Welcome to Week 6

A bit of history of hypnosis

I’m often asked by clients where hypnosis came from. Well, it has a long and interesting history. The word itself comes from hypnos which is Greek, and the Greeks were very interested in the state of consciousness between waking and sleeping, somewhat akin to day dreaming.

**Mind and health**

In the 18th century, an Austrian physician called Franz Mesmer developed the idea of animal magnetism, which he believed would ensure good health if allowed to flow freely. Many of his ideas seem odd to us, but what was important was his growing understanding of the idea that the mind could affect physical health and well being. His name survives to this day, to mesmerise someone is to have a great influence over them.

**Trance described**

Later in that century a Scottish doctor, James Braid, who was interested in mesmerism, took things to a more theoretical level. He found that by getting his patients to fixate on an object they would go into a trance like state. It was Braid who coined the term hypnotism for this phenomenon. It was Braid’s idea of fixating on something which is the foundation of the ‘swinging watch’ cliché which so many still identify with hypnotism.

**The idea of suggestion**

The next well known figure is a Frenchman called Emile Coue who have active in the latter half of the 19th century. He began the idea  that suggestion could change behaviour and coined the phrase  “Day by day in every way I'm getting better and better”.Coue also stressed the importance of self help, believing that he just facilitated his client’s change.

Coming closer to the present we come to Milton Erikson, still recognised as a leading influence on modern day hypnotherapy. He is still influential today for his work on how language patterns can affect our unconscious mind and his stress on the unconscious mind as being capable of finding its own solutions. It was while recovering in bed, almost entirely lame and unable to speak that he became aware of the significance of non-verbal communication. He developed the techniques of indirect hypnosis and believed that indirect suggestion had more effect than explicitly telling people what to do.

If you would like to find out more about Milton Erikson, you can visit the website of his foundation at [www.erickson-foundation.org](http://www.erickson-foundation.org)



So what is hypnosis?

So what is hypnosis. If you have been looking around the web, then you have probably found a number of different definitions and you might have even been feeling a bit confused. Well the good news is that it is not that unusual. When we talk about hypnosis we are actually describing a very common state which we all experience every day.

Oh, you might be saying, thinking of everyone wondering about like zombies, or drifting about oblivious to the world around them.

**The unconscious mind and hypnotherapy**

Well, there is a little bit of truth in this. Hypnosis, or the trance state describes the state of mind where the logical conscious mind – the bit we are usually aware of, is bypassed and the more creative and instinctive part of the mind takes over. You may recognise this; we often call it day dreaming.

In that state we are very suggestible and can even notice physical changes caused by thoughts occurring naturally in our minds or which are suggested to us by a hypnotherapist.

**Hypnotise yourself**

Try this little test for yourself. Shut your eyes and imagine you are sucking a lemon. Notice how your mouth feels different, you may even be salivating. Just as if you were actually sucking a lemon. That is the power of the mind. If you can do that by thinking about a lemon imagine what if you had a plan, a professional hypnotist and a goal you really wanted to reach.  What could your mind do then?

It is not a magic solution but it is a very powerful tool when it is directed to a goal which you really want. So, say you want to lose weight, then imagine what it would be like to eat and enjoy only healthy foods. Or say you are afraid of speaking in public, well imagine what it would be like if you were delivering a speech with smooth confidence. If these imaginings are happening when you are in that creative state with your unconscious mind in the driving seat then your whole being, your physical feelings, your mental state can be changed. And that can be the beginning of a new life for you.