

Applied Hypnosis

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The science of the mind has matured over the past several centuries since the study of altered mental states began with Franz Mesmer in the late 18th century. Back then the term used was mesmerism because Dr. Mesmer had discovered that many ailments could be healed using the power of the mind. Because his techniques were so radical, students of this science coined the term “hypnosis.” James Braid delineated the science from the mysticism in his published article in 1843, and as a result, our study of the human experience began.

Today, 160 years later, we have not only come to understand much about the hidden aspects of the mind, but we have mastered our lives through this understanding. Although modern psychology branches out in numerous fields, the study of hypnosis remains on the forefront of human engineering. While social psychologists study the masses of people, abnormal psychologists study everything wrong with people, and cognitive psychologists study brain functions, hypnosis encompasses every branch of psychology and provides a model in which we can understand the inner workings of every psychological field. This article addresses the modern applications of hypnosis and refutes many of the common misconceptions regarding hypnosis.

While hypnosis is a general term and experts in the field understand what a large umbrella the term hypnosis provides, its applications are nearly endless. Hypnotism is effective for any type of change, rehearsal, or self advancement. In areas where it cannot fully account for change, it certainly can assist in any form of change.

Humans tend to remain comfortable with what they know and are familiar with. Some people even have an opposite feeling of anxiety when types of changes in their environment are introduced. Nearly all people experience an anxiety in some form or another. For example a person who is adept at rapid climate changes might not be able to handle a major career upheaval. A person who can function highly in an ever changing business environment may not be able to handle emotions in a social setting. Every man, woman, and child has inherent strengths and weaknesses. Some of these stem from genetics and most stem from their environment.

What makes people so unique is their uncanny ability to adapt and respond to environmental stimuli and stressors. Where people go wrong is in making generalized conclusions about themselves as a result of past experiences. There isn't a person in modern society who hasn't heard a person explaining their behaviors, thoughts, or beliefs by using ideas conveyed to them in early childhood. Cognitive and Developmental psychologists have confirmed early childhood comprises the over majority of a persons abilities. Where we have gone wrong up until now is in allowing what happened in early development to dictate our future.

Thus we have modern psychotherapy, a multi-billion dollar industry geared to discover more and more social illnesses. The current DSM-IV has grown very thick and the American Psychiatric Association is poised to release yet a fifth version soon. The more incidences of human behavior that can be classified as a disorder the more disorders there are for professionals to bill clients and the more disorders there are for pharmaceutical companies to treat with prescription drugs. The result tends to be a never ending circle of disorders and treatments contributing to the ever so expensive health care industry.

While most people argue this mechanism has produced a higher quality of living, there remain issues of growing health concerns. Not only do many civilians lack adequate health coverage, but even when professionals are available they are often equipped with treatments that never solve underlying health concerns. The field of psychotherapy is the perfect example of an industry purporting to treat ailments while simultaneously contributing to the overall size of civilians requiring treatment. While all the advancements in psychological studies have expanded our understanding of the human existence, this expanded understanding has not penetrated the core of psychological treatments. In their defense is the fact that there is still much to learn about people.

What separates hypnosis from typical treatments is that hypnosis takes the desired result and works back from there. Traditional therapy works the other way, dissecting the problem until the desired result is well forgotten. Often this leaves the client worse off even after 10 or more years of therapy.

Not discounting the benefits we've enjoyed from modern science, hypnosis provides a whole new realm of treatment. Hypnosis is a powerful agent for change, as demonstrated time and time again. Hypnosis has effectively treated mental disorders and physical ailments while it's also been used for less than medical purposes. Hypnosis has been shown to effectively treat depression, anxiety, headaches, cancer, Parkinson's, vision, hearing, memory, and just about anything a person could want.

Hypnosis is effective with altering how the mind and body works. The only known limitation of hypnosis is that it cannot instill skill sets. A person cannot become an F-1 racing champion through hypnosis if they've never learned how to drive a car. However, a good hypnotist can lead a person into the appropriate hypnotic states that will facilitate the person becoming an international race car champion. A good hypnotist could even instill an entire background for driving a vehicle that would come alive once the person gets behind the wheel for the first time. Therefore, a good hypnotist could pre-install a skill set that would emerge only as the person physically took the steps to trigger the subconscious programming.

It remains today that hypnosis is at the forefront in instilling mental mechanisms that can heal or assert themselves in real life. Hypnosis is an excellent facilitator of expanding human potential because hypnosis can alter the underlying reasons for behaviors, thoughts, or beliefs formed during impressionable years. No longer do people have to allow themselves to be limited to what was learned within the first five years of life.

The reason hypnosis is so effective is because good hypnosis uses existing mechanisms of people. The same structure that allows people to function is the same structure used in hypnosis. A good hypnotist is able to capitalize on a person's existing mechanisms. While traditional medicine looks to change the mechanism itself, hypnotism only changes the content of the mechanisms.

There is a prevailing concern among the masses that hypnosis tinkers with delicate inner personal well being. While hypnosis does deal with the inner mind, the consensus among hypnotists is that the hypnotist cannot cause a person to act against their will. Unless a person is willing to alter their "will", the hypnotist cannot cause a person to act against their own will. However, because people are in and out of various states of hypnosis all the time, people are continually influenced by their environment and over time a person's will can be influenced by their environment.

Social psychologists have confirmed mass hypnosis. Although the terms aren't usually framed as hypnosis related, the concepts are identical. Social structures influence aggregate behaviors while a person's environment hypnotizes them into thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that otherwise wouldn't have happened. This tells us that while the prevailing consensus is that hypnosis cannot make a person act against their will, in truth everyday hypnosis frames the will in the first place. Therefore, an extremely gifted hypnotist actually could get a person to act however they want. It should be noted though that those techniques are not typically taught. The hypnotists who do understand how this can be achieved are under hypnosis themselves called the law. There are strict laws governing hypnotherapy in order to protect clients, and to this day hypnosis remains one of the safest services available.

In conclusion, hypnosis works because it uses a mechanism already in place. People already think, feel, and act in response to hypnosis everyday, either intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, hypnosis will remain at the forefront of human evolution because it is through hypnosis that people become who they are in the first place. It seems this natural phenomenon is only limited by the boundaries of our own imagination.

Suggested Readings

Heller, Steven. *There's No Such Thing as Hypnosis*. New Falcon Publications. 1987

Elman, Dave. *Hypnotherapy*. Westwood Publishing Company. 1984

Kraft, Tom; Kraft, David. Creating a virtual reality in hypnosis *Contemporary Hypnosis* Vol 21 (2); (2004) 79-85

Gravitz, Melvin A. The Historical Role of Hypnosis in the Theoretical Origins of Transference. *International Journal of Clinical & Experimental Hypnosis* Vol 52(2) (Apr 2004): 113-131