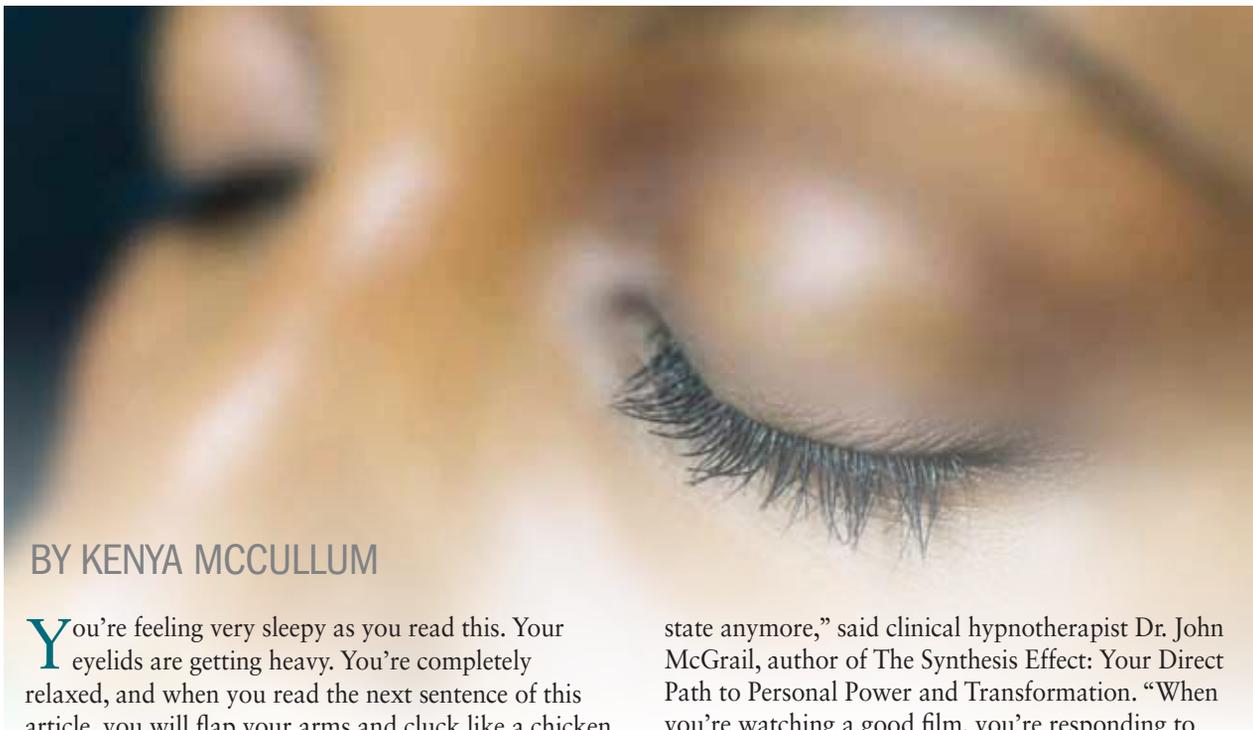


# Hypnosis for Better Health



BY KENYA MCCULLUM

You're feeling very sleepy as you read this. Your eyelids are getting heavy. You're completely relaxed, and when you read the next sentence of this article, you will flap your arms and cluck like a chicken three times.

Thanks to many examples in popular culture, when people think of hypnotism, they generally envision a scenario much like this. But hypnosis is not just a parlor trick performed by wannabe Harry Houdinis. When used in a clinical setting, hypnosis can be a mechanism for improving patients' health and well-being by working on problems at a subconscious level.

Although the idea of using hypnosis for better health might sound a little bit like metaphysical voodoo, the fact is we actually experience levels of hypnotic states all the time. Whenever we get engrossed in an activity — driving, listening to music, watching a movie — we enter a natural state of consciousness that is akin to what the stage hypnotist does to his unwitting volunteers during a show.

“When the subconscious mind takes over, which is what happens in hypnosis, it cannot tell the difference between illusion and reality — so a good movie feels real for those two hours and when the movie is over, the lights come up and we come back to what is called conscious awareness. You're not under the trance

state anymore,” said clinical hypnotherapist Dr. John McGrail, author of *The Synthesis Effect: Your Direct Path to Personal Power and Transformation*. “When you're watching a good film, you're responding to suggestion. The same thing happens when you read a really good book or when you just daydream.”

When done in a more deliberate manner, this hypnotic state can be instrumental in overcoming a myriad of health challenges, and patients commonly report that clinical hypnosis has helped them with issues like weight loss, smoking cessation and overcoming fears and anxiety.

In addition, clinical hypnotists may also help patients with serious physical ailments, like chronic pain and psychological problems, including depression. In these cases, practitioners will work in conjunction with their patients' physicians to ensure that the treatments do not ultimately cause more harm than good. For example, frequent headaches are often a sign of serious health problems and although a clinical hypnotist can eradicate the headaches, it doesn't help the patient if the underlying illness is still present. The symptoms have merely been masked.

## WORKING WITH A CLINICAL HYPNOTIST

Many people who consider hypnotherapy fear that the process will put them at risk of being programmed