

## Hypnosis

Questions people have about hypnosis.

- Can you be hypnotized to behave against one's own will?
- Can hypnosis produce “amazing feats” such as “the human plank?”



Image source: Schacter et. al.

- Can hypnosis reduce pain?
- Can you induce hypnotic amnesia?
- Can you use hypnosis to enhance memory?

What does the scientific research indicate about these claims?

## Hypnosis

The following are true, but misleading statements about behaviors people can perform under hypnosis:

- People who are hypnotized can become rigid as a board. They can lie flat with only two chairs for support (one at the head, and one at the ankles).



Image source: Schacter et. al.

- People who are hypnotized will throw water on another person when they are told or shown that it is acid (the acid was later switched without the hypnotized person's knowledge).

These are true, but misleading statements about hypnosis and cannot be used to support the claim extraordinary abilities that hypnosis can produce.

- What does each statement suggest?
- What information have you not been told about hypnosis?

## Hypnosis

What information have you not been told about hypnosis?

Many demonstrations of hypnosis do not have a control group. If a control group of non-hypnotized participants can perform the same behaviors, then hypnosis isn't as amazing as some claim.

- This feat is easily accomplished without hypnosis—don't try it at home.

Image source: unknown



- Experiments done with a control group show that people in the control group who were not hypnotized would throw acid on someone else when asked to by the researcher—just like those under hypnosis.

## What do psychologists know about hypnosis?

Hypnosis can help people:

- feel less pain,
- relax,
- and facilitate progress in therapy.

What hypnosis can do:

- **Hypnosis can help relieve pain.** This is helpful when chemical painkillers are not an option.

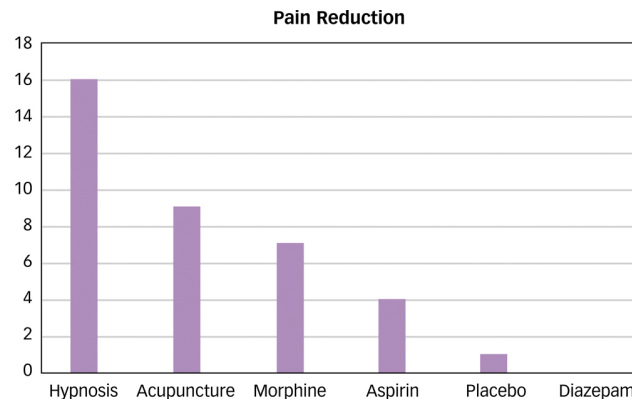


Image source: Schacter et. al.

- **Hypnosis coupled with cognitive-behavior therapy** enhances the effectiveness of weight-loss programs.

Hypnosis is more successful in changing subjective experience than changing behaviors such as smoking and overeating.

## **What hypnosis cannot do**

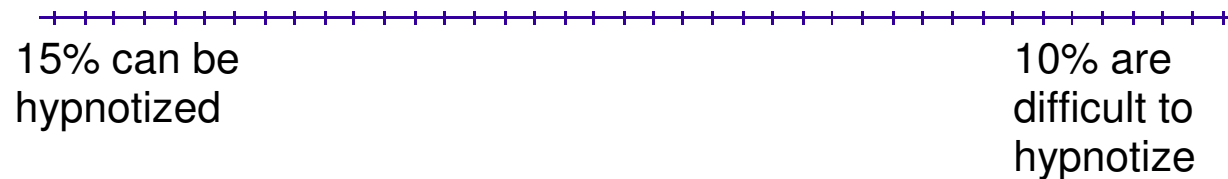
- You cannot be hypnotized against your will.
- You cannot be hypnotized to commit acts that are not consistent with your core beliefs and values (such as murder).

People are aware and control their behavior and can refuse a hypnotist's suggestions. Whether you are hypnotized or not, you be coaxed and persuaded to commit acts that are not consistent with your core values.

- Therapy and behavioral changes: Hypnosis has failed to produce long-term changes in cessation of smoking behavior.
- Memories:
  - Overall, hypnosis seems to increase the confidence a person has in their memories retrieved by hypnosis, regardless if they are accurate or not. People are more willing to guess what the missing information is. More often, hypnosis leads one to recall more false memories (pseudomemories) than enhance their memories—especially with leading questions.
  - A person told not to remember something heard during hypnosis may claim not to remember. In some instances, this may be nothing more than a deliberate attempt to avoid thinking about specific ideas. However, a brief memory loss does seem to occur.

## Factors Related and Unrelated to Susceptibility to Hypnosis

Approximately 15% of the general population can be hypnotized and about 10% of the general population is difficult and virtually impossible to hypnotize. In addition, children are easier to hypnotize than adults.



Several studies have shown that susceptibility to hypnosis is UNRELATED to personality characteristics such as:

- gullibility,
- hysteria,
- psychopathology,
- trust,
- aggressiveness,
- submissiveness,
- imagination or
- social compliance

People who are highly hypnotizable and difficult to hypnotize have the same rates of these characteristics.

Susceptibility to hypnosis, however has been linked with an individuals' ability to become absorbed in activities such as

- reading
- listening to music or
- daydreaming

## Explaining Hypnosis

Dissociation Theories: The idea that hypnotized people are in a trancelike state in which conscious awareness is separated, or dissociated from other aspects of consciousness (page 117).

