

THE HEALING POWER OF HYPNOTHERAPY

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*“And then the day came, when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to Blossom”
Anais Nin*

Hypnotherapy is a subject that arouses both a lot of interest as well as a lot of caution. Let's look at some aspects of hypnotherapy as a medium of therapy.

Myths and truths

Many myths abound around hypnotherapy. Stage hypnosis and movies do not do a lot to dispel that. A common set of myths is the perception of a person who is in a deep coma- like or sleep state who is easily able to be influenced or even manipulated into doing things that they may not want to or to having false memories or thoughts suggested or implanted ie that of being controlled by someone else.

The reality is that hypnosis, despite it having enormous potential for healing the mind and the body is really a very ordinary and natural process. It makes use of the fact that we are able to be in different states of consciousness. When you sit in the classroom making plans for the weekend and daydreaming about the details of this, while at the same time you are writing down the notes from the teacher, you are actually in a trance state. You are functioning on two levels of consciousness. The difference is that with hypnotherapy you make a conscious choice to enter into this trance state to promote self healing.

A hypnotic trance is an altered state of consciousness in which there is increased relaxation but at the same time increased mental alertness, enabling you to use therapeutic interventions and suggestions.

You do not lose touch with reality during hypnotherapy and nobody can make you act in a way that is beyond your beliefs or morals. Stage hypnosis is entertainment. People from the audience are willing to go along with being hypnotized as they are curious and also comfortable that this involves fun.

Goals of hypnotherapy

However, hypnotherapy has completely different goals and methods.

Generally it involves a therapeutic relationship, like any other therapy, in which the client and the therapist work on commonly agreed upon goals, be it relief of certain symptoms, changing behaviours or habits, dealing with addictions, managing fears or phobias, improving self esteem, stress management or working through an emotional difficulty or trauma. Hypnotherapy is also used for a variety of other reasons ie pain control (eg in childbirth or chronic conditions), dealing with autoimmune disorders (e.g. cancer,) and recovery from surgery. For medical conditions, the holistic premise of hypnotherapy is that there is a link between the mind and the body, between emotions and symptoms.

Most therapists use simple methods that can also be taught to their clients to practice for relaxation, improved sleep and reinforcing the therapeutic sessions.

Ethics

There should always be some discussion and shared understanding as to why this may be the preferred way of working with your particular problem, an explanation of what hypnotherapy involves and time to ask questions. There are also ethics involved and all psychologists working with hypnotherapy are registered with the Health Professionals Council of South Africa.

Who can benefit

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Nearly everyone can be hypnotized. Statistics differ but most people i.e. 75-90% are able to be facilitated to go into a trance state. It is not possible for someone to put you into a trance state against your will. In fact all hypnosis is self hypnosis with the therapist being a facilitator to guiding you into the trance state.

However, as with any other form of therapy, motivation to be helped is important to the final outcome. A web search into hypnotherapy websites can further add to the knowledge of how it is used and what it can be useful for.

There are some conditions or situations for which hypnosis is not recommended. It is up to the therapist to assess whether you are suitable or not. Since it is fairly simple to go into a hypnotic trance, it is important that when you are in a trance state that you work with people who are discerning and qualified to work responsibly and competently with you.