



NHS Fife Department of Psychology

Introducing Hypnosis



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You've probably been in a daydreamy state very similar to hypnosis many times every day of your life. Can you recall how sometimes as you wake up in the morning it's as though you remain half asleep, and thoughts and fantasies just seem to drift through your head, until you say to yourself "I've got to get up !", and reality breaks back into your mind. Or I wonder whether you have ever been so absorbed in a film or a book that the outside world seemed to fade away...you knew it was there, and if an emergency had cropped up you would have responded to it...but it was easier just to let your mind and your imagination become really deeply involved and your awareness of the outside world grow less and less... and you got so involved in the film or book that it seemed to become almost real...Or maybe you've been driving the car on a familiar journey and been so involved in your thoughts, or listening to the radio or music, that you were barely conscious that you were driving the car...people sometimes say "it was as if the car had driven itself, or that "my mind was miles away"... so that you when you arrived at your destination you could not remember anything of the journey.

And yet at the same time you had been driving safely, changing gear and stopping at red lights, without any conscious memory of having done so.

Hypnosis is a safe natural process, very similar to daydreaming or being absorbed in a book or film. During hypnosis you will probably feel very physically relaxed and comfortable and most people describe being in hypnosis as a very pleasant experience.

Hypnosis is a way of allowing yourself to act on appropriate suggestions without the usual self doubt and worry getting in the way. You can find that your attention is much more focused so that the therapy or treatment can be more effective.

So you won't be asleep or unconscious, and you will be in control at all times. Should you wish to you will be able to cough or move around in the chair normally without disturbing the hypnosis, and you may come out of hypnosis whenever you wish to do so. You'll probably be aware of what's going on around you, but happier simply to ignore it.

People respond to hypnosis in different ways. You may feel heavy and reluctant to move, or possibly light and floaty. What is important is that hypnosis can be a very powerful way for you to gain control over your thoughts, feelings or emotions. The important point about this is that hypnosis should be used in addition to treatment being carried out by a qualified health care provider.

From Simons *et al* (2007)



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