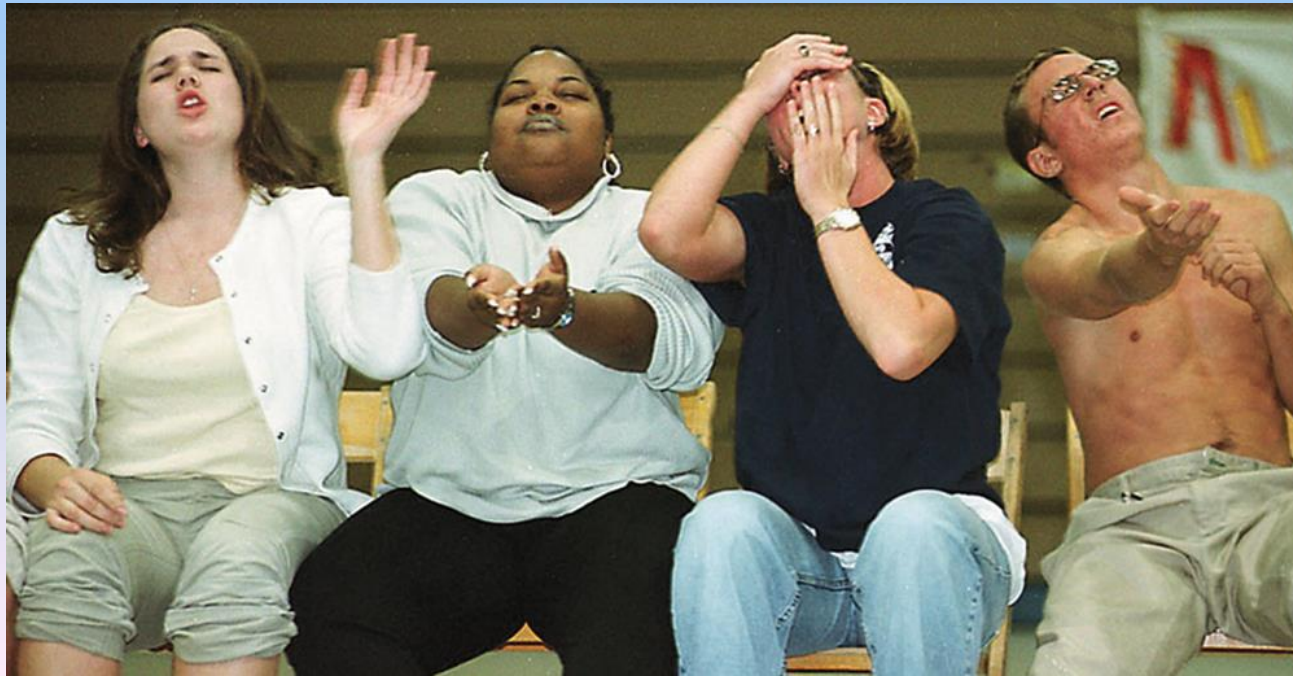


## Module 25: Hypnosis

# What is Hypnosis?

# Hypnosis

- *A social interaction* in which a hypnotist makes *suggestions* about perceptions, feelings, thoughts, or behaviors, and the subject follows those suggestions



## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Social Influence Theory

# Social Influence Theory

- Theory that powerful social influences produce a state of hypnosis.
- This theory notes that a person's physiological state does not change under hypnosis.
- Social factors influence people to believe hypnosis will work.

# Social Pressures

- The hypnotist's status and *authority* increase the likelihood that subjects will be influenced by suggestions
- Subjects *want to appear cooperative*, which increases their suggestibility.
- *Peer pressure* can also lead people to behave in ways they wouldn't normally.
- Not necessarily “faking” it – hypnotist and subject may both believe strongly in the powers of hypnosis

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Divided Consciousness Theory

# Divided Consciousness Theory

- Theory that during hypnosis our *consciousness splits* so that one aspect of consciousness is not aware of the role that other parts are playing.
- Promoted by Ernest Hilgard (1904-2001)



# The Hidden Observer

- We all do this regularly. While driving to school one part of your mind may wander thinking about a homework assignment you need to finish, while another part continues to monitor stop signs, traffic, etc.
- Hilgard discovered a *hidden observer*, divided from the rest of consciousness, that can hear what is going on and that protects us from doing anything in hypnosis that we would not do under any circumstance consciously, such as causing someone else physical harm.



