

to do things that they don't want do. But, according to Jason Linett of Virginia Hypnosis, the opposite is actually true.

“Some people have the expectation that hypnosis involves some kind of loss of control, when really hypnosis is more about helping people take control of those parts of their lives that often feel like they're out of control,” he said. “So, we're dealing with habits, we're dealing with behaviors, and we're dealing with emotions, beliefs and feelings. Rather than being that loss of control, it's that process of helping people empower themselves to think better, feel better and become much more effective at what they're doing.”

Clinical hypnotists begin their sessions much like a doctor by doing a patient intake to understand what the problem is. During this time, the hypnotist will ask about the patient's issue, how it originated, how it manifests itself and, most importantly, what success will look like when the hypnotherapy sessions are complete.

Based on this information, the hypnotist will tailor sessions toward patients' specific needs and goals. But no matter what the problem is, the objective remains the same — to slow the brain waves so that patients' unconscious mind will be open to making the changes they want to make. This can be done in a number of ways, such as by having patients count backwards, visualize something that relaxes them or stare at an object.

Once patients have entered this relaxed state, the hypnotist will begin the work of encouraging their subconscious mind to change. This is effective because the process quiets down the conscious mind — which often clings to the familiar and stands in the way of change — and allows the subconscious mind to take over during the session.

“The conscious mind is usually in the front seat and the subconscious is in the back seat. This is how most of us operate, but the subconscious is more of the driver — It's the backseat driver,” said hypnotherapist Beverly Flaxington, author of *Understanding Other People: The Five Secrets to Human Behavior*. “During hypnosis, if you've done it well, the subconscious is really sitting now in the front seat listening and the conscious mind is taking a little bit of a backseat.”

And when your subconscious mind gets behind the wheel, it begins to reprogram your conscious mind, encouraging it to make the changes that you are trying to make — but only if you really want to make them.

“Provided a person wants to change, hypnosis is usually 100 percent successful; otherwise it can have between a 75 to 85 percent success rate,” said Colin Christopher, author of *Success Through Manipulation: Subconscious Reactions That Will Make or Break You*. ❖



Choosing a Clinical Hypnotist

Check credentials. There is no state licensing procedure for clinical hypnotists at this time, but there are a number of professional associations that issue certifications, such as the National Guild of Hypnotists, the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and the International Medical and Dental Hypnotherapy Association. You can find clinical hypnotists through these associations, or check the credentials of the ones that you're already interested in working with.

Get references. Just like with any other service, it's important to get references. Try talking to patients who have tackled the same issues that you want to change to get a sense of whether a hypnotherapist is the right fit.

Look for community involvement. One way to tell if a clinical hypnotist is reputable is by looking for evidence of involvement in the professional community, as well as your local community. Does the hypnotist have a blog about their work? Does the hypnotist write journal articles about clinical hypnosis or participate in industry conferences? Has the hypnotist been interviewed on local television or radio? These can be indicators of experience and a deep involvement in the field.