

Beyond the Hypnotic State

An investigation into spontaneous healing.



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Hypnosis

Some people with illness can bring about spontaneous healing. Until we know how they do it, we can't help others develop this ability.

Chemical, surgical, and other external interventions are not effective in themselves. All healing relies on autonomic systems partly under conscious control. The issue, then, is understanding the limits of our autonomic systems.

Hypnosis is an attempt to extend the limits of intention, to amplify what is sometimes called “the placebo effect” in order to cause lasting change. Awareness of change starts with illusion. This is certainly the case in any change that involves consciousness, since all cognition is fundamentally illusory. The key distinction is between illusion and delusion: illusion is a vision that can connect with reality; delusion is a vision that cannot.

How It Works

There have been many attempts to understand why hypnotism works for some and not others; to determine if the difference resides in the client, or the relationship. And while there are many physiological signs of hypnosis, there are no physiological markers that reliably identify when a person is hypnotized.

The importance of understanding hypnosis lies in the hypnotized person's potential to affect unconscious processes. These processes include everything from thought patterns, to the function of their organs, to physical healing. People often demonstrate unusual powers of healing through hypnosis. For example, post-

surgical healing typically progresses at twice the speed when combined with hypnosis. This makes it all the more intriguing that there exists no physiological signature for the hypnotic state.

Measuring Subjectivity

Hypnosis is a meta-state: an unusual combination of normal states, rather than an unusual state in itself. You might compare it to dreaming, which feels like a normal state of awareness but clearly is not. This comparison is not far-fetched since, in the earliest times, directed dreaming was a healing modality. And like dreaming, there is no pill or treatment that can create a therapeutic hypnotic state.

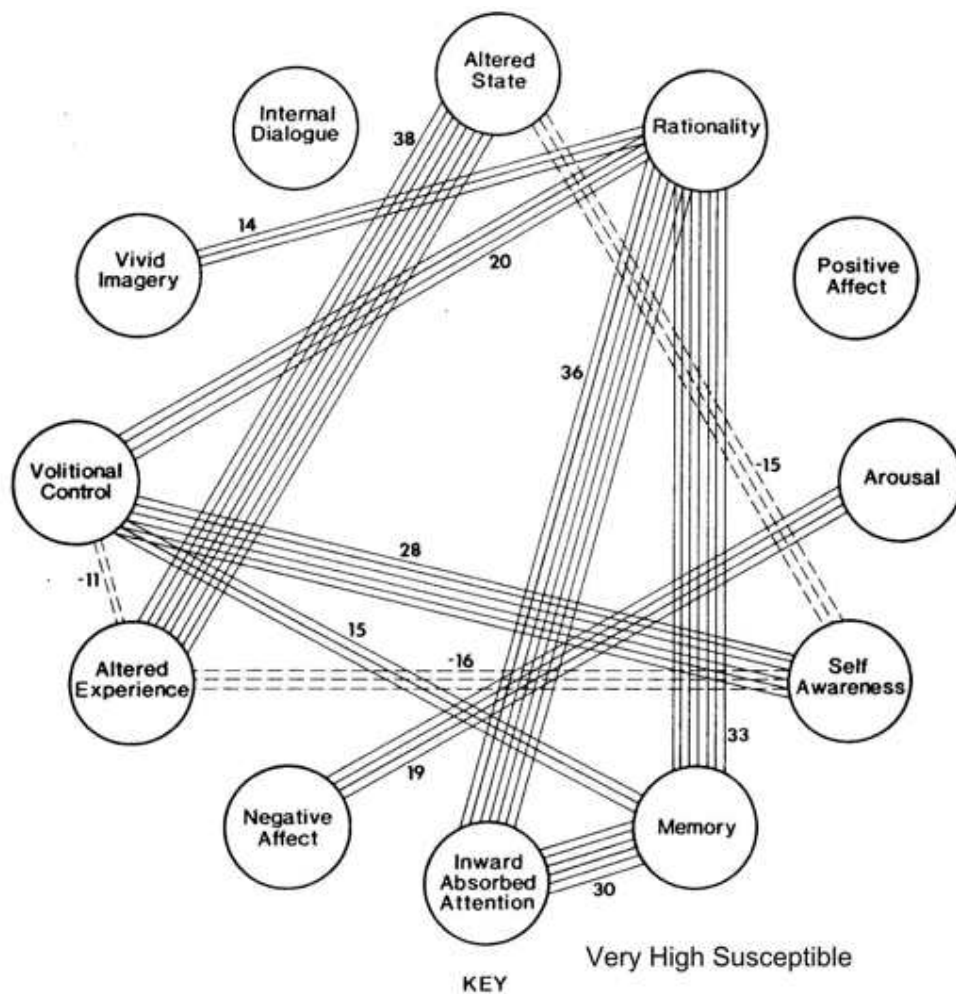
In 1980 Ron Pekala and others developed a subjective map of consciousness that identified the hypnotic state. The Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory, or PCI, is based on an easily administered test that can distinguish hypnotizable from non-hypnotizable people, and measure a person's hypnotic aptitude.