# Difference Between the Two

- Social Influence theory says that hypnosis is a result of *external* social variables.
- Divided consciousness theory says that hypnosis is the result of an exaggerated division of *internal* consciousness.

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Hypnotic Techniques

# Hypnotic Induction

- The process by which a hypnotist creates a state of hypnosis in a subject
- Usually done by voicing a series of suggestions
- Voice is usually calm and of a rhythmic tone



# Hypnotizability

- Differences in the ability of people to become hypnotized
- Varies from person to person
- Varies from situation to situation
- About 10% are excellent subjects, another 10% are poor subjects, and the other 80% fall in the middle

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Hypnotic Techniques: Hypnotic Suggestions

# Limits to Hypnotic Suggestions

- Suggestions usually involve sensations, thoughts, emotions, and a wide variety of behaviors.
- Hypnosis *does not cause* behaviors.
- Hypnosis can lead people to certain behaviors but so can ordinary suggestions.

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Hypnotic Techniques: Posthypnotic Suggestions

# Posthypnotic Suggestions

- Hypnotic suggestion that the subject will carry out after the hypnosis session has ended
- Technique can be used to encourage helpful behavior changes, such as stopping smoking or losing weight.

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# Hypnotic Amnesia

- *Inability* to remember what happened during hypnosis because the hypnotist suggests that the subject will have no memory of that period of time

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Applications of Hypnosis: Hypnosis and Memory

# Can Hypnosis help retrieve lost memories?

- Some believe hypnosis can help uncover lost memories that may be hiding deep within the *subconscious* (a proposed storehouse for ideas and memories you cannot easily access)
- Police departments have even used hypnosis to try to uncover details about a crime that witnesses may have lost (license plate numbers, etc.)

# Hypnosis and Memory

- While there are isolated cases of hypnosis helping recall, researchers cannot be sure if the memory came back due to hypnosis (maybe it would have come back anyway)
- Cannot be sure if the memory is accurate or one that is created to please the hypnotist

# False Memories?

- Under hypnosis, someone may unintentionally manufacture *untrue* details and then later be unable to distinguish the real from the unreal
- Even when not under hypnosis our brains fill in the “holes” with plausible events that could have occurred when we try to piece older memories back together
- Hypnosis increases the likelihood of these false memories being constructed

## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Other Hypnotic Claims

# Placebo Effect?

- Some claim that hypnosis can cure everything from headaches to warts
- The problem is that we have no way of knowing for sure that hypnosis caused these improvements
- Many studies have shown that people who receive treatment of *any* kind (even sugar pills) tend to show more improvement than those who receive no treatment

# Placebo Effect

- Improvement due only to the *power of positive expectations*
- People *think* they will get better so they do

