

Hypnotherapy Cases

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Learn to deal with your anxiety

To the anxiety sufferer it can seem that the symptoms appear out of the blue. Churning stomach, feelings of nausea, racing pulse, shallow breathing, inability to get off to sleep, difficulty concentrating – to name but a few.

These are all the natural symptoms of the body getting ready to flee or to fight because it thinks it is in danger. When we are under threat, we produce adrenalin that prepares us for action. In today's world we often feel under threat and produce adrenalin, but are not in a position to physically expend it by fighting or fleeing. So it stays in the system and we feel anxious instead. Often we don't even know what we are anxious about.

We do however, have more control over these feelings than we might think.

Typically, an anxiety sufferer is:

- Overestimating the risks he faces and underestimating his ability to deal with these risks.
- Is finding it difficult to prioritise what needs to be done and therefore feeling overwhelmed.
- Is frightened of not being in control, which can manifest as perfectionism – the fear of not being perfect, or as health fears, or social fears such as the fear of rejection.

Anxious people also tend to have “what if...” thoughts. What if this happened, what if that happened? And frighten themselves that way.

These are the thinking patterns that are at the root of the anxiety, and these patterns can be successfully modified. Hypnotherapy is a particularly effective way of doing this. Patients are shown how to:

- Feel more comfortable about everyday events they used to get anxious about
- Put some mental order into what needs to be done so that it becomes more manageable
- Feel in control, even when external events are changing or new
- Turn off those thoughts that go round and round and get off to sleep more easily
- Distinguish between those “what if?” thoughts that are rational and those that can be safely ignored”.

Get rid of anxiety

Poor sleeping, teeth grinding, inability to concentrate, low pain threshold, poor memory, panic attacks, sweating, increased awareness of danger can all be symptoms of stress and anxiety.

For some people this can be a temporary state due to some passing external factor like a looming deadline, physical illness or family problem. For others it seems to them to be permanently how they are. Chronic anxiety.

Yet there is a substantial and growing body of evidence that suggests that most anxiety is learnt behaviour. There is no anxiety gene, but there are patterns of thinking and behaviour that lead to feelings of anxiety.

The child who is constantly warned to be careful, look where they are going, watch out for this that and the other, is more likely over time to become anxious about life than one who is nurtured in a more empowering way.

Thankfully, patterns that can be weaved can also be undone. Thoughts and behaviours can be relearnt.

One of the first questions I ask people when they come to me with an anxiety condition is “How do you do anxiety?” Not why are you anxious, but how do you do it? Most people look a bit blank at this stage wondering what I mean. The reason for the question is that anxiety and stress creation is not something that happens to us, it is a process – it is something we do in ourselves. We imagine this; we remember that; we tell ourselves unhelpful things in our minds; we get feelings which we interpret as anxiety. And we all do it in our own special way. Hence the question “How do you do anxiety?”

If every time you closed your eyes you imagined a plane falling out of the sky you might be anxious about flying -right? If you made a big picture in your head of yourself standing speechless and dried up at that next presentation, you might well feel anxious about presenting mightn't you? The man who suddenly becomes sexually limp in bed, is the man who probably has just imagined that very thing happening. How anxious is he going to feel next time? Very.

Once you know how you do anxiety you can begin to change it – sometimes quickly. Seeing the plane in your minds eye flying safely to its destination is a much more relaxing thought to have. Looking forward to wowing that audience feels good too. And remembering all those times when things went well in bed and imagining it happening again – well, say no more.

There is so much that you can do that will help you move from feeling powerless to powerful, from having not being able to cope, to being in control. You just have to learn how. And you can.

How *attractive* are you?

We all know people who seem to get the job that's right for them; who are comfortable and at ease in social situations; who have a good family life. Far removed from the many who struggle frenetically to make a go of their lives. But..... do we have to fight and chase for what we think we need, or can we too attract that sort of life to us?

My answer to the question "can we attract the sort of life we want to lead?" is YES - absolutely 100% YES. We can. If others can so can we.

The difference between those who do attract to themselves the life they want and those who do not is not so much what is happening to them - recession, job losses, share prices tumbling - it is what is happening inside them.

It is in their **intention**. They know what they want. What they want at home, in their finances, in their social life. It is in their **expectation**. They know and they believe that they are going to have these things. It is in their **attitude**. They know that they are both capable and deserving of it.

