

HYPNOSIS QUESTIONS ANSWERED

© By Shelley Stockwell-Nicholas, PhD

People have lots of questions about hypnosis. COPHO member, Dr Shelley, of the International Hypnosis Federation answers them:

SO WHAT IS HYPNOSIS?

Is hypnosis a phenomenon, an art, a science, a therapy, a perception, a communication process, or simply life? ... That is a question!

Everyone naturally goes in and out of the hypnotic state. You've entranced yourself *today*. You may not have called it hypnosis: with self talk, upon awakening, taking a shower, daydreaming, runner's high, reading, deep in thought, watching TV, video game playing, a boring meeting, a freeway drive... You actually alter state when you blink or close your eyes.

You regularly hypnotize yourself when you think, fantasize, block or enhance memory, and bring ideas into clarity. Healthy thoughts support life, joy, goals, radiance and relaxation. You are the best one to define your own natural hypnosis.

Formal hypnosis is a series of techniques that allow you to be your best. It's fun, easy to learn, and belongs to YOU. Trance came with the package of your consciousness. You can easily learn to hypnotize (or de-hypnotize) yourself or another in less than ten minutes.

Professional Hypnotists spend a great deal of time learning how to master their helpful approaches and they teach you to use your natural ability to create a positive attitude and thrive. Phill Wells says it well; *"I call Hypnosis the XYZ technique; X to X-out past, unpleasant experiences, Y because we like you, and Z because everyone likes their ZZZ's."*

IS HYPNOSIS REAL?

Yes, hypnosis is a real mind state of mind... it's just difficult to define. You enjoy this state naturally to renew and restore yourself. Real physical responses result in trance and real physical changes create trance. From a biochemical perspective, thinking about doing something can be as useful as doing.

HOW DOES HYPNOSIS FEEL?

Hypnosis feels familiar! It feels the same as when you drift off in sleep or daydream.

The by-product of most hypnosis is relaxation of muscles, nerves, and the mind. Some describe it as feeling passive, placid and mellow; others as filled with light or surprised by new perception. In hypnosis, there is often a distinct experience of automatic, spontaneous, or involuntary thought or action. Some feel like they are floating. Others describe it as "earth bound, centered and focused." Some have keen body sensations. Others feel numb. Returning to regular "room awareness" makes everything more peaceful. One friend says, *"After hypnosis, my heart went around grinning all day."*

Hypnosis is a common and varied experience. Each hypnotic trance may differ from what you expect, and differ from your last hypnotic trance. This makes sense considering you are not the same person you were the last time! Your trance perception will differ from another's. Sometimes, part of you can be hypnotized while another part is not. For instance, if you are driving a car and having an animated conversation with your passenger, the part of you driving may be unaware and hypnotized while the part of you talking is fully conscious.

Hypnosis is so natural that it sometimes feels like you aren't doing anything unusual. Even when hypnosis brings dramatic results some may think the change happened "by itself." The calling card of hypnosis is effortlessness. People often say things like, "My hand moved down by itself" or "Suddenly I found myself feeling good and the pain was gone." These types of disconnections seem to be at the heart of hypnosis.

In fact, many don't know if they were hypnotized because hypnosis is very familiar. During daily living, your mind is constantly, automatically, and spontaneously going in and out of hypnosis (even to the extent of amnesia). In other words, the so-called "waking state of mind" and "hypnotic state of mind" combine to produce "normal behavior." What mind has come to know as "normal" is often unrecognized hypnotic behavior.

Ormond McGill's formula sums it up: "Hypnosis is a process of giving the mind forceful directions to change and advance desired behavior. The only way you can actually know if you were hypnotized is to objectively evaluate the success of the hypnotherapeutic session. The waking state of mind combined with hypnotic state of mind equals all behavior."

WAKING STATE+HYPNOTIC STATE= ALL BEHAVIOR.

Because hypnosis looks different than it feels, some ask, "Was I hypnotized?" In fact, hypnosis is an ordinary, familiar experience that you have every day, all day. But, since it looks wild on stage and costs money in private; expectation of what hypnosis feels like may not match the actual experience.