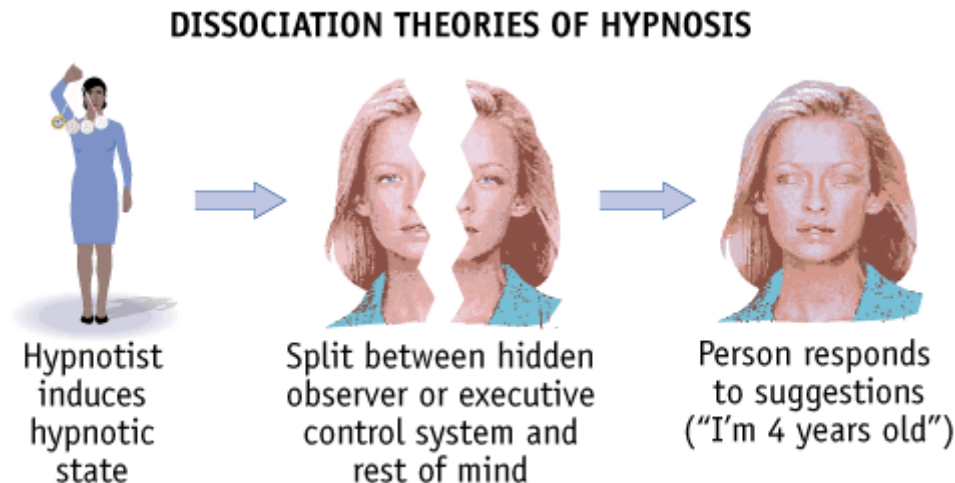






Image source: Wade and Tavis

There are two streams of consciousness (awareness) that are cut off from each other. One stream responds to the hypnotist's suggestions, and the other remains in the background aware of everything that goes on.



## Explaining Hypnosis

Dissociation Theories: The idea that hypnotized people are in a trancelike state in which conscious awareness is separated, or dissociated from other aspects of consciousness ([page 117](#)).

	<b>Laura</b>	
Arm in the water		Mind "somewhere else"
	<b>Michael</b>	
Smelling the colognes		Interpreting the colognes

## Explaining Hypnosis

Sociocognitive theories: Hypnotized people are not in an altered state of consciousness, but they behave in a way that hypnotized people are expected to behave (page 117).

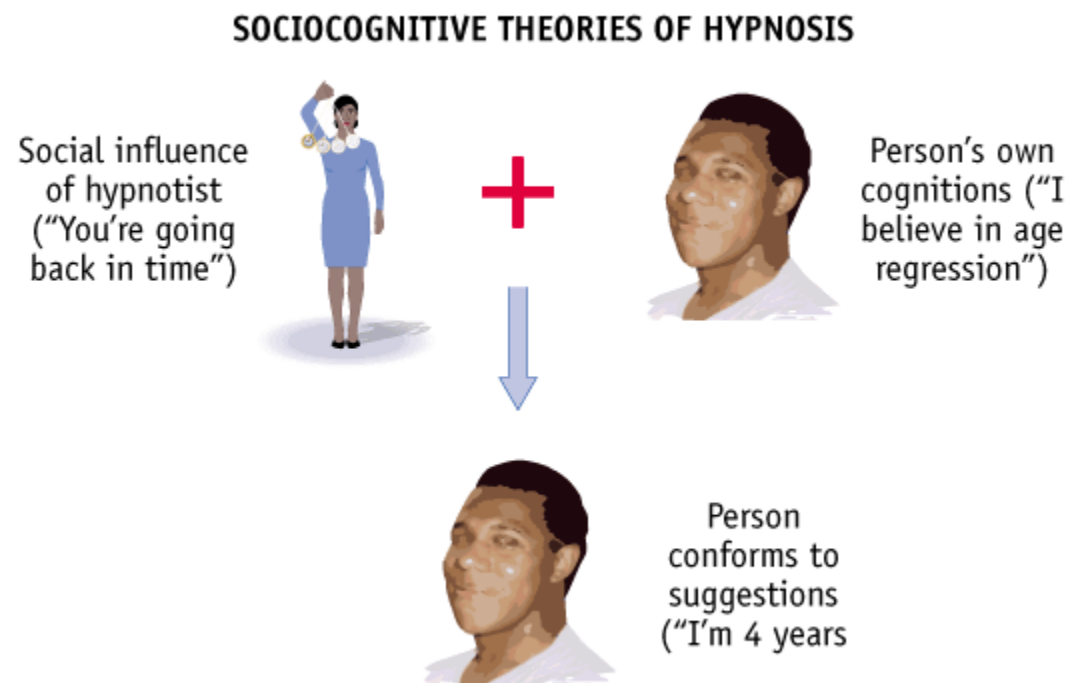


Image source: Wade and Tavris

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Most people believe that hypnosis involves a trance-like state and responsiveness to suggestions. People highly motivated to conform to role develop a perceptual set and respond accordingly.

	<b>Described as</b>	<b>Reported by Michael</b>
<b>French cologne</b>	Flowery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasant</li> <li>• Flowery</li> <li>• wouldn't wear it, it is okay, but a bit sweet and nice</li> </ul>
<b>California cologne</b>	Musky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musky</li> <li>• I think more masculine, wear the second one</li> </ul>