

Hypnosis

From the Greek. Sleep

Hypnosis is not a new treatment or therapy by any means.

The idea of sleep and hypnosis comes about because there is a similarity of appearance in the person being treated. Something akin to the appearance of some of your students during the post luncheon sessions on a hot summer's day!

When we sleep as in night-time, then the part of us sometimes referred to as a conscious mind, drifts off into another state, where dreaming may occur.

But it should always be remembered that the part of our minds sometimes called the sub-conscious, never sleep. if they did we should cease to exist, since it is that part of us which keeps all our mental and physical systems going.

Even in anaesthesia when undergoing an operation, the sub-conscious mind is alert and on duty.

This aspect may create problems when surgeons are operating. in all professions there are "in" jokes and ways of handling the ups and downs of the work. one supposes that this is true of teachers, in the sense you may all have your patois for children, head teachers and situations which arise on a daily basis whilst doing their work.

So it is with surgeons. yet the sometimes jocular approach to operative procedures which may persist in the operating theatre, and which may be more in place in another form of theatre, can be heard by the body on the table. thus if reference should be made by the staff performing the operation, to the prognosis of the operation, this could affect the outcome quite drastically.

Many people who come to see a hypnotherapist will say something like "Are you going to put me under? "

It is a concept which follows the inevitable connection between stage hypnosis and the therapeutic use of what is a valuable tool.

One could perhaps envisage a surgical procedure being used on a stage for entertainment, with attendant laughter at the state of someone's entrails being displayed!

Of course, surgery does have a fascination, second only to the police for entertainment value – witness the plethora of tv programmes devoted to the police and medicine. someone has said that if they didn't exist before tv, they would have to have been invented.

It would be an unusual person who has never experienced hypnosis.

1. Have you ever driven over a route well-known and regularly used, only to find at the conclusion of a particular journey that a part of the journey such as some traffic lights or a roundabout which must have been negotiated are completely forgotten?

Almost as though the journey did not take place.

This is simply caused through the fact that whilst performing a routine task such as driving, the mind drifts elsewhere, and other thoughts pervade the mind.

This does not mean that the task is performed dangerously.

Indeed, if a situation arose which presented danger to the driver, then the alternate thoughts would be rejected and the present danger would be dealt with without elapsed time causing added problems.

It is possible that whilst teaching a well-remembered and well-practised part of a subject to a calm and receptive class, on a nice warm summer's day, the mind of a teacher could drift off to the anticipated holiday occupation, approaching in a few days time, and whilst adequately delivering the lecture to the class, other memorable thoughts may intrude.

of course, at the conclusion of the lesson, it may well be that the teacher could not absolutely swear that a particular part of the subject was covered, but that it probably was.

As you experienced teachers will appreciate, much the same may be said of certain of your students!

Having said that, you will appreciate that lessons delivered to a person in an hypnotic state may indeed be better remembered. this is a generalisation, since all people are different, and their perceptions, abilities and thought processes vary enormously.

Occasionally, these thoughts, conceived in such a situation, may intrude into life as actual events. this may lead to a confusion of memory whereby one could insist that one had dealt with a particular matter, yet has to concede that it could not be so from available evidence.

These factors form the basis for hypnotherapy.

Hypnosis has been used throughout time by many generations of humans, for many and varied purposes.

Here one may think of shamans, druids, witch doctors, witchcraft and indeed the pointing of the bone in our own time and place.

Yet hypnosis can be described as a normal healthy and natural state of mind, in which change may be accomplished for the benefit of the subject.

A parent in crooning to sleep a child is using hypnosis, just as a whirling dervish is using it.

There is no power in the hands of the practitioner, over the mind of the subject, in the practice of either hypnosis or hypnotherapy.

Most people's experience of hypnosis is the stage hypnotist, who of course uses stage effects to gain a wider degree of incredulity in the audience.

The use of lights, music costume etc., together with a certain amount of expectation in the spectators, leads to a mind set which anticipates the unusual, and expects the amazing.

This of itself is hypnosis. the power of suggestion.

When the hypnotist suggests that 30 or so people come onto the stage, they each know what they are going to be asked to do.

Make a complete fool of themselves in front of others.

Only a certain percentage of the audience will offer themselves, across the spectrum of those who are willing to do this.

Some will be willing to act and be completely silly, and others will be bordering on that feeling.

By experiment and gentle suggestion, the artist will separate about 10 from the original group and send the rest back to their seats. these ten are then ready to do almost anything at his suggestion, and the show goes on with many aspects of hypnosis being displayed.

