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A Short History Of Hypnosis

By Colin Aldridge

A short history of hypnosis by Colin Winston Aldridge, Hypnotherapist;

Where to start when discussing hypnosis, it's a massive topic that has been part of human civilisation for many thousands of years, so it is a brief look at the history of hypnosis that I present to you.

Hypnosis pre-dates most of our modern day religions and medical practices alike and its existence can be traced back to the days of the pharaohs and ancient Greeks alike -this paper is a potted history -

So we will have to leave the Egyptian dream temples to one side and come quickly to modern hypnosis and its acknowledged forerunner Franz Mesmer who died recently as 1815, less than 200 years ago, having been born in Vienna. Mesmer is considered the father of hypnosis. He is remembered for the term mesmerism which leads to "being mesmerised" which described a process of inducing trance through a series of passes he made with his hands and/or magnets over people. He worked with a person's animal magnetism, another well know phrase we are all used to hearing in today's world. Jealous of his success the medical community eventually discredited him despite his considerable success treating a variety of ailments. As his successes offended the medical establishment they arranged for an official French government investigating committee to sanction him and his work. This committee included Benjamin Franklin, then the American ambassador to France, and Joseph Guillotine, a French physician who went on to introduced a device for physically separating the mind from the rest of the body which in fact is all Mesmer had done but without the permanent consequences of Guillotines work!

The next significant step for us here is that in 1841, Doctor James Braid began using mesmerism for his patients. He used a shiny object to put them into a deep "hypnotic sleep" in which they could accept healing suggestions. He believed staring at the shiny object exhausted the nervous system. He was the first to use the word "hypnosis It was in 1842 that Braid renamed magnetism and mesmerism to hypnosis and deemed it a psychological phenomenon. He used the word "hypno" from the Greek language; its meaning is "to sleep".

During his research into hypnosis he formed the following ideas, most of which still stand today: 5. That in skilled hands there is no great danger associated with hypnotic treatment and neither is there pain or

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discomfort.

6. That a good deal more study and research would be necessary to thoroughly understand a number of theoretical concepts regarding hypnosis.

7. That hypnosis is a powerful tool which should be limited entirely to the medical and dental professions.

8. That although hypnotism was capable of curing many diseases for which there had formally been no remedy, it nevertheless was no panacea and was only a medical tool which should be used in combination with other medical information, drugs, remedies, etc., in order to properly treat the patient.

James Braid died suddenly of a heart attack on March 25th 1860, at the age of 85 years. He maintained an interest in hypnotism throughout his life and made major contributions to the therapy that we use today.

In the medical world some of the most significant advances were made by Doctor James Esdaile. He completed his first operation without using anaesthetic in Calcutta, India in or around 1845. The client was placed into a trance state in which he remained throughout the procedure. Esdaile assisted in 300 major operations and over a thousand minor ones. Esdaile's mortality rate was 5 percent. This was good at the time in India, as most other physicians had over a 50 percent death rate while completing the same operations as Esdaile was performing. This form of anaesthetic was soon put into second place due to the arrival of chloroform. It was thought easier to inject someone than to assist them to enter a trance state. Using hypnosis is still widely preferred as an alternative to conventional anaesthetics, especially in the dental profession.

A segue to this is the life and times of Sigmund Freud, born in May 1856 in Freiberg, Moravia, he is a name we have all heard of. He got involved in hypnosis around 1883 and practised it for some time before abandoning it to concentrate on developing psychoanalysis. One of Freud's pupils was another name we are all also familiar with nowadays and that is Jung.

Carl Jung was a student and colleague of Freud's, who rejected Freud's psychoanalytical approach and developed his own interests. He developed the concept of the collective unconscious and archetypes. Though he did not actively use hypnosis, he encouraged his patients to use active imagination to change old memories. He often used the concept of the inner guide, in the healing work. He believed that the inner mind could be accessed through tools like the I Ching the Chinese book of changes and astrology. He was rejected by the conservative medical community as a mystic. However, many of his ideas and theories are actively embraced by healers to this day.

Although Freud and Jung were not directly involved in hypnotic practise they are associated with its experiential growth in modern times by eliciting the trance state during session.

The 20th century saw no abatement in the use of hypnosis in fact far from it

During World War II it was widely used among psychiatrists and physicians to treat problems such as

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stress and battle fatigue. There have also been formed many councils, associations and organisations all over the world during the last century in order to assist the modern-day therapist to keep in touch with the latest information and discoveries. And most have a "Code of Ethics" for their members to follow.

Here in Britain The Hypnotism Act of 1952 was introduced to protect the public against dangerous practices in hypnotic shows, and the performer is still required to get a license granted in a Magistrates Court prior to such a show.