We can all develop these positive and powerful intentions, expectations and attitudes. There are countless examples of people changing their lives immeasurably for the better when they have come to the realisation that the ability to feel confident, feel resourceful, feel in control, to have goals and expect to achieve them lies **within them**. And it is surprising how often what we are feeling on the inside becomes reflected on the outside. Things start going our way.

Sometimes it is life's disasters such as losing our job, getting divorced, illness, that provide with hindsight the opportunity to take stock, make those internal changes, step off the treadmill, start attracting. Attracting the life that is right for you.

The power of belief

A frequent quote from Henry Ford, the founder of Ford cars is “Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right”.

What we do or do not believe about ourselves and others has a powerful effect on our lives. The most common reason that a hoped for change, such as losing weight or stopping smoking, fails to happen, is because there is a fundamental belief getting in the way and preventing the change.

Jane had tried to stop smoking many times and each time had only managed to do so for a short period because she became anxious and upset – far more so than any symptom of nicotine withdrawal would warrant. During discussion it transpired that her mother had briefly taken up smoking at a critical point in her life, when Jane was a young girl. As a result of this Jane had formed the belief that you need a cigarette in order to manage stress (and therefore that you couldn't manage stress without one). Once this belief had been identified and dealt with, Jane was able to stop smoking.

Many people are overweight as adults because of beliefs installed at an early age by parents in the immediate postwar period, when food was short. “You must eat everything on your plate” is a typical one. Often coupled with “Think of all the starving children in the world”, which encourages the belief that you are lucky to be able to have food, so you must eat it all up. Other underlying and often unrecognised beliefs such as “It is not safe to look attractive”, can cause a person to maintain an unattractive weight. Even though as an adult you can challenge the relevance of these statements – the fact that you acquired the belief at an impressionable stage of your life means that it is still doing its work today and controlling your behaviour. Change the belief and you can change the behaviour.

Many beliefs are helpful and empowering. The problem lies with those beliefs that are unhelpful and disempowering.

A salesman can have all the right technical selling skills – but if he thinks he is not a very good salesman he won't be. If you don't believe you are any good at relationships you won't be. If you believe that every time you sit in an airplane you will have a panic attack, you will probably have one.

The good news is that beliefs can be changed. Indeed we are changing our beliefs all the time. A good therapist will help you change your beliefs to ensure that the new behaviours you are seeking are supported by empowering beliefs, not undermined by old outdated ones. Henry Ford was right. “Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right”.

Gain inner confidence through hypnotherapy

Most of us have experienced irrational fears that prevent us enjoying our lives as fully as we would like. Fear of going into a supermarket. Fear of going into a crowded room. Fear of flying. Fear of getting too closely involved in a relationship. Fear of public speaking.

Sometimes we cope with these fears through outward bravado. Sometimes by smoking or drinking too much. Often by avoiding the situation.

I have worked with many people who are fine and confident at work yet who feel out of their depth and inadequate at home. This can result in difficult relationships with the family.

Others are fine when they are in the bosom of the family yet they feel exposed and defensive at work, or at social occasions.

When people come to me with 'irrational' negative feelings, they often say that it feels as though they have no control of the part of themselves that is creating these feelings. Very often people will say that they feel angry or upset and they don't know why.

The reason for these irrational feelings is usually that some facet of our personality is stuck in the past – with all the feelings that it had back then.

These parts of us are often buried deeply in our minds and do not respond easily to conventional coaching or therapies.

Mary is a businesswoman at the top of her profession, yet for as long as she can remember she has had a feeling of anxiety in the pit of her stomach whenever she is around people other than her immediate family. She has never felt that she fitted in. For her, there were a few significant childhood experiences, which, once revisited under hypnotherapy, she was able to rationalise and let go. The feelings of anxiety went too.

Hypnotherapy provides a safe route to understanding, nurturing and updating these younger parts of ourselves so that the whole person can feel confident and able to cope in these situations. In this way irrational fears become a thing of the past, and people find they can enjoy that holiday, make that speech, relate to their children or work colleagues and live life more fully. Typically people report that they feel lighter, calmer, more at ease with themselves with the result that they have more energy too.

Depression – new ways of thinking

For those people in a depressed state, it is encouraging for them to know that there are things they can do today that will make tomorrow better.

