

Putting Hypnosis to Practical Use

by Dr. Fredric Mau



In February, *USA Today* reported that requests for therapists are up more than 40 percent in some parts of the country. The uptick is attributed to economic stress. Millions turn to self-help techniques to deal with today's stressors, but it's hard for most people to know where to start. History and current research suggest that hypnosis is an excellent choice.

Hypnotists recognize that people do not make profound life changes because of information. It seems obvious—every smoker knows that smoking is unhealthy; everyone who needs to lose weight knows they should eat fewer calories and burn more. You can even force yourself, through sheer willpower, to do something that is not emotionally comfortable for a short period of time—like dieting, for example. Behavior, though, is emotionally driven, and behaviors that are more emotionally comfortable tend to return. That's why after the diet ends, the weight lost simply returns.

The good news is that there is a better way. Through hypnosis, you enter a physical level of relaxation known as "theta." It is that dreamy-drowsy place where you feel like you are falling asleep. When you relax at that level, it's as if the rational mind gets out of the way and powerful emotional reframing is possible. Powerful change is then possible, arising from the emotions inside.

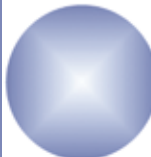
Many self-help techniques utilize hypnotic principles. Positive self-talk and autosuggestion are "more awake" versions of self-hypnosis, and were actually developed by French hypnotist Émile Coué at the turn of the last century. Yoga and meditation often involve relaxing to theta, and practitioners can benefit from hypnotic suggestion techniques. Massage and Reiki resemble physical hypnotic inductions. Acupuncture and acupressure involve the use of suggestion and the hypnotic technique known as physical anchoring. Guided imagery is also a hypnotic process.

South Carolina does not license hypnotists, so take care when you select someone to help you. The two main professional organizations to look to for credible hypnotists are the

National Guild of Hypnotists (NGH) and the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH). Founded in 1958, the NGH is the oldest and largest professional association of hypnotists in the nation. The ASCH serves medical and mental health professionals who use hypnosis in their practices. Certification by one of these organizations is a mark of quality. Incidentally, the terms hypnotist and hypnotherapist are used interchangeably by the NGH, so neither denotes a "higher" level of training or certification.

Beyond inquiries about certification, you might also ask a hypnotist if he or she offers a free initial consultation, how many clients the hypnotists usually sees, about her or his success rates, and whether the hypnotist has any special certifications (beyond membership in NGH and ASCH). In the final analysis, make sure you choose someone who makes you feel at ease, as hypnosis is based on a relationship of mutual rapport and trust between the hypnotist and the client.

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