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|  | **HYPNOSIS**  **What is Hypnosis?**  Few therapeutic procedures are less understood or more plagued by misconceptions and misunderstandings than hypnosis. Before considering what hypnosis is, perhaps it would be appropriate to consider what it is not. Most hypnotherapists, on interviewing a new client/patient, will ask such a 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. In the dictionary, hypnosis is defined as 1: a state that resembles sleep but is induced by a person whose suggestions are readily accepted by the subject 2: any of various conditions that resemble sleep. 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 that violates personal standards of behavior or integrity. There is neither magic nor voodoo involved. We have been much too prone to clump hypnosis in the same category in which we file our ideas on witches, warlocks and wizards.  Hypnosis is a method of therapy that seeks to dramatize thought into a specific action for a definite end. It is better described as an altered state of consciousness featuring selective perception, a process in which the subject (who is in control) chooses to see only what is relevant to his or her task, blocking out everything else. It is a means for acquiring information in areas that are not easily accessible by other methods.  Hypnosis involves guided concentration. The guidance, however, may be provided by a qualified practitioner or in the case of self-hypnosis, by the individual subject.  Every hypnotic trance includes the following elements:  Economy of action and relaxation. A reduction of muscular activity and energy output.  Limb catalepsy: a sort of rigidity in the muscles of the limbs, with the tendency for them to stay in any position in which they are placed. This is sometimes described as the lead pipe effect.  Taking words at their literal meaning.  Narrowing of attention.  Increased suggestibility. It refers to the great ease which action or belief is aroused in the hypnotic subject.  Optional benefits from hypnosis include:  The ability to produce anesthesia in any part of the body. Anesthesia is total or partial loss of sensitivity. Real sensations are to be abolished with the suggestion of the hypnotist.  The ability to make post-hypnotic suggestions to improve sleep, coping, control painful symptoms, etc.  Control of some organic functions such as bleeding, heart rate, etc.  Partial age regression: the experience of going back to relive something in the distant past just as it occurred, with all five senses operating to bring the sound, smell, sight, etc. alive. This memory is frequently one that would not be available to the conscious mind. It has been forgotten, or submerged, because it is painful.  **Where Did Hypnosis Originate?**  A?ny idea passes through three stages before it is accepted. First it is impossible; then it becomes absurd; and finally it becomes so axiomatic that everybody knew it the whole time. At the moment, hypnosis is in its third stage.  In the beginning, it was a religious rite. From the temples of Isis, Nature Goddess of the Nile, Egyptologists have copied numerous engravings shown worshippers in poses unmistakably characteristic of hypnotic trance. Priest-kings of the Two lands used entranced virgins as message bearers from the gods, and as late as Biblical times, the High Priests of Khem utilized mass hypnotism to still the mutterings of the people. A Greek engraving (928 BC) shows Chiron, most renowned physician of the time, placing his pupil Aesculapius under hypnosis. The Delphic Oracle and other contemporary oracles all operated under hypnosis, either self induced or assisted by drugs or volcanic fumes. Paracelsus (1493-1541) a Swiss alchemist and mystic announced that the stars and magnets gave off a subtle force which pervaded space and could influence men. Van Helmont (1577-1644) brought the matter down to earth. He inaugurated the doctrine of animal magnetism by teaching that a magnetic fluid radiates from all men and may be guided by their wills to influence the minds and bodies of others. It was Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), a Viennese physician, who discovered how to produce various cures by stroking people's bodies with magnets. In Paris, he constructed an oak chest filled with some chemical and bits of iron. He called it a baquet, and had people sit around it in a circle. Gone was the presumed influence of the far-away stars. The baquet was the supposed source of this animal magnetism power that Mesmer controlled and directed. Mesmer, togged out as a magician, made various passes and cast piercing glances at his circle, some of whom went into a hypnotic trance. Tremendous interest was aroused. In 1784 a French Royal commission, of which Benjamin Franklin was a member, reported that the box simply was not magnetic. The French government then offered Mesmer 20,000 francs to reveal the secret of his cures. He refused because he did not know himself. The results of the Mesmer episode were twofold. First, a new astounding power had appeared on the scene. Second, Mesmerís refusal caused both him and his power to be branded as a fake. The medical world and the public denounced him.  