We all know that there are degrees of depression - from feeling slightly down – to being in the depths of despair. There are many different theories about its causes and possible cures. The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will become the second most debilitating condition worldwide by 2020 (currently fourth behind heart disease, cancer and traffic accidents).

In so far as one can generalise about these things, people who feel depressed or have been diagnosed with depression tend to have certain thinking patterns in common. They tend to endlessly analyse or ruminate. They tend to have a past rather than future focus. Thoughts tend to be of the negative, half empty glass, variety. They also tend to believe the negative thoughts that they have been thinking and have difficulty differentiating between what is a valid thought and one that is best to disregard. There are other patterns too.

However, the most recent statistics show that although 15% of people who have been diagnosed as depressed need ongoing medication, 75% of people are able to recover completely through learning new patterns of thinking – and that having learnt these, they are better able to maintain a stable state. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one such approach for doing this.

People learn how to:

- think clearly
- behave effectively
- relate positively to themselves and others (as taught in interpersonal therapies)
- reduce vulnerability to relapses

It is also clear that these cognitive therapies are enhanced and made even more effective using hypnosis.

One of the attributes of hypnosis is that it enables a person to amplify useful memories or thoughts and diminish less helpful musing or imagination. It becomes easier to remember those times which have gone well – and how that was achieved; easier to leave memories in the past that belong in the past; easier to believe in a more positive future, with more positive relationships and more self belief.

The feeling of personal worth that this generates seems to be an important factor in sustained recovery.

Personalised hypnosis that makes a difference

How often do you want to do something and then find it doesn't happen? This is because part of your mind – obviously in this case a more powerful part – has other plans. And this part tends to be subconscious, so called because you are not really aware of its workings. Yet most of your bodily functions such as breathing, heart rate, sweating, temperature control, sex drive are controlled by it, and all of your long-term memories and habits are stored there.

One of my clients was a highly successful businessman who always excelled at everything he did. Over a period of time he found himself to be depressed and completely lacking in energy. Long lists of things had built up and he just couldn't be bothered to do anything other than watch TV. His family life started falling apart and life became a vicious circle with one problem leading to another.

After five sessions of hypnotherapy he was not only back to his old self, but more than that – he began to lead a more rounded life, finding more time for exercise, relaxation and fun. He became a whole person rather than a driven one. As Michael said “Through our sessions something has clicked into place and I feel much calmer and in control”.

Effective, long lasting changes have to be made consciously AND subconsciously. Hypnosis, combined with the cognitive approach of NLP coaching is able to safely provide a pathway to your subconscious mind. This helps you to change unhelpful thinking patterns and tap into your full potential.

In this way you can make important changes – from conquering fear of heights or public speaking to improving your relationships by handling stressful situations better and, of course, dumping unwanted habits such as smoking and excessive drinking.

Clinical hypnotherapy can at the very least be a deeply relaxing experience. When combined with NLP, it can transform your life by helping you move away from existing problems and identify new solutions.

EMDR. What's good for the forces can be good for you too

There has been considerable media comment of late about a therapy called EMDR. (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing). It is one of the methods of choice for treating members of the armed forces who have had traumatic experiences in war zones, and has proved highly effective for treating anxiety and some aspects of depression too. Unlike many therapies in common use, EMDR has been thoroughly clinically validated and millions of people have been able to banish unwanted negative emotions and put them in the past where they belong.

John had underlying feelings of anxiety that had plagued him for years and made every day a misery. EMDR was an important part of a treatment plan that enabled him to understand how he was producing the anxiety, change his attitude to work and relationships and learn how to maintain a state of calmness and peace.

Mary was unable to ski with her family because as soon as she found herself looking down from the top of the slope she froze with fear. After three sessions of EMDR and hypnotherapy she was able to enjoy skiing again.

Jane was unable to enjoy riding having experienced a bad fall some years previously. Three sessions of EMDR and hypnotherapy enabled her to resume show jumping.

Jim was so terrified of needles that he could not even look at a photograph of one. He was denying himself medical attention despite having had a severe heart condition, because of this fear. After two sessions he was able to pick up and handle a needle and after a further session was able to go to his GP for treatment that included injections.

I have also used EMDR with many other issues including fear of flying, abuse trauma, public speaking, stopping smoking, eating disorders.

