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### **WHAT HYPNOSIS IS?**

Hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness different from sleep and wakefulness. It is characterized by focused attention to a particular facet of mental activity with decreased peripheral awareness. In everyday life we, at times, become absorbed inwardly in thought, remembrance, fantasy or in reading a story or watching a movie; all these are examples of spontaneous hypnosis. Physically, it is a state of relaxation and decreased movements. It is calm and quiet, pleasant state of mind wherein we use more of our own potentials and in which imaginations and ideas can have a greater impact on our mind and body. Hypnosis is a structured, guided and goal oriented meditation.

Our mind is like an iceberg, three fourth of which is subconscious, i.e. we are not consciously aware of the processes going on in this larger portion of our mind. The subconscious mind is the regulator of all our psychological (viz., memory, thinking, feeling, behavior and personality) as well as biological (viz., autonomic, endocrine and immune) functions. It possesses tremendous potentials which are made available to an individual largely through the right brain functioning. Hypnosis provides systematic access to the right brain functioning and thereby to the subconscious inner potentials.

The word “hypnotism” or “hypnosis” provokes a picture of the magician in our minds, who pretends to use some strange power in him to demonstrate that the hypnotized person starts following every command. The person under hypnosis seems unable to bend a straightened arm as he has been told that he cannot bend it or sniffs a bottle of ammonia with obvious expression of delight, as he has been told the odour was that of a rose. He remains relaxed and comfortable despite application of a painful stimulus or he is regressed back to the age of six months and made to suckle a milk-bottle.

Stage performances of hypnosis, just for fun and entertainment, have done a profound disservice to the more valuable therapeutic use of this science. They not only cause psychological and at times biological damage to the participants on the stage but also spread misconceptions in the society.

The science of hypnosis, when used by a qualified clinician trained in hypnotherapy, is a very potent tool in the armamentarium of a doctor.

## **MISCONCEPTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS**

Generally, it is believed that people with weak mind can be hypnotized easily or that the hypnotist is endowed with a supernatural power or that he used some magic or mantra to bring the hypnotized person under his command. And then, the person under hypnosis would do everything, the hypnotist instructs him to do.

In fact, more than 90% of the population is hypnotizable. Ability to undergo hypnosis is a quality of one's personality and not a weakness. As it is with any other capability, everyone cannot attain the same degree of hypnosis. Co-operative individuals with strong will-power and better imaginative involvement can reach a deeper level of hypnosis easily.

Hypnosis is not a magic; neither a supernatural power nor a mantra is used by the hypnotist. Willingness of a person to undergo hypnosis is essential. Even under a deep state of hypnosis a person remains endowed with sufficient power of self-defense. He is not just a passive follower of all the commands of the hypnotist. Neither would he do the thing that is against his morals or personal ethics, nor would he disclose secrets.

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