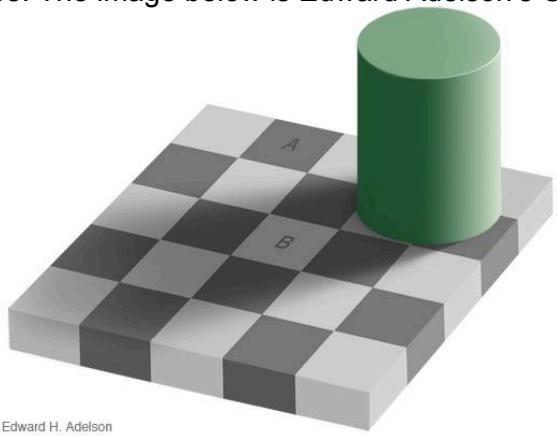
Optical illusions are simple yet powerful ways of demonstrating the flawed picture of reality that we all form. The internet has a wealth of websites showing that what is real is not necessarily what we see. The image below is Edward Adelson's Checkerboard Illusion, first published in 1995



The chances are that you will see square A is much darker than square B. They are in fact identical. Our brain takes the input from our eyes, and then applies what it knows about shadow, shade and colour. It makes the conclusion about what is real, and what we consciously "see" is the result. It is very convincing. (Follow link 1. at the end of this blog post if you aren't convinced)

The same is true for other senses such as hearing, taste, touch and especially pain.

No matter what impulses might be coming up through your spine, no pain is felt until your brain evaluates those impulses and decides whether you need to take action. If it believes you do, the end result is pain. Because everyone's life experience is different, it explains why we don't all feel pain the same way. It can be affected by your mood, where you are, who you are with, and even colour (link 2.). It can even be created when there is no diagnosable reason.

Knowing that our experience of pain is affected by such a wide variety of factors means we have the ability to change it, to reduce it or even eliminate it altogether. This is particularly important when it comes to chronic, long lasting pain. This is pain that has outlived its usefulness, but for some reason the brain continues to create the sensations.

Recently I helped a man who had lost half of one of his fingers decades ago, but he was still in pain from the **missing** half. Under hypnosis his brain was "retrained" to no longer produce the unnecessary sensation, all in a matter of twenty minutes.

Every day we are tricked into seeing, hearing and feeling things that are only real inside our own brains. Some we cannot control, like the optical illusion above. When it comes to pain the opposite is true, without the need for powerful, expensive drugs and their unpleasant side-effects

1. Does this Optical Illusion Fool You? Amazing Checker Shadow Illusion by Edward H.…
2. Color Hurts. The Effect of Color on Pain Perception | Pain Medicine | Oxford Academic