Of course, not all treatments are as rapid as three sessions, and it is not appropriate to use EMDR with every negative emotion – sometimes other approaches suit better. But when it is appropriate to use it as part of an eclectic approach to helping people move forward all the experience is that it provides a quicker and more effective solution than other more traditional therapies. Which is why the services use it of course. And why it is supported by NICE the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence UK.

You can process and change unhelpful and debilitating

emotions Many people have seemingly illogical fears and emotions that prevent them living their lives to the full. Maureen was an example of this. She was in her forties and had two children. For as long as she could remember she had avoided any situation where something unexpected might happen. This was particularly true in social situations. She avoided going anywhere new, meeting anyone new, and when inevitably unexpected things did occur, she felt overcome with emotion and just had to get out of the situation. This came to a head one weekend. She and her partner had agreed that she would drop him off at the house of some work colleagues after which they would stay in a hotel and have a pleasant weekend for two. As they drove up at the house, her partner said, "Why don't you come in and just say "Hello"". As he said that, Maureen just freaked out and had to go back home. She couldn't face her partner's colleagues and felt too upset to want to stay in the hotel. The week after – she came to see me. Using a combination of hypnotherapy to induce calmness, and another process called EMDR which is one of the more effective methods for dealing with negative emotions, Maureen suddenly remembered a long forgotten event that she knew was the cause of her problem. She was very young and at school. It seems that she had been hauled in front of the class and spanked. It was unexpected and she didn't know what she was being spanked for. She also remembered a dark cupboard that was open. As the therapy session continued, the feelings of intense fear evaporated. The image in her mind of the teacher became more distant and benign. The dark cupboard turned into a normal stationery cupboard. Maureen said, "I feel normal now". For Maureen it was as though a weight had been lifted. She felt more confident. She no longer indulged in self criticism. She no longer felt the need to control situations to prevent anything unexpected happening. She felt something amazing had happened. There is no need to live with illogical and overwhelming fears. They can usually be processed and put into the past where they belong. And paradoxically, it is often the case that the more acute the fear is, the more quickly it can be dealt with.

You may not be able to change what is happening to you – but you can change how you respond to it.

Heather was due to have an eye inspection – and she was dreading it. Ever since she could remember she had feared these inspections and when the consultant came near so as to look into her eyes they would automatically close however hard she tried to keep them open. It was always a battle, always a struggle. She would be near to tears just thinking about it. She knew the inspections were for her own good and this reaction seemed so irrational.

Her partner suggested that she make an appointment with me.

Over just two sessions, Heather was able to get a whole new perspective on the upcoming eye inspection. She became aware that as a young child she had been in an eye hospital for two weeks, and experienced all the fears and feelings that a young child in those circumstances might feel. As an adult she had forgotten she had ever had these feelings. She thought she had left the whole experience behind. In fact, these same feelings were coming back to her anytime she experienced something similar. This is why they seemed illogical and so frightening.

Heather had her eye inspection and this is what she wrote. “I am very very glad to report good news on all counts. My experience could not have been more different than those in the past. I couldn’t believe that I could allow this without my eyes closing automatically. My eye consultant could not believe that it all went so well. My attitude to the whole appointment was so very very different.”

For Heather it was her eyes. For other people it might be teeth, or hospitals, or sex or close relationships or a hundred and one things. Not all of these fears will change as quickly as hers did, but it is good to know that in many cases a real difference can be made.

Spotlight on hypnotherapy

Hypnosis is a naturally occurring, altered state of consciousness.

When we focus on something very intently, it is often possible to turn down or block completely, other signals that the brain is receiving. This is especially valuable for pain control. How many of us have worked hard in the garden, only to find later that we have cut ourselves without being aware of it.

The state of hypnosis provides a pathway to our subconscious or unconscious mind. Most of our bodily functions such as breathing, heart rate, sweating, temperature control, balance are controlled by it, and all of our long term memories, emotions and habits are stored there. Hypnosis provides a way to change unhelpful thinking patterns and tap into our full potential. In this way we can conquer fear of heights or public speaking; improve our relationships by behaving in more useful ways in stressful situations; dump unwanted habits such as smoking and drinking.

Hypnosis is often successful when other, more conventional methods of treatment have failed. It is safe and there are no harmful side effects. When administered by a professionally trained and skilled therapist it offers long lasting and often permanent benefits.