The second period in the history of hypnosis occurred in England. John Ellioston (1781-1868) was a medical man of big ideas. In 1837 he saw a demonstration of mesmerism by Dupotet and began mesmerizing patients in his hospital. The authorities forbade thus, whereupon Ellioston resigned, but kept experimenting. In 1843, he founded the Ziost, which he said was a journal of cerebral physiology and mesmerism, and their applications to human welfare. By 1849, mesmeric infirmariesî were operating in London and elsewhere. At Exeter, the chief surgeon announced he had mesmerized 1,200 patients and performed 200 painless operations. Even in 1842, W.S. Ward had amputated a leg painlessly, with the patient in a mesmeric trance. The use of mesmerism for an anaesthetic seemed assured. However, in 1844 and American dentist, Well applied nitrous oxide to extract a tooth painlessly. Once again, hypnosis lost out. Its application and effects re highly individual. Though powerful, they vary considerably from one person to another. The reason we do not use hypnosis nowadays for anesthesia is that drugs are more reliable. Although James Esdaile (1800-1859), in India, had performed 300 major operations in painless mesmeric trance, reducing mortality in elephantiasis from 40 to 5 per cent, drugs became more universally preferred.  James Braid (1795-1860) is called the discoverer of hypnosis. He placed the emphasis not on the practitioner who simply releases the hypnotic powers, but on the subject, who has them within himself. No more stars and magnets; just the mesmeric trance which he described as a ìnervous sleep. At fist he thought the hypnotic trance depended upon paralyzing the levator, the muscles of the eyelids, called the fascination method. Then he saw that not visual fixation but fixation of attention is the key. He used the word mono-ideism to describe the hypnotic state, stressed the factor of suggestion, and shifted emphasis from physiological to the psychological aspect. Braid helped create the modern view of hypnotism.  We are today in the third stage of the history of hypnosis, when realization of its power is rapidly growing. Hypnosis still has a long way to go; but it has come a long way. In addition, it parallels the history of science itself. For manís first scientific interest was in that which was farthest away from him, the stars. And the last great science to develop in time concerns that which is closest to him, namely himself, or psychology. Today we know this power comes form within oneself.  From every country, from every period of mans history, we find documents, paintings, sculptures and bas-reliefs attesting to the universality of the practice. In fact, there is adequate reason to believe that hypnosis in some form has appeared spontaneously and almost concurrently wherever human beings have congregated.  **Hypnosis and Stress:**  **How Does Hypnosis Work on Stress?**  Stress is a physical, chemical, or emotional development that causes strains that can lead to physical illness. A preeminent authority on stress, the Canadian physician Hans Selye identified three stages in stress response. In the first stage, alarm, the body recognizes the stress and prepares for action, either fight or escape. Endocrine glands release hormones that increase heartbeat and respiration, elevate blood sugar, increase perspiration, dilate the pupils, and slow the digestion. In the second stage, resistance, the body repairs any damage caused by the alarm reaction. If the stress continues, the body remains alert and cannot repair the damage. As resistance continues, the third stage, exhaustion, sets in, and a stress-related disorder might result. Prolonged exposure to stress depletes the energy supplies of the body and can even lead to death.  Self hypnosis is a powerful weapon to counteract stress and stress related illness. It is one of the fastest and easiest methods of inducing relaxation. Hypnosis and its uses in the practice of hypnotherapy are rapidly emerging as a highly effective science involving the problems of people. It can be very beneficial in many cases as a therapy in itself. It is a valuable adjunct in psychotherapy and psychiatry. Yet, it is possibly the lowest risk procedure available from the standpoint of contraindications  The subconscious mind receives and retains, neither accepting nor rejecting, all the messages we received from our backgrounds, whether genetic, social, religious or experiential, plus all the conflicts (big or small) that enter our lives daily. When for whatever reason the conscious mind (which deals with everyday living, logic, reason, etc.) becomes overloaded, 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.  When in the hypnotic state, the subject merely needs to suggest relaxation, and the body automatically relaxes. After time, the subject will permanently have their levels of stress reduced.  **What is stress?