

What is clinical hypnosis.

When hypnosis is used for treating a physical or psychological problem, we call the process clinical hypnosis. Clinical hypnosis can be defined as an altered state of awareness, consciousness or perception. Hypnosis is a highly relaxed state in which the patient's conscious and unconscious mind is focused and receptive to therapeutic suggestion.

Almost everyone has experienced one form or another of hypnosis at some time in his or her life. Think of those times when you were driving on an expressway and caught yourself briefly unaware of what you were doing, or when you or your children were so engrossed in a TV program that you were unaware that someone else had entered the room. There is nothing to fear, because hypnosis is a safe procedure when used professionally. The relaxation you will experience will be pleasant and refreshing.

A brief history of hypnosis.

Hypnosis under various names has been used for as long as records have been kept. Suggestive therapy is perhaps the oldest of the therapeutic methods. Modern clinical hypnosis is usually dated from about 1773. The term hypnosis was coined by James Braid, M.D., approximately 1841. The American Medical Association approved of the use of hypnosis as an appropriate therapeutic technique in 1958.

What training is required?

In many states, the use of hypnosis for psychotherapeutic purposes is restricted to physicians, dentists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, counselors, marital/family therapists, and other health professionals licensed in their state. These professionals are permitted to use this technique in conformance with their own individual training and licensing laws.

Professionals using hypnosis should have taken postgraduate (professional) courses in hypnosis, along with appropriate supervision in the uses of this technique. Many professionals receive their training through continuing education workshops. The major professional hypnosis organizations recommend a minimum of 60 clock hours of instruction and appropriate supervised training. Ask your health professional about

How is hypnosis typically used to treat physical or emotional problems?

his or her training if you have any question. The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH) grants certification in clinical hypnosis. Certification provides recognition of the advanced clinician who has met educational qualifications and required training in clinical hypnosis.

For information about specific standards of training or legal issues regarding clinical hypnosis contact ASCH.

Some examples of the utilization of hypnosis, by discipline, are:

- * Mental health - smoking and weight control, phobias, depression, anxiety, sexual problems, alcoholism, speech disorders, age regression therapy, chronic pain, self-esteem/ ego strengthening, memory/ concentration improvement, forensic work with witnesses.

- * Medicine - psychiatry, anesthesia and surgery, psychosomatic diseases, obstetrics/ gynecology, control of bleeding, burn therapy, dermatology, pain control, habit control.

- * Dentistry - fear of dentistry, dental surgery, bruxism, control of bleeding, tongue biting, saliva control, orthodontia, gagging, ease of dentures, general oral hygiene.

Are there physical or emotional conditions which do not lend themselves to hypnotic treatment?

The professional involved should make the decision whether or not hypnotic treatment is appropriate. He or she should take the individual's complete history in order to determine if there are physical or emotional conditions that would indicate if the use of hypnosis would be inappropriate. The professional will probably not utilize hypnosis with individuals who display physical problems, such as severe heart disease or other physical conditions where there is danger of masking an illness. Persons with significant emotional problems, such as borderline psychosis, may also not be appropriate patients for hypnotherapeutic treatment.

How long does hypnotic treatment take?

Length of hypnotic treatment is like most other treatment procedures. It will vary depending on the nature and severity of the problem. Treatment may be as short as one session for such things as smoking cessation, to several sessions for other problems. Hypnosis is frequently used in conjunction with other forms of psychotherapy. Hypnotic treatment is only one tool, and when used by itself the treatment is usually short term.

How much does hypnotherapy cost?

Per hour cost will vary depending on section of the country. Since fees vary in different parts of the nation, you should feel free to discuss finances openly with your health care professional.

Will my health insurance cover the cost?

Hypnotherapy is usually used in combination with other forms of treatment. Most insurance companies will cover a percentage of the cost of individual therapy. In most states, only treatment by licensed professionals will be covered.

Can I learn to hypnotize myself?

All hypnosis is self-hypnosis. The professional acts as a facilitator or teacher to help you achieve this pleasant state. Some professionals tape sessions for their patients, to be used between sessions or in place of repeated sessions. A good example is the use of hypnosis in the treatment of chronic pain. Tapes are frequently made for pain patients to be used by them as needed.

Misconceptions about Hypnosis

Loss of consciousness.

One of the major myths about hypnosis is that you will lose consciousness. Hypnosis is an altered level of consciousness, but you do not become unconscious. You will be aware of everything at all times and hear everything that the professional is saying.

Weakening your will.

Your will is not weakened or changed in any way. You are in control, and, if you wish for any reason to terminate the hypnotic state, you may do so simply by opening your eyes. You cannot be made to do anything against your will. Stage hypnotists like the audience to think that they have complete control over their subjects; professionals will make it clear that the patient has the basic control.