Hypnotherapy is commonly used to:

- Break unwanted habits such as smoking, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, bed wetting, nail biting, stuttering.
- Provide relief and remission from breathing problems, stomach and nervous problems
- Address skin problems and rashes
- Relieve female problems such as period pain
- Provide pain control for minor and sometimes even major surgery, dentistry, arthritic pain, and general neuromuscular aches and pains
- Resolve phobias, compulsions, emotional problems, sleeping problems, inhibitions, guilt feelings, jealousy, stress and anxiety
- Transform sexual problems such as premature ejaculation and frigidity
- Boost creativity and imagination, self-confidence and esteem, allow a person to perform to their full potential.

If you are looking for a safe, natural and highly effective therapy, then clinical

hypnotherapy could be the answer for you.

Hypnosis changes habits

A habit is something we do on a regular basis. It might be lighting a cigarette each time we make a phone call, or having a drink at a certain time of day. It could be scratching a particular spot or biting fingernails.

It is this regularity that builds the habit, rather like walking down the same path day after day. The shallow path becomes a deeper path and after a while it is so much easier to walk the path than push through the undergrowth.

Once these neural pathways have been established, the mind executes them without the need for conscious thought and this is why they can seem so hard to change.

Yet hypnosis provides a route into that unconscious part of the mind where our habits reside and a means to change them.

Emlyn had been biting her fingernails to the quick for 40 years and had tried all manner of things to stop doing this. A friend recommended that she me.

I told her that I could probably help and that typically three one hour sessions would do the trick.

She arrived for the first session and was surprised to find that the first thing she was asked to do was to imagine what it would be like to have nice healthy fingernails. What would they look like, how good would she feel, what would other people think. She was asked to create an image of herself with healthy nails and make it big, bright and compelling. And she was shown how to insert this new image into her neural pathway, which disrupts the old habit.

Emlyn was beginning to wonder when they were going to do some hypnosis – but actually the change had been made already. To consolidate the change, I talked her into a comfortably relaxed state. In this trance state her unconscious mind was able to amplify the new habit, which was to look after her nails, feel good about them and realise that she had some choice in what she did with her hands.

The first session turned out to be the only session she needed. Now Emlyn has nice healthy finger nails that she is proud to show others.

Is who you are what you do?

James had been doing the same job for a number of years. He liked his job. But times were changing and retirement was approaching. James felt anxious, found it difficult to sleep, wasn't enjoying life.

Mary's husband worked long hours in the city and often travelled abroad. To begin with Mary had found this difficult, but over the years she had made a life for herself, doing her own thing with her own friends. This worked for them. She enjoyed her life. Then her husband took a redundancy package and was home – every day. Mary began to feel trapped. She began to feel anxious and stressed. Although she loved her husband, she no longer enjoyed her life.

So often we equate who we are with what we do. 'I am a banker'. 'I am a social worker'. 'I am this person with a life I've created for myself'. Then the job changes, or something in our life shifts – and we lose our identity. We don't know who we are any more.

Yet – we are all individuals with skills, talents, passions and values that are part of us. Not tied to any job or way of life. Intrinsicly us.

And it's not the way of life or what we do that is important; it is the ingredients that matter to us. Perhaps it is the freedom, or the challenge, or the sharing, or the camaraderie.

Once we have identified what these are – for us – then we can build them into our life again.

James recognised that what he valued was the sense of achievement when he got things done, and the enjoyment of sharing this with colleagues. He got a part time job with a charitable organisation where he could have these in spades. He has never looked back.

Mary valued the space and independence that having her own life within the marriage gave her. She discussed this with her husband and together they worked out how their marriage could accommodate this. She now enjoys her life again.

The seeds of our future happiness are all there in our past. It's just knowing how to recognise them and nurture them that is important.

Dealing with stress.

For most of us, our daily lives provide ample opportunity to experience stress.

IBS, Panic attacks, anxiety, weight problems, heart problems are often the outward manifestation of stress.

Short term stress is not the problem – indeed a certain amount of stress is useful as a way of being on the ball and motivated. It is when a person feels powerless and not in control in the longer term– be it at work, or at home – that the corrosive effects kick in. The body continues to produce adrenalin and other stress hormones. The digestive and sexual systems are disrupted as the body puts all its effort into getting out of a situation from which it seems there is no escape.

