

Is Hypnosis Real? Here's What Science Says

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Look into my eyes. The phrase calls to mind images of a psychotherapist swinging a pocket watch. Or maybe you picture Catherine Keener in the film *Get Out*, tapping her teacup and sending an unwilling man into a state of hypnotic limbo.

“There are many myths about hypnosis, mostly coming from media presentations,” like fictional films and novels, says Irving Kirsch, a lecturer and director of the Program in Placebo Studies at Harvard Medical School. But setting aside pop culture clichés, Kirsch says hypnosis is a well-studied and legitimate form of adjunct treatment for conditions ranging from obesity and pain after surgery to anxiety and stress.