

# What is Hypnosis?

All human beings have experienced the hypnotic effect spontaneously in their life, during the normal waking day they can naturally enter the alpha or theta level of consciousness associated with hypnosis. Many people have watched a TV programme and yet have completely lost awareness of what has happened or what has been said on screen and the reverse, when absorbed in watching a TV programme totally lost awareness of their surroundings the outside world seems to disappear, even another person asking them a question goes unheard. This shows that it is not one particular group or a random occurrence amongst certain susceptible people that are able to enter this state, but the whole of humanity when the body and mind is relaxed enough this is a natural state we all experience.

There are three main components in the process of inducing hypnosis: relaxation, imagination and enactment (Hildegard and Le Baron 1984). One thing is certain and that is the importance of deep relaxation during hypnosis it is as a key ingredient if you like, a combination of both mind and body working hand in hand, it would be worthless to relax the body when the mind is dancing the rumba. Lying down all day on a bed does not equate to relaxing, if your mind is on high alert, your muscles will be tense, and other chemical changes within the body will occur affecting hormones, the nervous system and other organs, quite the opposite of relaxed in fact, showing mind and body are intertwined.

Relaxation during hypnotism in therapy is most commonly achieved by progressive muscle response, although there are many ways to induce a hypnotic state this can be used in this instance as an example. As the name suggests it is a technique where the muscles throughout the body are relaxed in an orderly manner, the breathing and heart rate slow down, muscle tension is reduced giving a change in physical feeling, brainwaves begin to slow, moving down the scale into the alpha or theta waves. Activity within the cerebral cortex changes the left hemisphere of the brain associated with logic and control becomes subdued, activity in the right hemisphere controlling imagination increases, when a subject is fully relaxed in both mind and body this is the point when the subconscious mind can be accessed. In a world where stress is one of the major causes of physical and mental illness the importance of relaxation and the benefits of hypnosis are a fact, the results speak for themselves, although successful treatment is never guaranteed.