Each of the subjects will be willing to perform sometimes outrageous tasks and antics, believing certain suggestions of the hypnotist.

Sometimes the task will be an immediate reaction to a stimulus, at others it will be a delayed reaction to something the hypnotist does or says, even after the subject has apparently woken up.

However, should the hypnotist suggest something to the individual which would be an anathema to that person, it will not be done, and the person will recover their normal senses.

For example, whilst a person may be willing to perform as a dog, to take their clothing off and appear naked to the audience would wake the person. unless they were in the habit of doing such a thing in public.

It is of course, vital for the hypnotist to erase in the minds of the subjects, all vestiges of the performance and their beliefs in it, before they regain full normality.

Hence, as you can visualise, if suggestions can be made to a person, whilst they are in a receptive state of mind to receive such suggestions, much therapeutic work may be carried out which will have long-term benefits to the individual.

Political parties, whilst slugging it out in the public arena, use the power of suggestion to a greater or lesser extent, as do advertisers.

Many people watch adverts each evening on the television, and express a view that "that didn't make me want to buy it".

Or conversely, "What the hell is that advert all about?"

The sole object of such advertising is to make a suggestion to the viewer, such that when a trigger of similar appearance or sound is made in the actual buying situation, then a sale may result.

It should be remembered just how fast our thought processes work.

Certain pre requisites exist to the successful and safe use of the methodology in a clinical setting.

1. The subject must be a willing subject.

This means that the person must want to make changes of some sort to their lives, for some foreseeable and tangible benefit.

You may notice a certain similarity in your professional endeavour, in the sense that if a student has absolutely no wish to be at school, or to study and learn, then your task is made impossible. before you can impart any knowledge to that mind, your job must surely be to formulate some degree of willingness into that student's mind.

2. The subject must understand that there is very little danger in the procedures whilst offered and delivered by a trained person.

There is no aspect of control or power over the subject, which may be used to assert the will of the practitioner. this is engendered by a trust developed by the two parties to the therapy. Another similarity to your profession.

3. Some form of agreement must be reached about the methodology and purpose of the hypnotherapy.

Both the practitioner and the subject must fully understand and accept the objectives and outcomes expected from the work being discussed.

The suggestions to be made will be developed in conjoint discussions and agreement between the two.

Yet another analogous reference to teaching could be made.

Given these basic agreements, the work may continue for as long as both parties agree, and much benefit may accrue to the subject by the use of implanted suggestion to effect change in the mind.

For example, in denying the use of substance smoking; to reduce the amount of food intake; to convert depressive thinking into more positive veins of thought and so on.

It is probably true, and is certainly accepted by force of logic, that anyone could use hypnotherapy.

Whether a person may use hypnotherapy is entirely dependent upon the factors to which i have already alluded.

It is vital to dispose of the idea that in some way, hypnosis is analgaesia. such statements as "Am I going to be put under?" will give a clue as to this belief's existence in the subject.

However, it is perfectly true that anaesthesia may be introduced without the necessity for drugs and analgaesics, by the use of hypnosis.

Teeth may be pulled and quite serious surgical operations may be performed in such a manner.

There was a British army surgeon in India during the eighteen-fifties, who produced evidence of over 3,000 operations performed without anasthaesia. not only were the operations performed without pain, but he showed that the mortality rate in such procedures fell from around a half, to about 5 percent, and that recovery times were faster and more successful.

If you wonder why his work did not proceed to greater things, it is worth noting that when he reported his findings to the Royal Academy of Physicians in London, he heard his work denounced and latterly forgotten, since it was judged to be blasphemous and contrary to the will of God. "God intended for humans to feel pain"

Several caesarian sections, dental and other sugical procedures have been carried out under hypnosis in our present time.

The problem in such areas is, that whilst it is drug-free, the degree of trance state to remove the sensation of such pain during the state of trance is required to be deep, and this may take a long time to achieve in individuals, whereas an anaesthetic drug works instantly, and without the acceptance and co-operation of the subject.

The practicality of the removal of pain may be seen often in someone with a slight discomfort who forgets it when something else takes over their temporary interest.

The safety of hypnosis may be judged from the comments of a russian scientist who worked with Pavlov, and who used hypnosis over a period of some fifty years, treating well over 50,000 cases, who is quoted as saying: "We have never observed any harmful influences on a patient which could be ascribed to the method of hypnotherapeutic suggestion therapy."