**  Stress, in its precise terms, is a physical, chemical, or emotional development that causes strains that can lead to physical illness, or, anything that stimulates you and increases your level alertness. Most people, when they think of stress, think of a person that is always in a hurry, always are tired, always worry about something, and etc. It is important to know that stress in itself is not necessarily harmful. There are many people that are like this, but stress, generally, is a part of our every day lives; it keeps us moving and alert. In fact, handling stressful situations can increase your confidence and push you to become skilled in new areas. Stress can help you to perform quickly and competently and is often a motivation for creative problem solving. Stress becomes dangerous when it is a constant force in your life. It remains a healthy thing only when it exists in proper balance with relaxation and play. There is so much that is not understood about the mechanics of how stress affects the body. There are definite undeniable physical reactions to stress, which can be harmful to your health. A preeminent authority on stress, the Canadian physician Hans Selye identified three stages in the stress response. In the first stage, alarm, the body recognizes the stress and prepares for action, either to fight or escape. Endocrine glands release hormones that increase heartbeat and respiration, elevate blood sugar, increase perspiration, dilate the pupils, and slow the digestion. In the second stage, resistance, the body repairs any damage caused by the alarm reaction. If the stress continues, however, the body remains alert and cannot repair the damage. As resistance continues, the third stage, exhaustion, sets in, and a stress-related disorder might result. Prolonged exposure to stress depletes the body's energy supplies and can even lead to death.  There is no definite definition of stress. The term has been used to refer to both the effects of stress and to the stressors, which are events or conditions that produce stress. In general, it is thought of as the perception that events or circumstances have exceeded a personís ability to cope. Stress occurs within each individual and is determined by his or her particular characteristics. That is why some people might be paralyzed about a deadline at work, while another might be excited. These stressors can be immediate and short-term, but also can be chronic.  There are some people that area actually addicted to stress, because of being exposed to high levels of it. Since the stress hormones resemble morphine in their chemical structure. Therefore, it is possible for some people to become addicted to their own morphine-like stress hormones. Some people also seek thrills, excitement, stimulation or arousal in high-risk activities, which is another addiction of this hormone. These people find pleasure in crime, violence, or other dangerous things. These characteristics, however, show few characteristics that may be regarded as addictive. They tended to be calmer and they tended to calculate their risk taking.  **Is all stress negative?**  Not all stress is negative. Some degree of stress is necessary for human survival. It is the drive that keeps us going and keeps us awake and remembering things. At certain times, and under certain conditions, stress helps to improve your self-esteem and competence, enhance your personal development, and relieve boredom. You need a certain amount of stress to perform well and to meet new challenges. An example of this would be in the area of athletics. You certainly need stress in order to perform before a race. It speeds up your heart, makes you more focused, as well as gives you an adrenaline rush. However, too little stress can be as detrimental as too much.  How your body responds to stress is another factor. Although the situations a person goes through in a day vary from person to person, people do undergo the same general response to stress. An example of this would be if you were doing something quietly and a high-pitched sound rang. Naturally your heart would start racing and your vision would become more focused. The best known of these responses are the reactions called the flight or fight response. The flight or fight response prepares the body for a high gear to confront a threat, escape form it or try to repair injuries. It is triggered by the nervous system, which stimulates the release of stress hormones. Because of these hormones, the digestive system shuts down, your visual perception and muscle response are enhanced, as well as the increase in your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and breathing and heart rates. If this stressor persists for only a short time, the body adapts and returns to normalcy, but remains alert to the stressor. But if the stressor is longer lasting, the flight or fight response is more useful. It may serve in a non-threatening challenge. However, with the busy world that we live in right now, the flight or fight response may be triggered by many simple things, as in standing in a line, or sitting in a car frustrated at someone in front if you. Your body is in a heightened state, but it has no way to release its pent-up energy. And without alternative methods in relieving stress, the reaction can be physically and psychologically damaging. |

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