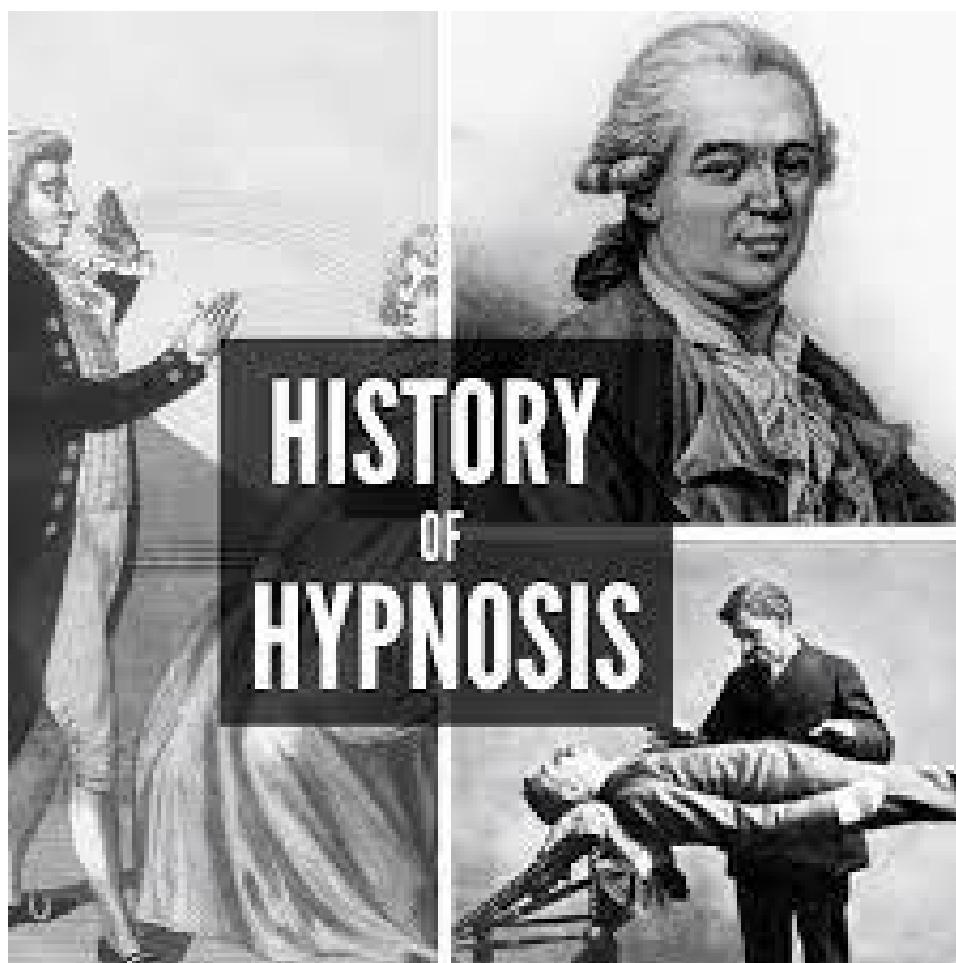


A Brief History of Hypnosis

Frankie Lafferty



Dating back to as far as 3000 - 1000 BC Hypnosis has been recorded as in existence .

Whilst there have been many forms of Hypnosis in recorded activities. It was the late 18th century when Franz Mesmer, a German physician, developed started to develop and promote the term “mesmerism”, essentially exploring his beliefs about the balance of magnetic power within our body, using animal magnetism.

Revered by many of his peers with many rejecting Mesmer’s concepts, it didn’t go unnoticed that Mesmer did achieve certain successes with treating a number of his patients symptoms . Its worth noting that in a similar way the research of Hypnosis was matched also by the research of “Sleep”.

Following the history of Mesmer was a Scottish ophthalmologist, James Braid, who coined the word ‘hypnosis’. It originated from the Greek word for ‘sleep’.

Modern science later proved hypnosis was not related to sleep but one thing hypnosis and sleep have in common is the enhancement of our external focus.

In the mid-19th century, Austrian physician, Josef Breuer’s work got attention for his treatment of Anna. O for hysteria. Breuer used suggestive hypnosis to trigger Anna’s childhood emotions, which resulted in the reduction of her symptoms.

A good colleague of Breuer was Sigmund Freud. Through hypnosis work, Freud discovered our unconscious process, which was a significant finding especially in psychoanalysis. Although Freud attempted to use hypnosis, it was free association that he invested in which clients talk freely and the clinician analyses their deep psychology. Later, in the mid-20th century, Melanie Kline, the leading developer of the object relation theory, reported that Freud became too authoritative in hypnosis, which hindered his hypnosis results.

The most prominent figure in modern hypnosis is American psychiatrist, Milton Erickson (1901 - 1980) , who was a master of using language creatively in order to communicate with patients' unconscious. What was unique in his approach was that he was not interested in identifying the cause of the symptoms, like many other clinicians back then, instead his focus was on helping patients release their symptoms by stopping the defence functions. He made outstanding clinical successes, and his methods were called Ericksonian hypnosis, which was strongly embedded in other contemporary approaches such as neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

In the late 20th century, the American Psychological Association established the Division 30 Society of Psychological Hypnosis. Since then, the science of hypnosis has been developed rigorously.