A more practical proof of the dangers of hypnosis and hypnotherapy comes from insurance actuaries, who rate a hypnotherapists chances of causing danger at around \$300 a year premium for \$10 million dollars risk, yet place 14,000 dollars on a GP's work for the similar cover.

So in effect, a hypnotherapist shares with a teacher the skills of teaching a methodology to a patient or client, so that the subject may use it for their benefit in some way.

It may be just to relax, or maybe to deal with some mental or physical disability which plagues them.

An interesting use of hypnotherapy is in the matter of past lives therapy.

You will realise that using hypnosis a person may access parts of their minds normally hidden by life's forgetfulness. events and experiences may be allowed to be re-thought and in some cases usefully re-organised and placed into perspective.

However, there are occasions when an examination of a person's experiences in the past of their own life does nothing or little to remove trauma and its effects.

In these cases it may be useful to delve into what may be termed past lives.

This of course, leads into areas of belief which may cut across a long-held and/or cultural belief structure, concerning the after life or whatever. Nevertheless, it does appear that evidence exists that there may be a possibility that we have lived previous lives.

In philosophical terms, such evidence has to be judged by its base and its authenticity.

I have personally witnessed evidence of such cases, and whilst I remain somewhat in doubt, the weight of evidence grows and adds credibility to the hypotheses.

I have been told of the following case by the practitioner who conducted it. A person of impeccable background and great experience. For the sake of brevity, I shall stick to the important features.

It concerns a lady who suffered from feelings of severe discomfort and pains which were inexplicable to orthodox medicine.

She was treated in the 1990's and had lived all her life in NSW Australia, had never travelled outside the state.

Using hypnosis, she was able to retrace her memory to what she ultimately regarded as a previous life, lived not in Australia but in England of the eighteenth century.

It must be understood that she was not led to look for a previous life but was regressed logically by the therapist in a precise guided and professional manner.

It transpired that she was able to describe a village in south western England, its name and location, and an event in which she had cut herself as a teenager, and had been assisted in healing the wound by a villager, who treated her in his home.

Whilst there, she noticed the sandstone flags on the floor of his cottage, and recognised them as being withdrawn from a local derelict abbey.

She berated the man for having desecrated holy buildings, and she was able to draw the markings on the stone whilst in the state of hypnosis.

Cutting a long story somewhat shorter, it was decided to test the allusion, and a team was assembled of researcher, film unit, and a local university in the UK as independent observer.

The whole team flew with the subject to the UK, and after an acclimatisation lasting a few days, she was taken to 10 different locations, being told that one of them was the one she had described.

You should be aware that the name of the village she had described did not appear on any current map, and the researchers had to go back to maps of the early 1800's to identify the village.

As she eventually came to the site which the researchers knew was the actual one described, she recognised the place, and described things which only a person living at the earlier time could have known.

The existence of footpaths and a waterfall, currently unknown, she described. She described buildings long gone but which appeared on ancient maps of the locality.

When she identified the building in which the neighbour had treated her for the injury which in fact cut short her life, it was seen to be used as a chook pen, and had been for what looked like centuries. the layers of dirt and filth on the floor of the building were accretions of many a long year.

After some financial haggling, the farmer who owned the shack, agreed to clear the floor, and lo and behold, there were the carvings in the floor just as described and drawn by the subject earlier in New South Wales.

Now it is entirely possible that the worthy and respectable people who carried out these experiments could have been duped. But the weight of probability, gathered with other similar examples unrelated to this one, allow a shadow of belief to emerge that hypnosis may be a very powerful tool indeed.

The feelings engendered by the state of hypnosis may be likened to the state of daydreaming.

Sometimes it can be a short episode, at others it may last a long time.

Professional hypnotherapists have at their command several techniques which may offer help and assistance in cases where other interventions appear to fail.

It should be mentioned that it is a therapy not to be tinkered with, but when applied by a trained person has great potential for health and healing.

Using a Member of a recognised authority like the Australian Society of Clinical Hypnotherapists, gives confidence that all checks, education and ongoing delivery and individual professional progression are being followed and ethically adhered to.

The difficulty in trying to gain a wider use of the delivery of hypnotherapy and similar therapies, is that it is so hard to research properly and produce "evidence-based" studies.

Quite apart from the sheer cost of trials, using a pharmaceutical, and double-blind trials, where one tablet or draught is exactly similar to every other one, a trial can demonstrate an outcome clearly and with good evidence.

Hypnotherapy relies on an interaction between one human and another, and each session may differ. There are many variables which may tend to consign hypnosis and hypnotherapy to the sidelines, until more reasonable thought is applied to medical interventions.

We can live in hope.