

subject to ignore all thoughts and impressions except those he suggests. The hypnotist then asks the subject to focus his eyes on a particular object. As the patient focuses on the object, his eyes become tired and his mind becomes drowsy. The hypnotist then tells the patient that he will be able to hear and obey commands.

35 Next, the hypnotist tries a few simple commands to see if the patient is responding. The hypnotist may tell the subject that his left arm is so heavy that he can't lift it. If the patient is then told to lift his left arm and he cannot do it, the hypnotist knows that he is working with a subject who will respond to his commands. Only about half of all people can be hypnotized.

40 From this point on, the hypnotist gives the patient a series of statements or commands. The subject may be told that he will not feel pain when pricked by a pin. Indeed, as the pin enters the skin the patient shows no signs of pain. The person under hypnosis then may be asked to imagine a blackboard and to write certain words on it. He may then be told that he cannot recall the words. Later, he may be told that he can recall
45 the words. With changing commands, most patients respond exactly as they are told. The hypnotist may tell the patient that he can see something that is not actually present, or he may be told he cannot see something that really is present.

 Some people can respond to a large variety of commands, but most people can only be influenced to do a limited number of things. In no instances can they be
50 influenced to do things that are distasteful or dangerous to them. In other words, a hypnotist cannot change a bad person into a good citizen or transform a good human being into a criminal.

Hypnotic Successes and Failures

55 Hypnosis has been most successful in calming people's fears and in helping them overcome bad habits. If an individual is afraid of flying or going to the dentist, his anxieties may be soothed through hypnosis. Hypnosis may also be very useful if a patient is overwhelmed by worries or fearful about discussing certain perplexing problems. In addition, patients have been successfully assisted in overcoming drinking and smoking habits.

60 Some hypnotists have claimed that they could get people to recall happenings from their former lives. A famous book called *The Search for Bridey Murphy* allegedly traced the life of an Irish girl back to a previous life. Investigations by scientists proved that this claim was not true.

65 Some crime investigators have experimented with hypnosis as a way of getting suspects or witnesses to reveal information (a little like a lie detector test). Unfortunately, an uncooperative witness can easily resist hypnosis. Even cooperative witnesses may report highly inaccurate information unintentionally. Hypnosis is not helpful in the search for the truth.

70 If you want to try your hypnotic skills, find a friendly dog and see if you can put him to sleep. Calm him down, lie next to him in the grass, and yawn 100 times. If the dog is not startled by activities around him, he may begin to yawn, too. Don't expect your yawning trick to last very long.