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Howard  
Napper

hypnosis &  
meditation

A comparison

fibromyalgia

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many thanks & all good wishes

Jane Sill

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# hypnosis and meditation: same or different?

by Kieron Devlin

A seductive voice is telling you: 'Become aware of your breathing, watching it like waves on an ocean. You drift away nicely in your inner space, suspended in slow motion. Your eyes close; you are tired; you realise how much your body aches to relax. The left analytical brain ceases to judge or label. Images flit across the screen of your mind, which is slowing, deepening, attuning to your deepest wishes and desires.'

Are you in a hypnosis session? Or is it a guided meditation on audio? It is hard to tell these states apart and we might well wonder whether hypnosis and meditation are one and the same process. There is overlap, but they are also very distinct in practice and purpose. From practising as a hypnotherapist, I began to notice that being in a meditative state was extremely helpful to my clients. Therapists model the ideal state of mind they wish their clients to have to help resolve problems. It is a kind of bio-feedback loop providing the signal of calm to clients who then gradually attune to a slower brain wave frequency in which 'creativity' and insight is more easily accessed, and problems dissolve. Yet, hypnosis is still not meditation - there are important distinctions.

## **differences, similarities and overlap**

The word 'hypnos' refers to sleep, while 'meditare' refers to pondering a topic. Hypnosis, or 'hyno-therapy', is a relaxation technique used to solve psycho-physical problems. It has predetermined outcomes; while meditation is a general approach to focussing attention, enhancing mindfulness and empowering spiritual development. They share common areas such as maintaining inward focus and requiring a secluded, undisturbed atmosphere to perform. They can both be done alone using audio CDs (See table). For hypnotherapists, the addition of meditation to your armoury can add a new dimension to support clients through loss of self-esteem, phobias, tension, depression or breakdown. In hypnosis and NLP, knowing how to change from being angry, upset, anxious or confused, to reach inner peace, is worth passing on to the client. Meditation techniques done alone are most similar to self-hypnosis -

which can be done sitting or lying down. Teaching clients to hypnotise themselves is a step towards them learning how to meditate as well.

## **buddha and mesmer**

Hypnosis and meditation arose out of completely different contexts. Meditation is a primarily religious practice. It is the backbone of the Vedic and Buddhist traditions. It offers a way of testing for yourself just how complex the organ of mind really is, how ideas buried deep in the mind pull all the strings. Hypnosis, on the other hand, grew from its links to medicine and psychology. In the 18th century, Mesmer noticed the impact of magnetism, what today we would call the 'energy body.' A century later, Coué noticed that positive statements - like meditation mantras - acted as suggestions on the mind - 'everyday you are getting better.' Hypnosis was not named as such until the 19th century. Hypnosis - when it is distinguished from stage hypnotism or entertainment - was used as complementary medicine, particularly for the management of stress and pain during operations. Today, doctors increasingly prescribe lifestyle changes for disease management. Hypnosis is now better recognised, and alongside meditation, might even be regarded as a kind of preventative medicine.

More than ever, we need to have this dialogue with the deepest aspects of our mind and beliefs. Hypnosis precipitates personal change; meditation takes it a step further, deepening and strengthening that development towards personal integration. This manifests in the way we act, our poise, elegance, mindfulness and compassion, not just towards oneself, but towards others. It is the ordinary person, cut off from their inner world, who can be helped most by this simple redirection of energy inwards in hypnosis.

## **it's 'all in the mind'**

Meditation, in contrast to hypnosis, is the investigation of consciousness itself. Meditators do this by sitting still - 'being' not 'doing.' Scientists are still baffled by 'consciousness' as it is regarded as the last bastion of subjectivity. Yet our whole perception of 'objective' reality depends on an observing 'I'. Without being aware of which state of mind predominates, we have less control over our

emotions and lives. We can even confuse what is real by being influenced by cultural spells that dictate behaviour out of sync with our true purpose. Through meditation we can begin to penetrate these layers of thinking into deeper states of intuition, contemplation and peacefulness. Perception of what hypnosis or meditation is before embarking on it is a key factor in achieving results which are verifiable.

Milton Erickson, the great hypnotherapist, who overcame colour blindness, dyslexia and polio with his unconventional techniques, developed the use of vague or unpredictable language patterns tailor-made to his clients' needs. His view was that hypnosis is a way of expediting change. If 'change' in the client did not occur, then it would not be effective hypnosis. An even broader definition of hypnosis by Grinder and Bandler, originators of NLP, is that it is 'all communication.' Suggestions are implanted not just by words but by the gaps between. Imagination wins out against will power in any battle. Hence, sceptics of both hypnosis and meditation who say 'it is all in the mind' fail to see the irony as they mistakenly downgrade the power of the imagination to dictate our personal reality. The mind is where we all live. Mind creates experiences in the body, and change must start with the imagination's power over the mind. The hypnotherapist knows this, but usually clients are less aware and need all the help they can get.

