

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING HYPNOSIS

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This study was prompted by the observation that most patients reacted with either extreme eagerness or marked reluctance when hypnosis was suggested as a method of treatment. It appeared that hypnosis was generally regarded as some mystic procedure in spite of the fact that it is losing its magic under scientific scrutiny - to the extent that the very existence of a 'hypnotic state' has been challenged (Barber, 1969).

One hundred subjects selected from different age groups and educational levels were interviewed on their beliefs, attitudes and sources of information about hypnosis. It was found that hypnosis was perceived by the subjects as some powerful instrument by which the person under hypnosis found himself in a state of complete subjugation to the hypnotist's will. The hypnotist was believed to be able to find out the subject's secrets, persuade him to commit unlawful acts, and even make the subject develop romantic attachments towards specified persons. Such beliefs were equally common at all levels of education. Over three fourths of subjects believed that strong support for the existence of rebirth could be obtained by regression to previous existences under hypnosis.

Although over-estimates of the power of hypnosis sometimes enhance its effectiveness, most of the prevalent misconceptions serve to hinder the use of hypnosis by reducing its acceptability. This situation needs correction because hypnosis is a safe, non-invasive, inexpensive and useful method of treatment in certain psychiatric and physical disorders (Frankel, 1975; Hilgard, 1968.)

References

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