

Hypnotherapy

What exactly is it and how does it work? Here's the lowdown...

1

Not all swinging pendulums

'Hypnotherapy is about getting a person to completely relax,' says hypnotherapist Victoria Wills. 'It doesn't really resemble what you may have seen on TV or in films where a hypnotherapist puts you into a trance by swinging a pendulum in front of your eyes. It's more like going into a deep state of meditation.'

In fact, you may have put yourself into a hypnotic state without even realising. 'When you walk for a long time, you can find you've travelled great distances without noticing. This is because you've become so relaxed that you've effectively walked yourself into a trance.'

2

Look into my eyes

A typical session can last up to one-and-a-half hours. You'll have a consultation with the hypnotherapist first to decide what you want to get out of the experience. Then you'll relax on a chair or sofa and be put into a hypnotic state - which can take up to half an hour.

'You are asked to slowly count up or down, or name things like fruits or capital cities. Once under, the hypnotherapist makes suggestions to your unconscious mind, such as ways to overcome your problems,' explains Wills. To bring you out of the trance, the hypnotherapist will often count slowly backwards from 10. Most people remember what was said during the session, but may not realise they were 'under' for so long.

3

Why it helps

'Around 85-95 per cent of patients are looking for help with weight loss, quitting smoking or beating phobias,' says Wills. It can also help:

- anorexia or bulimia
- improve self-esteem and body confidence
- ease symptoms of chronic illnesses such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

4

Mind over matter

It's being used increasingly as an alternative to painkillers, for giving birth (known as hypnobirthing), dentistry and even surgical operations (hypnosurgery). 'It works on the basis that all experience of pain is subjective and that the mind can control how the body responds to pain,' says Wills. Skipping the anaesthetic is a bonus for people who are allergic, or have had bad experiences before. Patients will undergo preparation sessions before the operation and the hypnotherapist remains in the room throughout. *h*

● Victoria Wills is the director of hypnotherapy at NuBeginnings, a relaxation retreat in Devon. Visit www.nubeginnings.co.uk or phone 01271 862 792 for more information.