Buddha himself said 'all that we are is a result of what we have thought.' But grasping the stream of constant thoughts is beyond most people. Daily practice of meditation takes us beyond. It offers a way of increasing awareness of the various layers of mind.

Meditation and hypnosis are both allowing processes - no one can force you into either. You must be a willing participant. One definition of hypnosis is that it is all 'self hypnosis.' Clients allow themselves to go into trance and be led along a path towards a predetermined goal. This is not usually done sitting upright or cross-legged. The spine does not have to be erect for hypnosis; cosy chairs are good enough. Meditation, on the other hand, by the Sivananda method demands long training, sitting upright, and aims 'to unite the causal, the mental and the physical bodies into one whole. Meditation helps to harmonise these just as each cell in the body impacts the whole system.' Interestingly, the effect of both hypnosis and meditation is 'healing and integration' which is the meaning of the word 'Yoga'- meditation in motion.

## attention to the visual

Energy goes where attention flows: Trance is any 'inward focus' of attention in which external stimuli are excluded, though we may still be conscious of our surroundings. Think of reading, driving, listening to music or watching a film. Unfortunately, we also have a habit of listening to our 'backseat driver' - negative self-talk which puts us into an uncomfortable trance. Getting out of this is the hard part. Getting into trance is easy - we are in it all the time. Where hypnosis is similar to meditation then is in such CDs and audio tracks where the listener follows instructions to visualise helpful scenarios. This is the guiding of attention. Visualisation drives the energy of the mind in specific directions. For David Fontana, these are natural skills which have fallen into disuse: "Visualisation and meditation are not the same thing, but are closely related and can be used in harmony and conjunction with each other."

Hence the need for a daily meditation practice, not only to see results which might just be 'I feel less bothered by problems' or 'more in tune with myself', but also to help strengthen powers of concentration. Hypnosis requires fewer visits to the hypnotherapist, but it works on debilitating issues, and can work on people who have no inclination towards spirituality. I encourage clients to keep journals and do lots of work between sessions, and to dispel the tendency to rely only on the therapist for anything to happen. Writing too is a form of inner reflection requiring the same state of mind as meditation. Clients begin to realise the responsibility is theirs. Usually, rediscovery of the well-springs of their creativity, triggers clients towards a spiritual path, and understanding the value of meditation.

The increasing number of hypnosis and meditation audios with soothing music can potentially accelerate personal growth in dramatic ways, joining the dots between mind, body and spirit. They do not replace direct contact with therapists and teachers, but they increase the opportunities for people to work alone. For me, what is exciting is how differing approaches are not really in conflict, but lend support to each other. They often rest on similar universal principles while adding an extra dimension. Distinctions are important, but so is being curious and open enough to find any method of reducing the pain psychological problems cause. Both hypnosis and meditation achieve this in abundance.

Further information from: [www.kierondevin.com](http://www.kierondevin.com).

### hypnosis

Is a 'technique' to induce trance  
Usually 'passive' with a therapist talking while client listens and follows  
Light focus on breathing during induction.  
Done sitting, or lying down  
Does not require upright spine (Can even be done standing up).  
Goal to access the subconscious in order to aid the conscious goals  
Takes around 30-60 mins to perform  
Communication can occur even while client is in a deep state.  
Has a therapeutic goal ie to solve specific problems.  
Has DIY version 'self hypnosis'  
Helps achieve personal goals.  
Does not usually become a way of life  
Is structured in steps

### hypnosis & meditation

Turns attention inwards  
Uses focussed attention  
Enters a 'trance' state of mind  
Varies from light to deep trance  
Requires quiet atmosphere, conducive to relaxation  
Can be done alone or in a group  
Slower brain waves from alpha-delta are measurable  
Has 'healing' and 'integrative' effects  
Uses visualisation of imagery  
Uses sound vibrations  
Can be used effectively alone from an audio/mp3  
Helps relieve pain and suffering

### meditation

Is a general approach to enhancing spiritual development and going beyond the limits of the ordinary mind  
Usually active, and done alone  
Done sitting cross-legged or sitting  
Strong focus on breathing and staying in the present moment  
Needs an upright spine  
Done ideally twice daily for 15-30 mins.  
Goal to go beyond the mind which is perceived as limited  
No communication with anyone externally  
Less structured - open plan  
Encourages 'mindfulness'  
Uses mantras and mudras  
Increases sense of inner peace and oneness and avoids routine ways of thinking  
Personal goals achieved as a side effect  
Can become a total way of life