

Effects of a short-term mindfulness intervention on hypnotisability and mental health

ABSTRACT:

Background

Cold control theory claims that people can alter their subjective experiences in responding to hypnotic suggestions, by having an intention to perform an act while being unaware of the intention. That is, according to the theory, hypnotic response entails not being mindful of a relevant intention.

Aims

The aim was to test the claim that hypnotic response may be harder for people who have been trained to be more mindful of mental states, compared to an active control.

Method

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: mindfulness of mental states; of the world (active control); waiting list control. Hypnotic response was measured pre and post; as was mindfulness, stress, depression and anxiety.

Results

The mental state group increased in the mindfulness facet Acting with Awareness (AA) compared to the waiting list control, difference = 0.35 Likert units. A correlational study we ran showed a change of -0.13 subjective units in hypnotic response per unit change AA. Thus, we would expect a change in hypnotic response of $0.35 \times -0.13 = -0.05$ subjective units in the mental state group compared to the control group.

The amount by which hypnotic response reduced in the mental states condition vs the control condition was -0.18, $t(60) = 1.00$, $BH(0,.05) = 0.79$, which is insensitive. We would need about 3,000 participants in total to detect such an effect.

Mindfulness of mental states compared to controls reliably reduced depression and anxiety by 0.3 Likert units.

Conclusions

Showing an increase in mindfulness reduces hypnotic response will need a multilabs study. We found however that mindfulness of mental states rather than the world reduces depression and anxiety.

Keywords

Hypnosis, Mindfulness, Active control, Depression, Anxiety

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Published Work:

Dienes, Z., Lush, L., Palfi, B., Rooseboom, W., Scott, R., Parris, B., Seth, A., & Lovell, M. (2020). Phenomenological control as cold control: Hypnosis and beyond. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*. (<https://psyarxiv.com/7jn8q>)

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