

Hypnosis & the subconscious

Why does hypnosis succeed better than other therapies?

Study after study shows hypnotherapy outperforming the competition, whether the client's goal is quitting cigarettes, having happier relationships, shedding excess weight or increasing self esteem.

Hypnotherapy has the power to remap our brains and change our lives because hypnotherapy works by accessing the subconscious mind.

One three-year

comparison found:

Psychoanalysis: 38% success rate after 600 sessions.

Behavior therapy: 72% success rate after 22 sessions.

Hypnotherapy: 93% success rate after 6 sessions.

As *Psychology Today* reports, "specific suggestions and images fed to clients in a (hypnotic) trance can profoundly alter their behavior. As they rehearse the new ways they want to think and feel, they lay the groundwork for powerful changes in their future actions."

Both brain-imaging research and therapeutic practice indicate that hypnosis is far more effective in this regard than mere positive thinking or non-hypnotic imagining, because hypnosis can be used to direct the subconscious mind. And the subconscious—which is also known as the unconscious or non-conscious—controls far more of our emotions and behavior than we might normally realize.

Says the *New York Times*, "The main studies show that the unconscious mind may understand and respond to meaning, form emotional responses and guide most actions, largely independent of conscious awareness.... The findings imply that, despite the subjective experience of being in conscious control of feelings and thoughts, decisions and actions, people are piloted far more than they know by the unconscious mind."

“ An enormous portion of cognitive activity is non-conscious," states Emmanuel Donchin, director of the Laboratory for Cognitive Psychophysiology at the University of Illinois. "Figuratively speaking, it could be 99 percent; we probably will never know precisely how much is outside awareness.”

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The subconscious is by definition not normally accessible to our conscious attempts to influence it. That is why hypnosis is key, for it is the only known means of reliably accessing and guiding the subconscious in a drug-free manner which gives clients more control over their own lives.

"One of the interesting ironies about hypnosis is that old fantasy that it takes away control," says Dr. David Spiegel, professor and associate chair of psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine. "It's actually a way of enhancing people's control, of teaching them how to control aspects of their body's function and sensation that they thought they couldn't," concludes Spiegel, as quoted by *Newsweek*.

While scientists continue to investigate both the conscious and subconscious mind, we know that the subconscious involves a complex web of neural activity, spread throughout diverse areas of the brain, and, like our conscious minds, cannot be easily delimited or defined. What all the research bears out, however, is that our subconscious beliefs wield enormous power over the rest of our physiology and hence over our physical and mental well-being.

This in turn makes hypnosis effective in helping clients achieve real change. A three-year comparison of more than 1,000 case reports surveyed by Alfred A. Barrios, formerly of the University of California produced these average success rates for treatment of psychological issues: psychoanalysis, 38% recovery after 600 sessions; behavior therapy, 72% recovery after 22 sessions; hypnotherapy, 93% recovery after 6 sessions.

“ Despite widely held misconceptions about hypnosis (in part because of its long history as a type of entertainment), a growing body of research supports the ancient practice as an effective tool in the treatment of a variety of problems. This increased understanding of how hypnosis works and what it does makes it a legitimate option for patients whose needs have not been met by more traditional methods. ”

*Newsweek
Scientific Research*

One theory about why the subconscious may out-power our conscious minds is simply that it harnesses far more of our neural capacity. One study suggests that when awake, we consciously process an estimated 50 bits of information per second. That may sound like a lot, but even if it were 100 times that much, it would still be miniscule compared to what the brain in its subconscious capacity performs.

The human brain contains 100 billion neurons, each linked via synapses to as many as 100,000 others. That's one quadrillion synaptic connections, each capable of processing up to 10 information bits per second. What this means is that the subconscious brain may process quadrillions of bits per second, whether sleeping or awake. Wow! While the estimates vary, all support the supremacy of the subconscious mind's huge processing power.

Although the ability of hypnosis to access the subconscious is not entirely understood, most hypnotherapists put clients into a trance state by speaking to them in a very specific manner, relying on specialized neuro-linguistic patterns to

stimulate the client's autonomic nervous system—first triggering the sympathetic, and then the parasympathetic branch—usually leading to such physiological changes as REM (rapid eye movement), affected breathing, lower blood pressure, and deep muscle relaxation. This results in a trance state of physical comfort and intense mental absorption during which the subconscious becomes highly receptive to suggestion.

During this hypnotic "sleep," clients are not asleep at all. Clients remain fully conscious, and therefore able to work with the therapist to redirect their subconscious beliefs, feelings and goals to achieve real change. As *Scientific American* explains, "Under hypnosis, subjects do not behave as passive automatons but instead are active problem solvers who incorporate their moral and cultural ideas into their behavior while remaining exquisitely responsive to the expectations expressed" by their hypnotherapist.

Perhaps the *Mayo Clinic* website sums it up best: "The purpose of hypnosis is to help you gain more control over your behavior, emotions or physical well-being."