When I was 21 years old, I went to see Pat Collins (the "Hip hypnotist") at the Celebrity Club in Hollywood, California. I was convinced it was a sham, "Those volunteers must have been set-ups" I thought. So to prove something to myself, I stayed for the second show and bounded on the stage when Ms. Collins called for volunteers. During the show I followed her instructions so as "not to embarrass the nice lady." After all, she was an entertainer. I did notice that every time she exclaimed, "Shelley, Sleep" I had an irresistible urge to cave-in on top of my neighbor and even to the floor! But, I definitely "was not hypnotized." When the audience chose me to be "levitated" I found myself staring up at the stage lights for many minutes, suspended between the two chairs. "Maybe I'm hypnotized," I said to myself. "Just maybe, because I don't think that I'd normally do this!" In the end it was a lot of fun to play with hypnosis; I loved the feeling.

CAN EVERYONE BE HYPNOTIZED?

Yes, of course!

Whenever you move from outward perception to inner awareness, you enter trance. Your words induce trance too. "Wonder," "amaze," "puzzle," "understand," "curious," "love," "mesmerize," and "hypnotize" cause you to go inside to clarify what is meant.

Hypnosis techniques put you in charge of your natural ability to enter trance. Hypnosis is a skill, like reading or writing that anyone can easily learn.

Some say the very young, those with low IQ's (who can't concentrate), or an intoxicated person, cannot be hypnotized. I myself have successfully hypnotized infants, people who can't concentrate, and someone who's intoxicated.

Now and again, someone challenges themselves or a hypnotist with, "You can't hypnotize me." They are correct. No one can hypnotize you without your permission... unless, of course, they are your mother/father/ caretaker/ sibling/ mate/ teacher/ kids/ boss/ society/ religion/ drill sergeant/ fraternal organization/ or advertisers.

The sentence, "You can't hypnotize me" may be a velvet challenge, a statement of distrust, a contrarian speaking, or a complete misunderstanding of what hypnosis is. No matter how you slice it, all people are hypnotized and hypnotizable.

You choose to allow another to formally hypnotize you. I think it's fun to take someone from the "never land" of "you can't..." to the "promised land" of joyous relaxation and mind mastery. Professionals like Dan Cleary assures the skeptical, "No need to worry about hypnosis; hypnosis is my department." Another way to get a client to say, "I know I was hypnotized" is to point out to them, while entranced, the subtle experience of hypnosis. The suggestion given in hypnosis, "When someone asks you 'were you hypnotized?' you'll answer, 'Yes, I know I was hypnotized!'" reassures them that their session was successful. Of course, a programmed post-hypnotic suggestion response is not *real* knowing. However, if they give the programmed answer, it is proof that they were hypnotized because they actualized the hypnotic suggestion.

Hypnosis with a professional hypnotist works best when you want it to work and have a readiness for change. If you believe or imagine anything will work, it generally will. Some come for a first hypnosis session in desperation, desperately wanting it to work; which is a big reason it does. The road to Pennsylvania Hypnotherapist Beverley Bley's office was called "Wits End." Conversely, if you believe hypnosis can't work, it probably won't help your problem. Either way you hypnotize yourself to be or not be hypnotized.

WHO CAN DO HYPNOSIS?

Anyone who has the mind to, and even those who don't, can and do, do hypnosis.

It is easy to learn to induce a self-hypnotic trance and it's very important that YOU learn hypnosis to keep yourself from inadvertent trances that do not benefit you.

Professional hypnotists teach you how to do just that and they use hypnosis to hold the mirror for YOU.

ARE YOU UNCONSCIOUS DURING TRANCE?

Deep hypnosis looks different than it feels.

From the observer's viewpoint, a hypnotized person may look like they're passed out or unconscious. In fact, hypnosis is a continuum of awareness marked by your own perception. Most people are mentally alert and physically relaxed. You can also be physically and mentally alert. Scientists, Hilgard and Bányai at Stanford (1976) observed that people vigorously riding stationary bicycles were just as responsive to hypnotic suggestions as those hypnotized in a relaxed setting.