Yet a situation that might prove stressful for one person, may be like water off a duck's back for someone else. Situations that have the potential to cause stress – only become stressful when they are perceived as such.”

Mary became stressed when her husband retired. His attentions and needs seemed restricting and intrusive. She learnt that she could view this as a demonstration of love and caring and that she could continue to lead her own life and do those things that were important to her.

Janet felt stressed by the constant demands of her children – believing that it preventing her from getting on with her life. She learnt to put the situation into a wider perspective and realise that in the context of a lifetime, the time she had with her children would be very short and precious. She learnt to enjoy making the most of them while she could.

John is a cancer survivor. His experience has helped him focus on what is really important to him. People and situations he used to resent no longer bother him.

While we can never be in control of events, we can be in control of how we respond to them – and this is the key to leading a healthy and fulfilling life.

To do this may involve changing deeply held beliefs about ourselves and our own ability to manage situations. Beliefs that have been strengthened by repetition and experience.

And beliefs can change – sometimes overnight. Hypnotherapy can help people shift old thinking patterns and embrace more constructive ones. Hypnotherapy can help people focus on a constructive future and let go of the past. Hypnotherapy can help people know that they can manage, that they are in control of themselves and how they feel. That they do have choices where they used to see no choice.

Travel with confidence

Some people feel unable to go anywhere because they are frightened of travelling, be it driving, flying, or going by boat. This sometimes inhibits their whole family from enjoying themselves – year after year.

Yet fear of travel is an illogical fear. Certainly, planes crash occasionally – as witnessed recently with the appalling Air France disaster. And when they do it is headline news so everyone knows about it.

Statistically, however, flying is far safer than driving, which is one of the most dangerous forms of travel. Depending on whether rural roads or cities are being considered also the length of the trip, flying is between 60 and several hundred times safer than driving.

Notwithstanding this – people feel more in control of their destiny in a car – even as a passenger – than they do as a passenger in a plane.

Because fear is an emotion rather than being based on logic, statistics alone are not enough to help the average fearful traveller. The mind needs to get the message at a deeper level.

I have seen many people with travel fears over the years and virtually every one has been able to travel confidently after a series of sessions – typically about 3, involving hypnotherapy and related approaches.

- People find that rather than being fearful they feel calm
- Rather than imagining all sorts of disasters that might befall the plane, they think about the holiday they are about to have and all the pleasant things they are going to do
- When they hear the sound of the flaps being altered or the wheels descending, they know that this is normal and are able to ignore it
- They are able to enjoy reading a book, watching a film, or chatting to other people

Having a session of hypnotherapy is a relaxing, natural, safe and enjoyable experience. People learn at a deep level how to access feelings of calmness and confidence so they can use them when they need to.

This means they can enjoy planning their holidays sure in the knowledge that they will be able to make the journey. And their families will be pleased too.

Put Smoking Behind You

If you have made the decision to stop smoking you may be interested in reading on.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) who need hard evidence before they agree to statements, have recently agreed the following statement about the efficacy of hypnotherapy in stopping smoking.

“Research comparing many different studies of hypnotherapy has shown that on average smokers are over five times more likely to break the habit with hypnosis than by willpower alone. Hypnotherapy in general is also proven to be more than twice as effective compared with nicotine gum. If you really want to stop smoking, then one session of hypnotherapy could be all you need.”

This statement, accepted by the ASA, quotes average figures. It follows that many hypnotherapists get even better results than these. Smokers are physically addicted to nicotine. After four days without a cigarette they are no longer addicted – however they may have a psychological dependency. Some people are more physically addicted than others and some are more psychologically dependent than others. **It is important that the therapy is focussed on the specific needs of you - the individual**, so that you get the benefits you (mistakenly) associate with smoking in some other healthier way. It may be that you need to learn alternative ways to become calm and relaxed in stressful situations. It may be that you need another ways of motivating yourself when you are bored. Some people need help in order to feel comfortable with the thought of being a non smoker – because they have smoked for so long. If this is done, most people can stop smoking after one session of hypnotherapy, rid themselves of the burden of smoking, become more energised, healthier, and better role models for their children.

Have you really decided to stop smoking?

It was reported recently in the Daily Telegraph that a man is so desperate to stop smoking that he is being taken out to a deserted island for a month where there is not a chance of getting hold of a cigarette.

