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"Helping others help themselves in mind, body, spirit, and emotion."

## Understanding Hypnosis

### *What It Is and How It Works*

This brochure is presented for the information of the general public to discuss the applications of hypnosis for dealing with such matters as habit control, stress, excessive eating, smoking, fears, motivation, self-confidence, concentration, learning enhancement, sleeplessness, goal-setting, relationships and other areas which lead to unhappiness, dysfunction or difficulty in achieving personal goals.

Hypnosis and its uses in the practice of hypnotism is rapidly emerging as a highly effective science in solving the problems of people. It can be very beneficial in many cases and is also a valuable adjunct in psychotherapy and psychiatry. Yet it is probably the lowest risk procedure available from the standpoint of contraindications.

Yet few complementary procedures are less understood, or more plagued by misconceptions and misunderstandings. Before considering what hypnosis is, perhaps it would be appropriate to establish what it is not!

Most hypnotists, on interviewing a new client/patient, will ask the client what he or she thinks hypnosis is. Replies range from sleep, to unconsciousness, to surrender of mental powers and control, to magic, to voodoo. All are in error.

Hypnosis cannot be sleep. In most cases the subject is fully aware of communication and is able to respond on request either verbally or by signal. Nor is unconsciousness involved. A subject asked to make a specific movement will comply with the request unless it is objectionable, in which case there will be a refusal.

There is no surrender of mind or control. A person who does not want to be hypnotized cannot be hypnotized or be induced to do or say anything which violates person standards of behavior or integrity. There is neither magic nor voodoo involved.

Any hypnotists can explain the actions or behaviors seen in stage, film or television shows, where the subject seems to follow directions mindlessly.

Actually, hypnosis is better described than defined. It is often considered an altered state of consciousness featuring "selective perception", a process in which the client (who is in control) chooses to see only what is relevant to his/her task, blocking out everything else. Hypnosis involves guided concentration. The guidance, however, may be provided by a qualified practitioner, or in the case of self-hypnosis, by the individual client. Self-hypnosis, which can be taught by a properly certified hypnotist and learned by virtually any client, can provide the recipient with a lifetime of benefit.

### WHERE DID HYPNOTISM ORIGINATE?

The basics of hypnotism go back to ancient times. Those who have read Jean Auel's memorable book, "Clan Of The Cave Bear", will remember accounts of magic, healings, inherited memories and revelations performed or created by the "Mogurs" and "medicine women" of prehistoric clans. Hypnotism. In the early

centuries of our own land, the medicine men of Indian tribes performed seeming miracles. Hypnotism. Wider, non-secret usage began in the 1700's in several forms under different names.

There were periods of progress and periods of stagnation in the development of modern hypnotism. Medical interest and acceptance expanded following World War II when the use of hypnotherapy proved especially helpful to surviving battlefield casualties suffering from shock, injury, battle fatigue and various psychological disorders. As understanding increased hypnotism began to be recognized as an important adjunct to counseling psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, and also medical fields including neurology, obstetrics, emergency medicine, burn therapy and others. Hypnosis is finding increasing usage in dentistry and other areas where pain control is important. All humans (and possibly several animals) have two distinct minds—the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind is vastly larger and more powerful than the conscious mind, yet it is the least understood and used by mankind. Actually, the great “unconscious” mind has two fundamental elements, the subconscious and the superconscious, the former the storehouse of memory, the latter dealing with the spiritual.

### DOES IT WORK?

The subconscious mind receives and retains, neither accepting nor rejecting, all the messages we receive from our backgrounds, whether genetic, social, religious or experiential, plus all the conflicts (little or big) that enter our lives daily. When for whatever reason the conscious mind (which deals with everyday living, logic, reason, etc.) becomes overloaded, the subconscious prepares us for what is considered appropriate action (usually fight or flight). However the subconscious mind does not analyze, as does the conscious mind, but accepts all messages in the literal sense.

In essence, hypnosis is a means of communication between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. Many human problems, habits, stresses, anxieties, attitudes or apparent deficiencies can be traced to interpretations by the subconscious mind which, when understood by the conscious mind, can reduce or resolve specific problems.

The subconscious is also the seat of all memory. Traumatic events can be buried or suppressed in the subconscious. A major benefit of hypnosis is its ability to uncover and bring into the light of understanding the buried information or experience which may be the cause of a troublesome problem.

### WHAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE

Your first visit with your hypnotist will, primarily, be exploratory. You will learn about hypnotism and become comfortable with it. Your hypnotist will discuss your interests and your desires to determine if hypnosis can accomplish what you want to achieve.

If you both feel that it will be worthwhile to proceed, your hypnotists may give you some small tests to determine your type of suggestibility, your ability to relax, your skills at visualizing—procedures which help your hypnotist adapt to you as an individual so as to design programming personalized for you which will be acceptable to your subconscious, retained and acted upon in a manner leading to full achievement of your goals.



Member

The National Guild of Hypnotists was founded in 1951 and is the oldest and largest organization of its kind. Professional membership in the NGH signifies that an individual possesses specific qualifications, agrees to abide by a strict code of ethics, and will pursue continuing-education studies for annual recertification. Medical or psychological referrals may be required for certain conditions.

This brochure was researched by the NGH educational faculty and is distributed as a public information service by its members.