

Amy Logan's insomnia was leading to a lot of restless nights. Taking a friend's advice, she decided to pay a visit to a hypnotist. Here Amy looks at the medical benefits of hypnosis and is put into a deep, deep sleep ...

The lights are dim and the couch is comfortable; the hypnotist's voice is monotonous, yet soothing. "Listen and relax, listen and relax," he repeats over and over. My arms and legs and even my eyelids are feeling heavy. My breathing is slowing down, as though I'm falling into a deep sleep and then the hypnotist begins ...

There is evidence that the Ancient Egyptians used hypnotism over 2,000 years ago, but hypnotherapy as we know it dates from the 18th century (1) Hi, it wasn't until the following century, however, that surgeons began to use hypnotism (coming from the Greek word for sleep) to relax patients during surgery. With the rise of modern medicine, however, in the last **200** years, hypnotism has been associated more with stage show hypnotists swinging a pocket watch in front of their victims and asking them to cluck like a chicken to entertain an audience!

But now, increasingly, with the help of hypnotherapy people are managing anxiety, losing weight, stopping snoring, and overcoming many other addictions and conditions. In fact, up to 75% of people who have used hypnotherapy to stop smoking have been able to kick the habit. **(2)**

So how exactly does it work? Scientists are not 100% sure. What they do know is that it creates a state of deep relaxation in which patients are more open to suggestions than when they are wide awake. **(3)** They are not cut off from the outside world, but they're completely focused on the hypnotist's voice. It's at this point that he can suggest positive changes to thought patterns and habits.

Hypnotherapy isn't just for psychological problems, though. (4) Burn victims, for instance, have benefited from pain relief after a session of hypnotherapy. One senior citizen even had an operation which involved a surgeon sawing into her foot while under hypnosis! She says, "I said to myself that if I had any pain I should think of it as waves lashing against a sea wall. Every time it happened, I imagined the pain going away, like the tide."

While hypnotism isn't a magic wand, it seems it may be able to treat countless conditions. Moreover, it is painless as well as risk-free, it has no side effects and it's cheap. **(5)**

Before trying hypnotherapy for myself, I did a little research and found out that although about 90% of people can be hypnotized, good hypnotherapy patients tend to be relaxed, imaginative, intelligent, and easily absorbed by things. So what happened after my own hypnotherapy experience? Well, throughout it, I felt normal and could still hear the traffic outside, but when "awoke" after what I thought was about 20 minutes, I was surprised to learn that an hour had passed. I have to admit I've been sleeping better ever since. **(6)**

It looks like hypnotherapy might work for me, but what about you?
Could you be hypnotized?