With your eyes open or shut, you can drift into the lightest daydream and profound inner awareness. In all cases, there is a YOU aware of where YOU are and what YOU are thinking and doing.

In "ultra depth" states you enjoy a lovely world entirely of your own making. It's fun and a great escape. Deep hypnosis is similar to deepest sleep where you drift into unknown places, come back refreshed and renewed and may not consciously remember where you went. This is the "conked out" state many imagine when they see someone entranced. Dr. Luys described this in the 1800s; "... *hypno-lethargy is a phase so deep that even contact with the operator or yourself may seem lost.*"

HOW DOES HYPNOSIS WORK?

No one knows for sure. We know that nourishing hypnosis motivates you to be your best and live your dreams. Unresolved inner conflict and negative hypnosis causes stress and unhappiness. Good hypnosis helps you resolve conflicts so you relax and get happy.

Cognitive scientists publish thousands of papers on hypnosis in major journals showing how hypnosis powerfully alters perception and physiology. Still no one knows how it works; they just know how to use it.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HYPNOSIS, HYPNOTHERAPY & HYPNOCOUNSELING?

The main difference is the spelling.

Some say that hypnosis is a mind state and hypnotherapy is a technique. Because hypnotism is self-regulated, various schools and training organizations offer various titles and certifications. There are no universal standards in this field. In New Jersey practitioners call themselves "Hypnocounselors." The terms Hypnotist, Hypnotherapist, Hypnocounselor, Consulting Hypnotist, Hypno-Advisor, Mental Wellness Technician, and many other titles are used interchangeably.

The International Hypnosis Federation endorses a three tiered certification based on hours of training and tailored to various state requirements. Level one, "Certified Hypnotist;" level two, "Master Hypnotist;" and level three "Hypnotherapist" or "Hypnocounselor."

WHY DO I NEED HYPNOSIS?

If you want to enjoy life, and want to succeed, and feel great, hypnosis is for you. To use your resources, be your best, and have great relationships, you need hypnosis. There's nothing to lose but tension, depression, fear, fatigue and pain.

Hypnosis can change hurtful habits and limiting beliefs, into helpful habits and beneficial beliefs. From improving your golf game to upping your libido, hypnosis is your ticket.

CAN I REALLY HELP PHYSICAL PROBLEMS WITH MY MIND?

YES!

Ancient people honored the mind/body/environment connection. Chinese and indigenous traditions correlate organs and illness with specific mental/emotional states. The idea is to return one to holistic balance. Plato taught that what you take in through your senses is a minute fraction of reality.

Ever notice how your heart pounds and your breath changes when you are excited, angry or in love? How your thoughts turn you on or off sexually?

How a baby cries and a woman's milk flows?

Emotion is "e-motion" or "energy in motion." Each conscious or subconscious emotion evokes an intricate biochemical action inside yourself that then inspires the next thing you feel. What you think emanates from inside your bio-computer. Your biology determines what you do and how you feel and what you do and how you feel influences your biology. Happiness makes you healthy free, easy and more vital. What you expect, see, hear, smell, taste, feel and intuit is received within a millisecond and placed into your memory. This, in turn affects your decisions, feelings, and imagination to color what you next see, hear, smell, taste, feel and intuit.

The color of food influences your perception of its taste, smell and how well you digest it. My grandpa was repulsed when we colored his favorite strawberry jam with green food coloring. A 1970s experiment

gave people blue food-colored steak and green french fries that looked normal under colored lights. When the colored lighting went to normal, the blue steak and green fries made some puke! Speaking of puke... for some just the word makes them want to— you get the idea.

Physical environments affect your energy. Breathing stale air in a poorly ventilated room makes you mentally sluggish.