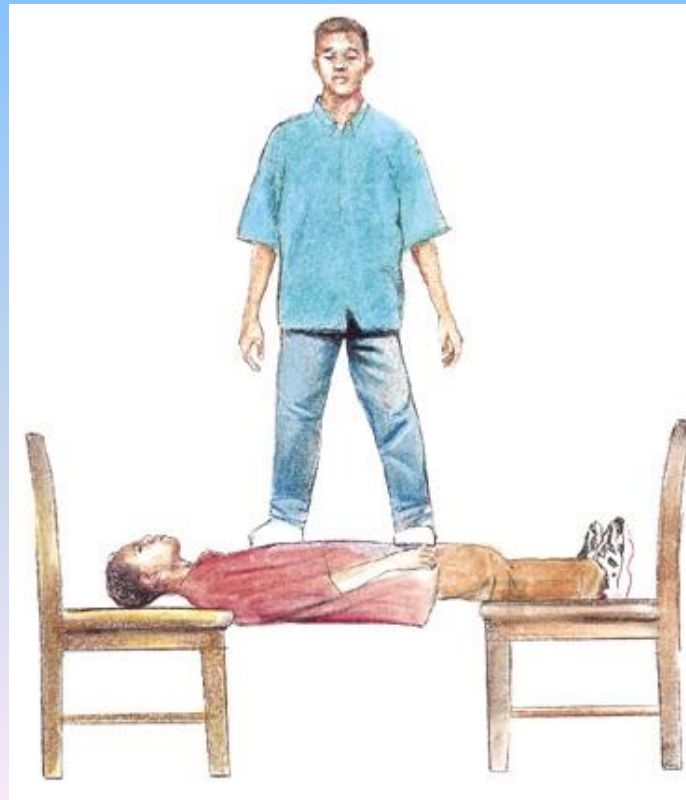


# Unproven Claims of Hypnosis

- *Feats of Strength* – being able to perform physical feats while under hypnosis that supposedly go beyond normal human abilities (i.e. lifting a car)
- These feats may be possible without hypnosis
- *Age Regression* – an attempt to turn back the clock to an earlier time in the subject's life while they are under hypnosis (4-years-old)
- Hypnotically enhanced memories are unreliable

# Feats of Strength

- Many feats of strength done under hypnosis can be accomplished without hypnosis.



# Age Regression

- Under hypnosis, the supposed ability to remember earlier periods of time in one's life
- Psychologists consider age regression demonstrations unreliable.

# Evidence of reincarnation?

- Famous case of Bridey Murphy in the 1950's
- Young Irish woman who “appeared” when subject was under hypnosis
- Gave details of 19<sup>th</sup> century life in Ireland
- Later discovered that one of her childhood neighbors was Bridey Murphy and was the source of much of the information she gave under hypnosis

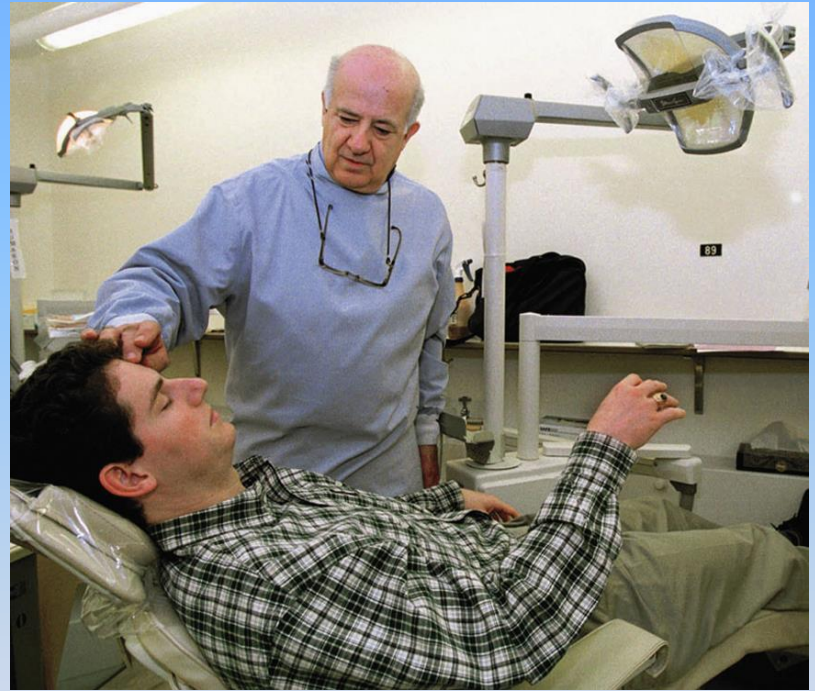


## Module 25: Hypnosis

# Hypnosis and Pain Control

# Pain and Hypnosis

- Hypnosis *does* work as a means to control pain.
- Hypnotized subjects can separate themselves from the pain they are experiencing
- Has a number of practical applications – dentistry, hypnobirthing



The End