The PCI has gotten little attention. No one seems to recognize that it may help explain how people heal themselves. It's a treasure map and, like all treasure maps, no one seem believe it exists.

The Phenomenology of Consciousness

The PCI is a set of questions whose answers, measured on a seven-point scale, describe one's subjective experience pertaining to hypnosis. The 12 major attributes of the PCI scale are:

1. altered state
2. rationality
3. positive affect (emotion)
4. arousal (general decreased relaxation)
5. self awareness
6. memory
7. inward absorbed attention
8. negative affect
9. altered experience
- 10.volitional control
- 11.vivid imagery
- 12.internal dialog



Each line represents approximately 5% of the variance in common.

Figure 1: the PCI diagram

This PCI diagram represents the average state of mind of a small group of highly hypnotizable people. Self perception is broken into 12 states of consciousness arranged around a circle. This diagram does not indicate the strength, level, or amount of each state, but rather the connection between these states of mind, represented by the connecting lines.

The lines represent the degree to which pairs of states correlate, or vary in direct proportion to each other. The more lines, the stronger the two states correlate, meaning the more frequently they occur together. Broken or dashed lines represent one state that's associated with the opposite of the other.

Variation between pairs ranges from +100% to -100%. A value of 100% means the two states occur together, while a value of -100% means the opposite of one state occurs with the presence of the other. Each line represents an 5% agreement so that 100% correlation — such as would indicate two states of mind always appear together — would be represented by two circles connected by 20 lines.

Only three pairs of circles have more than seven lines between them, indicating a correlation of 35%. The actual measured degrees of correlation are given by the numbers that appear on the figure.

The PCI opens unfamiliar ways of thinking. In this expanded “inner space” we must take small steps in order to answer the question of who are most adept at healing themselves.

The Ability to Self-Heal

It is not the magnitude of these attributes that is important, but the relationships between them. A person's score on the PCI's dimensions does not identify what I'm calling their self-healing ability, it is how a person moves through these states that makes the difference. This essential point takes the PCI beyond a personality profile to an understanding of healing.

The ability to self-heal is not a special state of mind, but a special relationship of states of mind. A skill at which some people are more adept than others.

The three features stand out in Figure 1:

1. A strong connection between Altered State and Altered Experience, which means a person sees and feels differently when in an altered state.
2. A three-way connection between Rationality, Memory, and Inward Absorbed Attention. This implies a person can engage their analytical mind and memory when entering an inward, altered state. Coupled with the first feature, this means a person can intentionally create a lucid illusion.
3. Weak or absent connections between other states of mind is the most salient feature of a highly hypnotizable person. Weak connections indicate an ability to dissociate, to shift attention to new perceptions without resistance from what has been called "the society of mind." This passive skill reflects a willingness to explore.

"(When you realize you are) programming everything that is happening inside your head. You are free of the physical world at that point and anything can happen inside your head because everything is governed by the laws of thought rather than the laws of the external world. So you can go to the limits of your conceptions."

— John C. Lilly (1915-2001)



By focusing on the Rationality-Memory-Inner Absorbed Attention triad I have created an induction/visualization/suggestion tape designed to clarify and strengthen these relationships. This is a step toward developing one's self-healing ability. Listen to this audio presentation when you're in a resting, detached state. This is the first of several works that take the insight of the PCI and put it into practice.

[Listen to Thinking-Healing](#)

In later posts I'll discuss how these properties can be developed to enable greater self-healing.

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