Your brain broadcasts worry and stress to your nervous system and every organ of your body. Emotion affects your blood pressure, heart, lungs, liver, and digestion. Depression, crisis, and conflict make you feel physically rotten, super sensitive, or numb and can bring on illness. Illness can cause depression. Depression may activate chemical changes and arthritis-like symptoms, digestive problems, headaches, difficult breathing, heart palpitations, dizziness, arthritis, fibromyalgia, shingles, herpes, chronic fatigue...

Harvard Medical School and other research institutions note that hypnosis blocks neural receptors to ease pain, stress, and anxiety. Hypnosis lowers blood pressure and heart rates, and allows you to relax. You are your mind/emotion/body. When you relax you thrive.

Hypnosis was recognized by the American Medical Association and the U.S. National Institute of Health over 50 years ago. Medicare covers hypnosis for pain or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Many medical professionals refer patients to certified hypnotists and vice versa. So do scores of satisfied clients. Referring doctors understand that hypnosis is complimentary to conventional medicine and want their patients to relax, stimulate their innate ability to heal, and relieve pain, grief, stress, and insomnia... Just what the Doctor ordered!

Over half of all people who seek wellness care proudly go to alternative and complementary providers. A 1993 study published in the New England School of Medicine Journal, says providers of “unconventional” therapies (non-medical alternative therapies) had an estimated 425 million patient visits in 1990. This figure exceeds the 388 million visits to primary care physicians. COPHO member organizations offer referrals to terrific hypnotists.

IF YOU NEED HELP TO SOLVE PROBLEMS, DOES IT MEAN YOU HAVE A WEAK WILL?

Of course not! Hypnotic suggestions from a professional hypnotist assist you to strengthen your will power and reach goals. Some claim strong-willed people cannot be hypnotized. In fact, strong will-powered folks are great at hypnosis because, once they decide to cooperate, they love to follow their own instructions.

Sometimes it's difficult to work things out yourself because you're too close to your own issues. A hypnotist “holds the mirror” so you reflect. “How do I change my attitude?” “What positive thoughts and actions help me?” “How have I held myself back?” Then your hypnotist helps you shift gears from reverse or neutral, to full-speed-ahead.

Ormond “McGill, in his Hypnotherapy Encyclopedia (Creativity Unlimited Press), says it well; “Will is a conscious mind activity that assists you to enter hypnosis. Hypnosis is a subconscious mind activity. When you get your inner self to accept an idea, realization follows automatically... Just using will to implant subconscious ideas, attempts the impossible. A sick person thinking over and over ‘I am not sick’ is still sick. By trying to will themselves to health, they may feel worse because this idea and their critical mind constantly reminds them that they are indeed sick. When you contemplate the opposite of what you want you battle with your will to repress thoughts of illness. The more you struggle to hold illness thoughts in check, the more the thoughts possess you... Hypnotherapy is not a question of will power or a weak mind verses a strong mind. It is the task of learning to operate your mind instead of your mind operating you. Hypnosis brings a quiet assurance as they easily direct all parts of the mind to bring you what they desire.”

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T COME OUT OF TRANCE?

Some worry that if they go into trance, they won't come out. If this happens to you, open your eyes and dial 911. Just kidding. The Dean of American Hypnosis, Ormond McGill used to answer this question with, “Where would you go?”

You have been cycling in and out of trance since you were born as you dream, relax, and sleep and you have naturally terminated these trances when you chose.

In hypnosis you naturally awaken if there's an important reason to return to room awareness. As in life, someone calling your name, or a baby crying, lets you easily detach from trance and attend to anything that needs attention. If you have time restraints, it's a good idea to set an alarm clock before you enter self-hypnosis and to give yourself a timely suggestion, “I choose to relax for half an hour,” or “At 2:30 I will

come back to my regular awareness.” When you are in the able care of a hypnotist they will mind the time for you.

n a larger sense, some never leave certain harmful reality tunnels, childhood trances, trauma trances or bad habits unless they get a “wake up call” or hypnosis.

ARE HYPNOSIS PEDIGREES OR DOCUMENTS NECESSARY?

You need no pedigree or documentation to use hypnosis. If so you might need a piece of paper before you convince yourself with self-hypnosis. Advertisers, promoters, politicians, the legal system and religions use hypnosis freely.