Most people do not need to go to such extremes. Our bodies do not like smoke, they never did and once a proper decision is made to stop smoking most people stop.

The key is in making a proper decision to stop. i.e. a decision, which the whole mind approves of. It is all too easy to make decisions with the conscious part of the mind, which are not recognized by the subconscious part. And it is the subconscious part that does the craving, and causes the problems if it is not on board with your decision.

Of course there are times when the subconscious mind fully understands that smoking is just not on. Such as when travelling by plane, or in some area where there are explosive gases. Generally, smokers do not even think about smoking at these times because the whole of their mind has got the message that “you don’t smoke here”.

Recent research into smoking cessation shows that hypnotherapy is by far and away the most successful method of stopping. Far more effective in most cases than nicotine patches. And it is successful because it amplifies the decision to stop smoking and become a non smoker, so that both the conscious and subconscious parts of the mind understand. The majority of people stop after one extended session.

And it seems to make little difference whether a person has smoked for 50 years or 50 weeks. The important thing is fully making that decision.

So, rather than going to all the effort of finding your own deserted island, you may find that there is someone who can help much closer to home.

Get rid of those cravings

Sarah is an NHS professional in her 40's. She has always had a sweet tooth but 7 years ago developed Candida overgrowth and was told that she must cut sugar from her diet. She knew it was the right thing to do but had tremendous cravings and just couldn't help herself sneaking the odd sweet thing and before she knew it she had gone overboard and eaten the lot. She was feeling bad about herself, overweight, and had low energy.

When she came to see me we explored just how these cravings were occurring. For a start, Sarah worked tremendously hard with hardly a break all day. In those short breaks she would eat something quick to keep her going. Then when she got home she would feel guilty if she sat down to relax, feeling that she should be slaving away for her family. She was putting everyone else first and herself way down the pecking order.

She was also telling herself that she was being denied something she wanted – sugar. The more she felt she was being denied, the more she wanted it.

As a child and right through her life, her mother had been telling her that you had to be thin to be attractive. As a result she didn't like the way she looked – in fact she hated looking at herself.

Low self esteem, no time for herself, eating the wrong food, and hating the way she looked, all combined to focus Sarah's craving on sweet things which seemed to make her feel better for a while. And now she wasn't able to eat them.

Over three further sessions, using hypnosis, and self-hypnosis, Sarah began to value herself for who she was. She made time in her schedule for herself. She recognised that her family was perfectly capable of taking a lot of responsibility for itself. She realised that it was her choice to be fit and well and that she was making the choice not to eat sugar, rather than having the decision forced on her.

Over this period, the cravings for sugar disappeared. As a bi-product she became one stone lighter. Her skin began to glow and people started saying how good she looked.

Once you change what is going on inside, the outside changes too.

Lose weight the natural way

The experts will tell you that diets do not work – for long. Rather, it is generally accepted that people often end up weighing more as a result of yo-yo dieting.

People who maintain a naturally healthy weight tend to have a different mindset than those who struggle with their weight. Learn this successful mental strategy and for most people, they too can maintain a healthy natural weight.

When you analyse the approach that healthy eaters have to eating, you notice a number of characteristics they have in common.

Even at the food buying stage, they imagine what it would be like to have already eaten the food – and if it feels stodgy or sickly, they don't buy it. Whereas, people who put on weight tend to look at the food and imagine how good it would be to eat it – then buy it. They don't think about the consequences until they have eaten it – when it is too late.

Other characteristics of the healthy eater are:

- A healthy self image
- They eat more slowly so they can enjoy every mouthful (which also allows the taste buds in the mouth to let the brain know they have eaten something)
- As soon as they feel comfortably full they stop eating – even if there is food left on the plate
- They feel in control of their eating habits
- They have no desire for sickly sweet foods that they know are bad for them
- They 'know' they are the right weight without constantly scale watching.
- They take some sort of exercise. It doesn't have to be much.

Many of the unhelpful beliefs we have about food are learnt from our parents who were from a different generation. The strategies that were good for them then are not necessarily helpful now. Things have changed. Food is more available for one.

Hypnosis is good for changing long held patterns and convictions. Many people find that after three or four sessions they can think in the way healthy eaters do and begin to lose weight naturally.

Diets may not work – but changing habits and perceptions does.