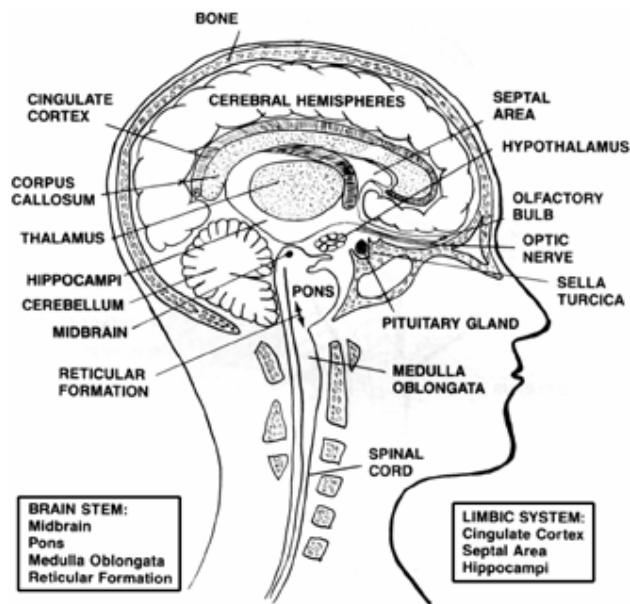


HYPNOSIS AND MIND – BODY COMMUNICATION

Hypnosis has long been recognised as an effective means of modulating the autonomic nervous system. The actual psychobiological processes involved has recently been explored by neuroscientists which give us a more clear understanding of not only the major anatomical and functional relationships between the mind, hypothalamus and the autonomic nervous system, but also how hypnosis accesses this same channel of communication to promote health and well being.

Ernie Rossi, in his book, *The Psychobiology of Mind – Body Healing*, suggests that in general, mind influences of the cerebral cortex reach the hypothalamus via its associated limbic system structures, the hippocampus, amygdala and thalamus. The hypothalamus then mediates these mind influences to the autonomic nervous system via the lower brain stem control centres, which serve as relay stations of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. (See diagram)



This network of communication can increase blood pressure, control body temperature, regulate blood flow, increase or decrease salivation and gastrointestinal activity, cause bladder emptying and sexual orgasm. Therefore all organs can respond psychosomatically. In all learning, the systems of the brain, nervous system, endocrine system and immune system work together according to our conscious choice of action. Neuron pathways are created in the brain determined by emotional responses to life events and we develop learned patterns of behaviour which we continually re enact. These patterns are held in memory are sometimes called state dependant learning and memory

Rossi explains that during times of stress, state-bound patterns of information may be generated in the regulation of any individual organ or combination of them. These patterns that may develop are what we call “psychosomatic problems”.

So we can understand that the *mind* modulates the activities of the cells via the autonomic nervous system through

- a) Mind generated thoughts and imagery
- b) Which are filtered through the state – dependant memory, learning and emotional areas of the limbic – hypothalamic system, transduced (like the flow of energy from the wind to a windmill, energy is transduced from one place or state to another) into the

neurotransmitters that regulate the organs of the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system finally branches out into the sympathetic (activating) and parasympathetic (relaxing) systems.

- c) These systems' terminal nerve endings secrete neurotransmitters initiate the third stage in the process of *information transduction* from the thoughts, images and emotions of the mind to the biochemical responses within the individual cells of the tissues and organs of the body.

As Rossi explains, the major point to remember is

Mind modulates the biochemical functions within the cells of all the major organ systems and tissues of the body via the autonomic nervous system.

It is these same processes that are activated during psychotherapy and hypnotherapy.

HYPNOSIS AND MIND- BODY HEALING

The psychology of mind – body communication and healing is in its early stages of research. Understanding the role of messenger molecules (neurotransmitters) is still being explored through the work of Scientist such as Candace Pert Phd and outlined in her book “Molecules of Emotions” Through this understanding we are creating new concepts of therapeutic hypnosis as a tool to assist healing and change by emphasising natural psychological processes of *information transduction* (remember the windmill) and the state-dependant memory, learning and behaviour to access and facilitate the utilisation of the client's own inner resources for problem-solving. (Rossi)

Messenger molecules are then:

1. The major pathways of communication between and within all the regulatory systems of mind and body, at the same time;
2. They serve as the ultimate keys for the state – dependant encoding of the types of personal and emotional experience and behaviour that have always been of relevance for psychotherapy and hypnotherapy and mind- body healing.

Use of the clients' natural – existing processes requires a trained therapist with the knowledge and skills to utilise these resources. So it becomes more evident that we are not just implanting suggestion into the subconscious mind of an open subject through hypnotherapy, but actively engaging their own inner memory, learning and conditioning.

Understanding the power of the human mind, we then can see and get a sense of hypnosis using this same power of the mind as a great corrective force. The role of the hypnotherapist is to facilitate the process which teaches the subject how to achieve the hypnotic (trance) state through the *willingness* of the subject. The hypnotherapist uses suggestion, stimulates the imagination, opening up the client's own creative imagination and inner potential. Hypnoanalysis also takes place in problem resolution. Such suggestions are not accepted unless the client is willing to receive them.

Through this process, the hypnotherapist is skilled at teaching the client to become aware of their own unconscious processing. In *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy, building and rebuilding the brain*, Louis Cozolino suggests, “Information is made conscious and analysed. Fears, phobias, depression, and traumas and behavioural problems are activated along with any other thought process we might stimulate. This process allows for the linkage among explicit and implicit circuits, conscious awareness and the inhibition and control of anxiety and fears. Regardless of the particular problem, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy teaches a method to help us better understand

and use the intricate processes of the mind–body connection.” It really is like teaching an old dog new tricks, which we now know is possible.

Rossi, Ernest Lawrence, *The Psychobiology of Mind – Body Healing, New Concepts of Therapeutic Hypnosis*. (1993), Norton and Co. NY

Cozolino, Louis, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy, Building and rebuilding the human brain*. (2002) Norton and Co. NY