

Hypnotherapy - Hypnosis

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Hypnosis -- or hypnotherapy -- uses guided relaxation, intense concentration, and focused attention to achieve a heightened state of awareness that is sometimes called a trance. The person's attention is so focused while in this state that anything going on around the person is temporarily blocked out or ignored. In this naturally occurring state, a person may focus his or her attention -- with the help of a trained therapist -- on specific thoughts or tasks.

How Does Hypnosis Work?

Hypnosis is usually considered an aid to [psychotherapy](#) (counseling or therapy), because the hypnotic state allows people to explore painful thoughts, feelings, and memories they might have hidden from their conscious minds. In addition, hypnosis enables people to perceive some things differently, such as blocking an awareness of pain.

Hypnosis can be used in two ways, as suggestion therapy or for patient analysis.

- **Suggestion therapy:** The hypnotic state makes the person better able to respond to suggestions. Therefore, hypnotherapy can help some people change certain behaviors, such as stopping [smoking](#) or [nail biting](#). It can also help people change perceptions and sensations, and is particularly useful in [treating pain](#).
- **Analysis:** This approach uses the relaxed state to explore a possible psychological root cause of a disorder or symptom, such as a traumatic past event that a person has hidden in his or her unconscious memory. Once the trauma is revealed, it can be addressed in [psychotherapy](#).

What Are the Benefits of Hypnosis?

The hypnotic state allows a person to be more open to discussion and suggestion. It can improve the success of other treatments for many conditions, including:

- [Phobias](#), fears, and [anxiety](#)
- [Sleep disorders](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Stress](#)
- [Post-trauma anxiety](#)
- [Grief](#) and loss

Hypnosis also might be used to help with pain control and to overcome habits, such as [smoking](#) or overeating. It also might be helpful for people whose symptoms are severe or who need crisis management.

What Are the Drawbacks of Hypnosis?

Hypnosis might not be appropriate for a person who has psychotic symptoms, such as [hallucinations](#) and [delusions](#), or for someone who is using drugs or alcohol. It should be used for pain control only after a doctor has evaluated the person for any physical disorder that might require medical or surgical treatment. Hypnosis also may be a less effective form of therapy than other more traditional treatments, such as [medication](#), for psychiatric disorders.

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Some therapists use hypnosis to recover possibly repressed memories they believe are linked to the person's mental disorder. However, the quality and reliability of information recalled by the patient under hypnosis is not always reliable. Additionally, hypnosis can pose a risk of creating false memories -- usually as a result of unintended suggestions or the asking of leading questions by the therapist. For these reasons, hypnosis is no longer considered a common or mainstream part of most forms of psychotherapy. Also, the use of hypnosis for certain mental disorders in which patients may be highly susceptible to suggestion, such as dissociative disorders, remains especially controversial.




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Is Hypnosis Dangerous?

Hypnosis is not a dangerous procedure. It is not mind control or brainwashing. A therapist cannot make a person do something embarrassing or that the person doesn't want to do. The greatest risk, as discussed above, is that false memories can potentially be created and that it may be less effective than pursuing other, more established and traditional psychiatric treatments.

Who Performs Hypnosis?


Hypnosis is performed by a licensed or certified [mental health](#) professional who is specially trained in this technique.



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