In 1970 the British Police tried experimenting with hypnosis for interviewing witnesses to certain crimes. Hypnosis was reported to be particularly effective in helping witnesses and victims recall detailed descriptions of criminals and perpetrators relate the details of violent attacks and recall the scenarios immediately preceding certain accidents.

Milton H. Erickson

To give full credit to Milton H. Erickson's (1901–1980) life story in hypnosis, it deserves a complete section of its own, however here I will just explain briefly the outstanding achievements he made during his life. Prior to his death in 1980 Erickson certainly played his part in shaping hypnotherapy into what it is today.

Erickson was a psychotherapist who used hypnosis throughout his career to aid his clients' progression and recovery. He was excellent at intently observing people and rapidly building rapport with them. Metaphors, confusing statements, surprise, imagery, and humour were part of his vast range of therapeutic tools.

His methods of trance induction are nowadays referred to as Ericksonian hypnosis, and without a shadow of a doubt, he added another era to the history of modern hypnotherapy.

Hypnosis today in the 21st century

And so we arrive at the current day in the history of hypnosis. There are many leading figures and pioneers in the world of hypnotism today. And the story of hypnotism does not end here, quite the opposite in fact. There are new and exciting discoveries being made all the time and also "add-on" therapies that complement hypnotherapy, many of which have their roots in hypnosis. These are continually being developed, and the list is endless of the psychological problems, phobias and fears that can be put in their place by these well-founded therapies. Below are some examples:

12. Stopping smoking 13. Weight loss 14. Improving low self-esteem and motivation 15. Dealing with anxiety and panic 16. Increasing athletic performance 17. Curing procrastination or putting off doing something,, especially out of habitual carelessness or laziness 18. And curing phobias such as: 19. Fear of heights 20. Fear of spiders, snakes and other animals 21. Fear of public speaking 22. Fear of enclosed spaces

This is enough to give you an idea of the vast possibilities of the therapeutic uses of hypnosis today.

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In conclusion, the story of hypnosis starts way back as I have said, before history as we know it was even recorded. Down the line it has received contributions from many colourful characters and cultures, but the true fact is that hypnosis is really a fully natural phenomenon. It occurs to people all the time in everyday life and it has been harnessed in many ways over the years, by many individuals who wish to progress the phenomenon and bring it up to date in their time.

This is not by any means a full account of the history of hypnosis, more of a brief overview. There are many more characters who had their part to play, and should not be left out of this but this is a short essay embracing only the most significant aspects of the topic.

Colin Winston Aldridge, Hypnotherapist.

My name is Colin Winston Aldridge, I am a clinical hypnotherapist based in Chelmsford, Essex UK –

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When Do I Need Hypnosis?

By Mark Dodd

Have you seen this scene: A man is asked by someone to jump for ten times, crawl on the floor then roll over like a dog? Some have this in mind as the picture of hypnosis. Actually– it is not the truth. What is hypnosis then?

Hypnosis is, in fact, a natural state of heightened awareness, focused attention and, often, deep relaxation. This experience is called "the alpha state". In the "alpha state" our brain wave frequency is slower than when awake, but faster than when we're asleep. According to different academic studies, the old misconceptions are now eradicated and the fact that all forms of hypnosis are really self-hypnosis is now paving the way to deeper understanding.

For others, hypnosis is the exit to stress because it is a way of relaxation. According to experts, hypnosis depends on how the recipient accepts it– whether deep or shallow it depends on him or her.

Nowadays, hypnosis has brought wonders to a lot of people all over the world and it has been the source of all that could be relied on as solutions. Many who were able to accept hypnosis as a deep process were able to see for themselves the goodness behind it and the light at the end of the tunnel.

Hypnosis has solved problems involving one's inner sense like: addiction especially today's illegal substance addiction; it could also help out with one's self-acceptance and acceptance of others too. If your fears, lack of confidence, low motivation, success orientation are really bothering you, hypnosis may let you calm the storm inside you.

The skills that may have been not that active in you because of some reasons may be polished again through this method. So, if you think that you need help with regards to your leadership, learning skills, creativity, sports performance and so forth hypnosis may just be the one you have been looking for.

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Health disorders could also be addressed with the use of hypnosis. Experts have proved that the power of hypnosis reach even the solutions of various health disorders like Fibromyalgia, headaches which are common with us, insomnia, high blood pressure and others.

The misconceptions about hypnosis are now near the exit door. Recent studies are now showing how hypnosis paves the way to better living. If done with the proper purpose, this would be a great means of healing naturally inside and out.

Mark Dodd is a freelance writer for the Hypnotic Times. He writes a regular column which is published every Thursday. His latest 'favorite pick' is

<http://www.behypnotic.com/>



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