



**M**ention hypnosis and many people immediately think of stage hypnosis, when people appear to lose control and behave outrageously under the influence of the hypnotist. Medical hypnosis is not like this at all.

### Normal hypnotic events

We have all experienced hypnotic events. They are a natural, normal state of mind and can be used to instruct the unconscious mind and body. We all carry around with us the ability to lessen our stress, ease our pain, overcome our fears, and change unwanted habits.

Many people have experienced a trance-like state, but did not call it this. It may have been when you were day-dreaming, or so engrossed in a book or project that time passed unnoticed. Most people have experienced driving along a familiar road, so absorbed in thought, that they arrive home without remembering the drive.

### Hypnosis has a specific aim

Hypnosis is very similar to these states. The difference in hypnosis is that there is a specific aim, so the trance is channelled to achieve a desired result. If you tried right now to slow your heart rate or increase the temperature of one of your hands, you would find it difficult. These are internal changes in physical, psychological and emotional parts of yourself.

Under hypnosis, the therapist can make suggestions that you act on more powerfully than under normal conditions. You may be able to control areas of yourself that are normally

out of reach.

### How successful is hypnosis?

The degree to which a person can be hypnotised varies greatly. About 20 per cent of the population can be hypnotised easily. However, the chances of success are greater in situations of increased motivation, such as among wounded soldiers in a battlefield or acute burns patients in hospital units.

### What may hypnosis help?

Hypnosis works best for complaints that have a physical and a psychological component. It is used mainly for:

- Anxiety*
- Chronic pain*

# Hypnosis...

## in the treatment of some medical problems



### *Sleep problems*

- Bed wetting*
- School refusal*
- Certain phobias*

It is less effective for problems such as overeating or smoking, where the person has more voluntary control of the situation.

### Will I do something stupid?

People often ask if a hypnotist can make them to do something against their will during hypnosis. This fear stops many people exploring this technique. Generally, you cannot be made to act in a way that threatens your fundamental self-interest or that conflicts with your normal code of con-

duct.

However, some caution is needed in choosing your therapist. This is because psychological harm, such as false memories or unexplained anxiety, can be created by inexperienced therapists.

Used appropriately, hypnosis can be a technique for empowering people, and for enhancing their natural abilities to achieve what is important to them.

