

# HYPNOSIS EXPLAINED

Among the general population, hypnosis, what it is and how it works, is greatly misunderstood. Most people's idea of hypnosis comes from a lot of misinformation and inaccurate stereotypes. Stage Hypnotists particularly misrepresent the phenomenon. And hypnosis is ridiculously portrayed in the cinema.

So what is it?

A very simple example of someone in hypnosis is to think about how you got to sleep last night. If you fell asleep, congratulations! You are very good at hypnotizing yourself. In order to achieve sleep, a human must get into a light stage of hypnosis. This state of mind actually makes it possible for a person to "get to sleep."

Think about it. You're lying in bed; your mind is still active. The muscles of the body start to release tensions (relax) and the thoughts begin to drift. Eventually the thoughts will turn to thoughts associated with relaxation (maybe thinking about some pleasant or enjoyable activity.) At some point, you drift, without awareness of time into sleep. No one can "pinpoint" the actual time they made the transition.

So hypnosis is the last conscious waking state before sleep. The form of hypnosis is commonly known as self-hypnosis. When in that state of mind we experience the three characteristics of being in hypnosis: 1) inability to maintain concentration or stay focused, the thoughts drift from one thing to another (like day-dreaming, 2) in hypnosis, we experience some time distortion, it seems to either speed-up, or slow-down, 3) in the state, we also experience some amnesia (we don't remember accurately.)

Another simple way to understand hypnosis is to think of it as an escape mechanism that is built into our behavior. We all possess this mechanism. It is often called the fight/flight reaction. Think of it as escape from any overloading experience, such as falling in love, stressful driving conditions, extreme climate condition (heat or cold,) any intense anxiety or fear, intense physical pain or discomfort. To escape these we can enter a trance state of mind.

One very typical example of people being in hypnosis is when they fall in love. That feeling of intense emotion is certainly overloaded. While it feels really good, being in love certainly affects people's capacity to think clearly or rationally. And they sure are suggestible to the person they're in love with! Some have humorously referred to love as "the interruption of normal brain function."