



OPENING YOUR MIND TO HYPNOTHERAPY

Usually when I tell people that I am a Clinical Hypnotherapist, I get a kind of jokingly scared response from them, like, "Really, so you can put me in a trance and make me bark like a dog?" I can only conclude from this that there is a lot of ignorance in our society about what hypnotherapy really is and what its benefits are. Let me attempt to correct some of the misunderstanding and dissuade you from having fears about this powerful tool that may be useful in your life.

The first thing to understand is that clinical hypnotherapy is very different from stage hypnosis. Stage hypnosis is what you see at fairs, carnivals, and shows where a hypnotist takes people from the audience and puts them in a trance as a form of entertainment. Clinical hypnotherapy is not a form of entertainment and has a very different intention than stage hypnosis. The intention is to help the client overcome any issue they have going on and improve their life in a confidential setting where they feel safe, comfortable, and aware of the process.

Hypnotherapy works because it is an easy and safe way to bypass the conscious mind and access the unconscious mind. In some schools of psychology, the unconscious mind is called the subconscious. Many hypnotherapists, including myself, prefer the term 'unconscious' to 'subconscious' because it does not connote that this part of our mind is 'less than' or 'inferior to' the conscious mind.

The conscious mind is the part of the mind we can control - our thinking. It is the thoughts we are aware of and the ideas and decisions we make. The unconscious mind is more mysterious. It is operating all the time, but in a less tangible way. Hypnotherapists use the analogy of the unconscious mind being like a computer because it is easily programmed by whatever information is put into it. Like a computer, it processes the data that it is given and runs on the programs that it has been taught. The data going into your unconscious mind on a daily basis includes the things people say to you, the television you watch, what you see in the world, what you hear on the radio - in other words, everything coming in through the senses. The unconscious mind does not have the ability to discern what information or 'programs' would be harmful to us. It does not censor what is coming in. The conscious mind is different in this way because we can choose to be aware of our thinking and therefore make judgments about how we think, feel, and see the world.

Many people are unaware of what their core beliefs are. These are the programs running in the unconscious mind that are like filters that change the interpretation of your experiences to validate the core beliefs that you have. For example, a person may have the negative core belief of "I am unlovable". It is likely that an early childhood trauma or situation or pattern has shaped this belief. At some point, the unconscious

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mind has adopted this belief. Again, because the unconscious does not know whether the information it is receiving is good for us or not, it takes in everything as 'true'; there is no 'false'. The person who believes on the unconscious level that they are unlovable then creates their life experiences to validate this belief. They get into relationships and sabotage them because deep down they do not feel they are lovable. Hypnotherapy is a powerful tool for shifting beliefs like this that exist on the unconscious plane.

Knowing about the unconscious mind is important because it will help you make positive choices for yourself concerning who you surround yourself with and what information you expose yourself to. It can also help you better understand how to talk to yourself and more effectively structure your thoughts. For instance, when you learn that the unconscious mind does not register negatives, such as the word 'not', you can learn to change your thoughts into positive affirmations. When we tell ourselves something like, "I am not going to smoke cigarettes", the unconscious mind only hears "I am going to smoke cigarettes." We could rephrase this to: "I am letting go of smoking permanently now."

Hypnotherapy is a way to journey into the unconscious and look at what 'programs' are running and what beliefs or traumas may be influencing our daily thinking and routine. Through hypnosis, we are able to reprogram the unconscious mind. Much of this takes place in restructuring how we think and what stories about the world we are telling ourselves.