

HISTORY

The art of hypnosis (people going into trance to heal themselves or to retrieve information) is as old as time itself, but the recorded technique of hypnosis dates back to the 1700s. A German physician practicing in Paris named Franz Mesmer (1734-1815) saw a Jesuit priest perform an exorcism by tapping on an individual's head with an iron crucifix. Later, the "patient" appeared to be cured.

Mesmer experimented with magnets and found that some people could be made to go into trances by touching them and come out of trance cured of some problem. He presented his theories that hypnotic state derives from the operator who induces the trance, in 1772. (The phrase "mesmerized" was coined at this time.)

Although Mesmer's explanation of how hypnosis works is considered wrong by today's standards, the phenomenon is nonetheless genuine. Soon after, Mesmer published his theories a commission was formed to investigate; the commission included Benjamin Franklin. They concluded Mesmer was a fraud and that "all cures are based on imagination."

James Braid (1785-1860), a British doctor, used eye fixation on objects to induce hypnosis, gave name Hypnosis (Greek for sleep). He tried later to change the name, but was unsuccessful. He performed thousands of operations using only mentally induced hypnosis.

Likewise, John Elliotson (1791-1868), a professor of surgery at the University College in London and the inventor of the stethoscope, used hypnosis for painless surgery and for treating mental disorders.

James Esdalie (1808-1859): Doctor who practiced in India performed surgery with hypnosis for anesthesia. Note: Hypnosis is all that is used as anesthesia during eye surgery in India, to this day.

Jean Charcot (1825-1893) and Hippolyte Bernheim (1837-1919): French neurologists, although feuded for many years, they collaborated which led to development of new Nancy School, utilizing suggestions. All modern hypnotists follow this school.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): Freud studied under both Charcot and Bernheim. Freud used hypnosis for a while until he switched to Free Association where the patient does most of the talking. Freud tried to discredit hypnosis until he was very old. Then he said it was a good method, but that he was not good at it. This set hypnosis back 70 years.

Emile Coue (1857-1926): Wrote the most famous positive suggestion of recorded history; it is now being used by members of Alcoholics Anonymous though out the world. "Everyday in every way, I'm getting better and better".