



hypnosis

the power within

Combine a painful marriage with a stressful job and a weight problem, and you arrive at a life that could be a lot happier. That's what Evelyn found. Then she began working with hypnotherapist Jeffrey H. Cohen, and the experience changed her in ways she could never have imagined. (To protect her privacy, *remedies* has agreed to use Evelyn's first name only.)

Self-Discovery

Think "hypnosis" and the hocus pocus of nightclub entertainers may come to mind. But instead of some guy in a tux making you snort like a pig, therapeutic hypnosis leaves you in complete control of your thoughts, actions, and surroundings. When it's undertaken with a trained and certified hypnotherapist who guides you into this natural state of mind, hypnosis "can be one of the most powerful things you do in terms of self-discovery," says Cohen, owner of the New York Hypnosis Center in New York City.

Hypnosis can also help you tackle smoking and other bad habits, along with pain, stress, allergies, asthma, preparation for medical procedures, performance anxiety, skin conditions, and gastrointestinal problems.

How It Works

As you read this sentence, you are fully conscious. Your brain waves are moving in a beta state. When a hypnotherapist assists you in experiencing the hypnotic state, you become increasingly relaxed, your brain waves slow down, and you enter into an alpha brain-wave state, allowing access to a powerful part of the mind—the subconscious. Unlike the next phase, known as theta (where dreams and nightmares live), or delta (the deepest of sleeps), in the alpha state, you retain complete control. Even if you've never been hypnotized, you're already familiar with alpha: You enter this state when you're daydreaming or engrossed in a novel.

Evelyn's Story

"For 15 years I'd been exploring ways to improve myself, but it was always two steps forward, one back. I kept hitting invisible obstacles," says Evelyn. Then, in

2006, she met Cohen. Her first 60-minute hypnosis session began with his asking her why she was there and what she hoped to accomplish. In a soothing voice, Cohen counted backward, bringing Evelyn to a very calm place where she was still completely aware of everything around her. He then repeated the questions.

"In my conscious state, I couldn't answer them, but under hypnosis I knew exactly why I was there and what I needed to do. Under suggestion, he gave me a new behavior to replace the old," she says. And then he counted her back up into full consciousness.

Explains Cohen: "Your conscious mind can only do analysis, reasoning, and problem-solving. But your subconscious is where your emotions, belief system, and habits reside. When you don't pay attention to your emotions, you may cover them up with distractions like smoking, overeating, or drugs. Then you may find yourself dealing with a symptom, rather than the underlying emotions that are driving it. Hypnosis gets past the firewall between your conscious mind and your subconscious, into which new information can then flow."

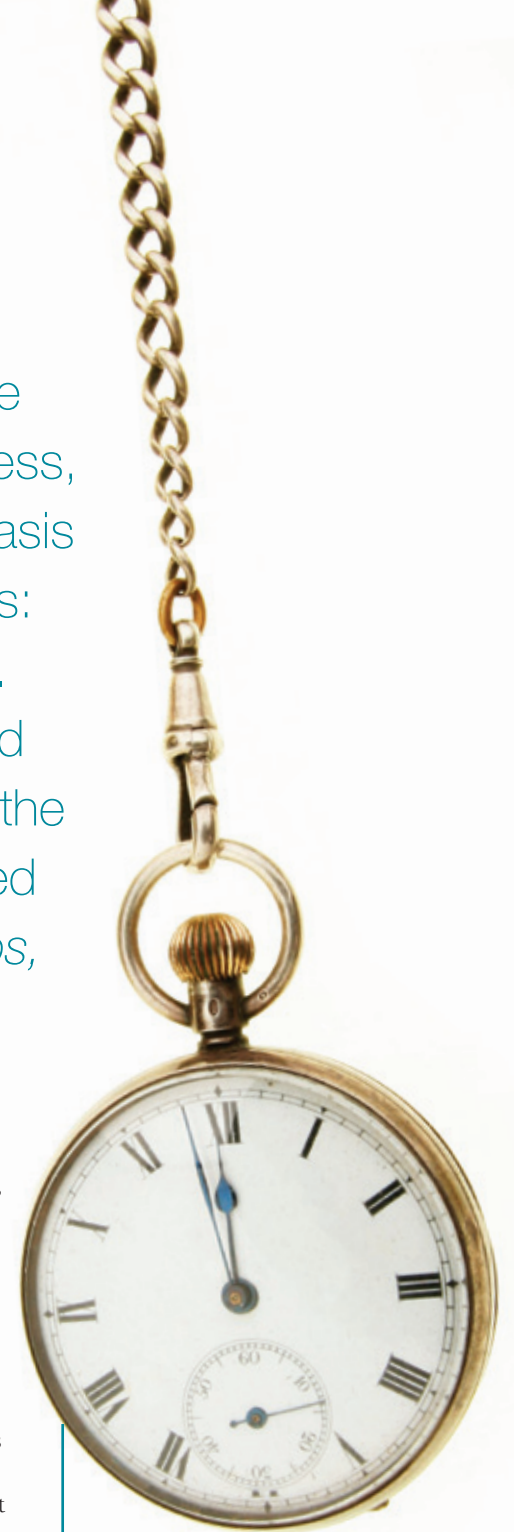
You're a good candidate for hypnosis if you easily lose yourself in music or movies, if smells trigger strong memories, or if memories trigger physical sensations from past events. Hypnosis

Hypnotherapy differs significantly from stage hypnotism. Nevertheless, there is a legitimate basis for the familiar phrases: "You're getting sleepy. Very sleepy." The word "hypnosis," coined in the 19th century, is derived from the Greek *hypnos*, or sleep.

won't work if you fear or misunderstand it, if the hypnotherapist is inexperienced or poorly trained, if you feel a lack of rapport with the practitioner, or if you subconsciously resist change.

The power lies in the mind of the person being hypnotized. "In hypnosis, you can't be forced to do anything you don't want to do or that's against your morals," says Cohen. "At the same time, you have within yourself the ability not only to understand what might be holding you back but also to resolve it."

After a series of appointments with Cohen, Evelyn successfully addressed her marital problems and weight (losing 40 pounds for good). Soon, she had started her own business. "What I would have spent a lifetime in psychotherapy trying to work through, I achieved in about ten sessions with Jeff," she says. —Claire Sykes



online resources

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