypnosis is not something imposed on people, but something they do for themselves. A hypnotist simply serves as a facilitator to guide them.

### **When Will Hypnosis Be Beneficial?**

We believe that hypnosis will be optimally effective when the patient is highly motivated to overcome a problem and when the hypnotherapist is well trained in both hypnosis and in general considerations relating to the treatment of the particular problem. Some individuals seem to have higher native hypnotic talent and capacity that may allow them to benefit more readily from hypnosis.

It is important to keep in mind that hypnosis is like any other therapeutic modality: It can offer major benefits to some patients with some problems, and it is helpful with many other patients. But it can fail, just like any other clinical method. For this reason, we emphasize that we are not "hypnotists," but health-care professionals who use hypnosis along with other tools of our professions.

### **Selecting a Qualified Hypnotherapist**

As in choosing any health care professional, care should be exercised in selecting a hypnotherapist. Hypnosis and the use of hypnotic therapies are not regulated in most states, and hypnotherapists are, in most cases, not state licensed in hypnosis. Lay hypnotists are people who are trained in hypnosis but lack medical, psychological, dental or other professional health care training. A lay hypnotist may be certified and claim to have received 200 or more hours of training, but licensed health care professionals typically have seven to nine years of university coursework, plus additional supervised training in internship and residency programs. Their hypnosis training is in addition to their medical, psychological, dental or social work training. Careful questioning can help you avoid a lay hypnotist who may engage in fraudulent or unethical practices.

Ask if the person is licensed (not certified) in their field by the state. If they are not legitimately licensed, they probably lack the education required for licensure. Find out what their degree is in. If it is in hypnosis or hypnotherapy, rather than a state-recognized health care profession, the person is a lay hypnotist. Check for membership in the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis or the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (which are the only nationally recognized organizations for licensed health care professionals using hypnosis) as well as membership in the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Dental Association (ADA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), etc. Contact a state or local component section of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis to see if the person is a reputable member. If you have doubts about their qualifications, keep looking.

### **Uses of Hypnosis**

#### LEGITIMATE USES OF HYPNOSIS

Below is a list of legitimate uses of hypnosis as defined by the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH):

Allergies

Anxiety & stress management

Asthma

Bed-wetting

Bowel syndrome

Burns

Colitis

Concentration difficulties

Crohn's disease

Dentistry (relaxation, fear elimination, prevention of gagging and nausea, control of saliva and bleeding,

behavior modification)

Depression

Dermatologic disorders (eczema, herpes, neurodermatitis, pruritus [itching], psoriasis, warts)

Hemophilia

High blood pressure (hypertension)

Learning disorders

Nausea & vomiting

Obesity & weight control

Pain (back pain, cancer pain, dental anesthesia, headaches and migraines, arthritis or rheumatism)

Raynaud's disease

Sexual dysfunctions

Sleep disorders

Smoking cessation

Sports & athletic performance

Surgery/anesthesiology

Test anxiety

Ulcers

#### SOME NON-LEGITIMATE USES

Alcoholism

Drug addiction

Growing taller

Getting lucky

Magical seduction powers

Penis growth

Psychic powers

Remote influence

#### QUESTIONABLE USES

Breast growth (There have been instances where hypnosis has worked with breast growth, but we are not confident in the research.)