

'Nothing is sinister about hypnosis'

No more are swinging pendulums used to send people into a trance; it can be done merely by talking or using images. There's no magic in it: Expert

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Most people associate hypnotism with a swinging pendulum that makes them go into a trance, giving the hypnotist access to their subconscious minds. But Prof Jacob Raju, director of Bangalore Hypnosis Institute, says it can be done just by talking and is a form of cognitive behaviour therapy.

Nowadays, people are hypnotised using language, images and feelings by a process known as Neuro-Linguistic Programming, which helps them deal with their problems. This process is no magic or mystery, Prof Raju says, but a procedure with a scientific basis.

"All our problems are thought related. They are either related to our past, such as feelings of regret, or to the future, such as anxiety. Through hypnosis, we make the person aware of the present, in which he/she is in a relaxed state of mind, and change the feelings or images associated with the problem," says Prof Raju.

A person need not undergo the induction process, which is done in the traditional method using a swinging pendulum. In modern hypnotherapy, the hypnotherapist engages the person in normal conversation on a therapeutic theme.

He is able to induce a trance inside the conversation and access the subconscious images and emotions that run their entire lives. He guides them to the best available solution which is acceptable to their subconscious mind, says Prof Raju.

He cited the example of a 69-year-old man who compulsively scratched his head, so much so that it became embarrassing when he had to meet people during formal occasions. Treatment helped him shed the habit.

People usually seek hypnotherapy to deal with stress, anxiety, relationship problems or to give up smoking, but some harbour misconceptions about hypnosis.

"There are several myths associated with hypnotherapy. People think that once they are in a state of trance, they will reveal their hidden secrets. But that is not the case. Even in a state of trance, the patient is aware of what s/he is saying and what is happening around them. People think they can control someone's mind through hypnosis. Sometime parents come to us asking us to erase the memory of the person their son or daughter is romantically interested in. Actually, hypnosis works like psychological counselling. You cannot control someone's mind by hypnotising them," said Anuradha Jayachandra, psychotherapist, Basix Centre of Human Excellence.

Once a person is taken into a relaxed state of mind, a hypnotherapist makes positive suggestions to alter the feelings or images that they associate with their problems.

"We only guide the person to access his/her subconscious mind. A person has to repeat the suggestions even after the session for him/her to be able to break the old pattern of thought and associate their mind with a new positive pattern of thought," says Prof Raju.

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