When you study hypnotism as a career, you join a distinct, ethical, stand-alone profession; that of a well educated practicing hypnotist. Professional Hypnotists, Hypnotherapists, and Hypnocounselors spend hundreds, often thousands, of hours learning and practicing hypnotic techniques. When you successfully complete your training, you become certified as a legal state/federally sanctioned professional.

Hypnosis does not require state licensing. Occasionally, someone licensed in another profession is also certified as a hypnotherapist. Confusion comes if someone licensed in another profession falsely claims to be “a licensed hypnotherapist.” In most states, anyone can call themselves a “psychotherapist” “counselor” or “therapist” as these are unlicensed titles. You cannot, call yourself “Psychiatrist,” “Psychologist,” or “Clinical Social Worker” unless you have specific licensure. Psychiatrists are medical doctors and therefore can write prescriptions. A “psychoanalyst” has been trained in analytic techniques and may or may not be licensed. In California, Marriage and Family Counselors, Social Workers and Psychologists require licensing. Hypnotherapy does not.

The post nominal most commonly used is “CHt” meaning “Certified Hypnotherapist.”

A hypnotist’s designated title is based on training and desires. Titles include but are not limited to Hypnotist, Master Hypnotist, Hypnotherapist, Advanced Hypno-Counselor, Advanced Hypnotherapist, Board Certified Hypnocounselor, Certified IHF Hypnosis Instructor, Childbirth/Midwifery Hypnotist, Child Hypnosis Specialist, Clergical Hypnotherapist, Clinical Hypnotherapist, Conflict Resolution Specialist, Cognitive Hypnotherapist, Educational Hypnotist, Ericksonian Hypnotherapist, Forensic Hypnotist, Guided Imagery Specialist, Higher-Self Hypnotherapist, Holistic Hypnotist, Humanistic Hypno-Anesthesiologist, Hypnotherapist, Hypno-Advisor, Hypnoanalyst, Hypnocoach, Hypno-Consultant, Hypnocounselor, Hypno-Healer, Hypno-Integrationist, Hypno-Kinesiologist, Hypnologist, Hypnomotivator, Hypnopsychotherapist, Hypnoresearcher, Hypno-Technician, Hypnosis Instructor, Marketing Expert, Medical/Dental Hypnotherapist, Military Troop Specialist, Motivational Hypnotist, Motivational Speaker, Neuro-Linguistic-Programmer, Performance Hypnotist, Reprogrammer, Smoking-Cessation Specialist, Spiritual Counseling Hypnotist, Stage Hypnotist, Stockwell Joy Therapist, Sports Hypnotherapist, Transformational Hypnotherapist or Transpersonal Hypnotherapist. Other legal alternative providers include Coaching, Counseling, NLP, Spiritual Counseling, Past Life Therapist, Pastoral Counseling, Therapy, Trance Induction, Nutrition, Naturopathy, Energy Work, Past-Life Regression & Movement Therapy, and Verbal First Aid Specialist.

CAN HYPNOSIS HAVE ADVERSE AFFECTS?

Hypnosis is a mild process. Rare negative affects come from a preconceived notion or from ignorance. Interestingly, these same complaints occur in non-hypnosis processes, tests, consultations, or experimental settings with other authorities in other settings. Pre-hypnosis education dispels such frustrations and a well-studied professional hypnotist makes sure none of these happen.

“Adverse affects:”

1. Insensitive or misconstrued suggestions.
2. Unclear or ambiguous suggestions or misused words.
3. Drowsiness, dizziness, stiffness, aches, or anxiety.
4. Masking a serious organic problem.
5. Pseudo memories created by leading and misleading questions or suggestions.
6. Being brought out of trance too fast.
7. The person is not sure that they were hypnotized.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE HYPNOTIST’S INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

Professional hypnotists agree to keep your records and conversations confidential. No one is permitted to see your records without permission from you; unless, of course, these records are subpoenaed by a court of law.

