



Ethical Considerations in Hypnosis: Ensuring Safe and Responsible Practice

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DESCRIPTION

Hypnosis, though often shrouded in misconceptions and theatrical portrayals, is a legitimate and effective tool in the field of psychology. Its potential to influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in a therapeutic context is backed by a substantial body of research and real-world applications. As understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind hypnosis deepens, its role in psychology is likely to expand, offering new avenues for addressing a myriad of psychological challenges and improving overall well-being. Hypnosis, a term that often conjures images of a person swinging a pendulum or saying phrases like You are getting sleepy. However, beyond the popular portrayals, hypnosis is a fascinating and legitimate subject within the realm of psychology. It involves inducing a state of focused attention and increased suggestibility in an individual. In this article, we will delve into the concept of hypnosis, its history, and the psychological mechanisms at play, its applications, and the ongoing research in this field. Hypnosis, also referred to as hypnotherapy or hypnotic suggestion, is a state of heightened focus and concentration, often induced through relaxation techniques. During this state, an individual is more open to suggestions that can influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Contrary to popular belief, hypnosis does not involve losing control or being in a deep sleep-like state; instead, it heightens suggestibility while maintaining awareness and control. The roots of hypnosis can be traced back to ancient times, with mentions of similar practices in ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures. However, modern hypnosis, as we understand it today, emerged in the late 18th century through the work of Franz Mesmer, an Austrian physician. Mesmer introduced the idea of animal magnetism, suggesting that a magnetic fluid in the body could be manipulated to cure various ailments. Psychologists often describe hypnosis as a state of focused attention and height-

ened suggestibility. The brain undergoes changes in activity and connectivity during this state. Studies using neuroimaging techniques like functional magnetic resonance imaging have shown altered patterns of brain activity, particularly in the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex, suggesting a shift in cognitive control and awareness. In a hypnotic state, the mind becomes more receptive to suggestions, and the individual may experience alterations in perceptions, sensations, thoughts, and behaviours. This heightened suggestibility can be utilized for therapeutic purposes, including managing pain, overcoming phobias, improving habits, and addressing psychological issues. Hypnosis has demonstrated significant efficacy in managing chronic pain conditions. It helps individuals alter their perception of pain and develop coping mechanisms, reducing their reliance on pain medications. In the realm of addiction, hypnosis has shown promise in aiding smoking cessation and addressing other substance abuse issues. By targeting the subconscious mind, hypnotherapy helps individuals overcome cravings and develop a strong resolve to quit. Hypnosis can induce a deep state of relaxation, making it a valuable tool in managing anxiety and stress. By accessing the subconscious mind, individuals can reframe negative thought patterns and achieve a greater sense of calm. Hypnotherapy can be beneficial for individuals dealing with phobias or traumatic experiences. It allows them to confront and reprocess these fears in a safe and controlled environment, often leading to a reduction in the severity of phobic responses.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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