

What is Hypnosis?

Hypnosis is a state of mind. After people learn about hypnosis they realize they have been in hypnotic states many times. Children are often in this state when they make-believe, daydream, listen intently to stories, and play video games. Adults experience hypnotic states deep in prayer or meditation.

People in hypnosis often feel relaxed, peaceful, and detached from extraneous worries. Concentration is enhanced and distractions ignored. Imagination is more intense. In hypnosis, we can better imagine sensations: sights, sounds, smells, touch. There is increased control of the body. Blinking slows or may stop. Breathing slows and deepens. Blood pressure, heart rate, skin temperature, and muscle tone can all be controlled. **Some call this a trance: a state of comfort and increased self-control.**

What Hypnosis is Not

False notions of hypnosis come from television, books, the theater and other fictions. Early on, children see cartoons portray hypnosis as an evil spell cast by the bad guy over the good guy to control the good guy's behavior against his or her will. Children also hear that witches cast spells on people. Since adults in a hypnotic trance may close their eyes and look relaxed, we may think hypnosis is a form of sleep. **Each of these beliefs is incorrect.**

Stage hypnotists, if they really use hypnosis, take advantage of willing volunteers to entertain. We believe that this powerful skill is only for personal use. It should not be exploited for entertainment.

Hypnosis is a state of intensified self-control. It is not sleep. In fact, people in hypnosis are more focused and in charge than in their usual state of mind. It is very personal. A trained practitioner can find helpful words to **suggest** ways to feel, understand or behave, but **cannot control** the person in hypnosis. You can be guided to strengthen your will in the direction you choose.

All hypnosis is self-hypnosis to be used for one's benefit.

What is Hypnotherapy?

When a trained therapist uses hypnosis as part of treatment, it is called hypnotherapy: the use of guided, focused imagery, in a trance, to strengthen self-control over physical and emotional problems.

The process of hypnotherapy will depend on your child's symptoms and beliefs. There is an initial visit to understand the problem, especially from the youngster's viewpoint. At later visits, your daughter or son will learn his or her own method for self-hypnosis. We can then help them learn to use self-hypnosis on their own.

Why use Hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy has been successfully applied to treat acute and recurrent pain, asthma, bed-wetting, stool withholding, habit problems, nervous tics, anxiety, fears and other problems. Presently, self-hypnosis is among the most effective therapies for childhood migraine headaches.

The value of hypnotherapy goes beyond its ability to help with these ailments. A child's personal success in self-hypnosis boosts their confidence and mastery. Young people learn to use this technique to cope with new challenges. Self-hypnosis grows easier with practice. It is like learning to play a musical instrument. In time, the musician develops skill, creativity, and the ability to play an increasing variety of music.

What are the Risks of Hypnotherapy?

When used correctly, there are no risks with hypnotherapy. It is a tool like medication, exercise, and diet. When the proper antibiotic is prescribed to treat an infection, you may develop a rash, diarrhea, and an allergic reaction even if the antibiotic works. Hypnotherapy has no such adverse effects. It increases one's ability to control symptoms.

Hypnotherapy can be used inappropriately. We would not first use hypnotherapy to treat headaches due to a brain tumor, the pain of appendicitis, or a child's fears while being abused. **Hypnotherapy should only be used as part of the treatment plan for a specific problem after a careful evaluation by a trained health professional.**

What are Parents' Roles in Hypnotherapy?

The primary tasks for parents are to ask questions, understand, and then support the process. If your youngster can read this pamphlet, read it with him or her and write down your questions together. Younger children might better understand terms like using "your mind" or "make-believe" instead of hypnosis or hypnotherapy. You may simply say "the doctor is going to help you pretend about your" asthma, headaches, etc.

We will need your help to understand: **(1) how the problem affects your child's life, (2) all that you have done so far to help, and (3) your own fears and worries about your child's problem.** This is important because your anxiety is infectious. Your child feels it too.

Each young person's use of self-hypnosis is a contract with the nurse or doctor. Success requires that they cultivate their own imagery and sense of mastery. It is not your job to "make" your child "practice." As a matter of fact, if you insist that they "practice," they are more likely not to do it. You might suggest a convenient time, place, or situation in which they can do their hypnosis (after dinner, before homework, in an easy-chair, with certain stresses). It is their choice to use it.

It is our privilege to help youngsters learn to use this wonderful ability.

We look forward to hearing your comments and answering your questions.

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HYPNOSIS *and* HYPNOTHERAPY *for* Children and Adolescents

Hypnotherapy is a safe and practical means of helping young people manage physical and psychological problems.

Once learned, self-hypnosis can be a valuable, life-long skill.