ARE THE RESULTS OF HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS PERMANENT?

Some suggestions stay indefinitely, others need reinforcement. Repetition of the thought reinforces, that's why self-hypnosis or a follow up visit can help a suggestion stick. Acting out a suggestion repetitively also makes for permanent resolution.

HOW MANY SESSIONS ARE NEEDED?

Hypnotherapy is generally short term; from 1 to 10 sessions. Clients often enjoy returning at a later time for a "tune up." Weight loss, deep sadness, hopelessness, depression, or similar situations may need more sessions and more long term help to get the desired results.

HOW MUCH DOES HYPNOSIS COST?

Practitioners set their own fees. Sessions vary from \$50 to \$500 an hour. For more long term goals like letting go of substantial weight, getting a grip on an eating disorder, or depression, some hypnotists charge a lump sum for a block of time. For example "To reach your goal, you pay a fee of \$2000 and will visit me once a week for six months and listen to hypnosis tapes at home when you go to sleep."

HYPNO FACTS:

- 1. Hypnosis Helps People Of All Ages**
- 2. Hypnosis is Safe, Fun, Easy To Learn, And Belongs To All Of Us.**
- 3. Hypnosis is Good Business**

Hypnotists bring revenue into your city. Statistics from the New England School of Medicine show that over half of all people seeking health care, go to practitioners like hypnotists.

- 5. Hypnotists are Law-Abiding**

Hypnotists are trained to satisfy local and state laws. They hold business licenses in their communities, are active in the chamber of commerce and community events.

- 6. Hypnosis Is A Legal Profession**

Like most professions, Hypnotherapy is a non-licensed legal occupation. It is totally different and separate from other practices (like psychotherapy for example) and sometimes it's offered as an adjunct to a licensed profession.

- 7. Hypnosis Is A Self-Governed Stand-Alone Profession**

Since hypnosis is self-regulated and no certification is legally required. However, Certified Professional Hypnotherapists are well trained in their specialty.

- 9. Hypnotists Belong To Professional Hypnosis Organizations and Unions**

Though not required, most hypnosis practitioners belong to one of over 35 hypnosis organizations, like the International Hypnosis Federation, and are often affiliated with the AFLCIO hypnotists union in California. Each member agrees to a code of ethics, spend hundreds of hours learning and practicing hypnotic techniques, and regularly attend conferences.

HYPNO HELPERS

"Hypnotherapy... takes advantage of the mind-body connection to foster healing. It's also one of the most common referrals we make for our patients at our University of Arizona Integrative Medicine Clinic. I often recommended it for a wide variety of conditions."

-Andrew Weil

Well Informed Hypnotists

To get a referral for a terrific Hypnotist in your area go to www.hypnosisfederation.com, e-mail IHF@cox.net, or call me, Dr Shelley at (310) 541-4844.

Hypnosis certification training is offered in many countries of the world. The required numbers of hours for certifications vary and can be as long as three years! The International Hypnosis Federation® and their instructors require at minimum 150 hours of class room training followed by Practicum Training to become a "Certified Hypnotherapist." Hypnotherapists attend regular continuing education meetings and classes. The International Hypnosis Federation and their recognized instructors certify Hypnotists, Master Hypnotists, Hypnotherapists, Hypnocounselors, Spiritual Counselors, Hypnocoaches and offer regular and varied specialty courses during the year and at their conferences.

Buyer beware. Anyone can run a hypnosis school and call themselves, “hypnosis instructor.” Some promote with BIG hype i.e. “Become a hypnotherapist in a weekend!” These folks use a hypnotherapy certificate as bait to upsell \$20,000 other classes. Some have top-notch web pages. Some claim to be “state approved” while some pretend to be “accredited;” both claims are misleading.

Well Informed Instructors

It is a good idea to Google an instructor’s name or the school name. For example to check me out Google, “Shelley Stockwell” and the “International Hypnosis Federation.” ASK EVERYONE you can about where to really learn hypnosis friends, and other hypnotists.

International Hypnosis Federation recognized or approved schools offer terrific training.

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