

'Hypnotherapy worked for me!'

Laura Webster, 27, a media manager from London, shed more than a stone after hypnotherapy sessions with Zoe Clews

I work in media relations and advertising and spend a lot of my lunch hours entertaining clients. Inevitably, I was always eating rich, heavy foods such as dairy, breads and pasta, and drinking a couple of glasses of wine at least three times a week. I always promised myself that I'd be good, but my willpower always gave way, and I'd tuck into a three-course meal, along with my colleagues and clients.

When my weight reached 11st 2lb, I realised it was time to do something about it. I tried numerous diets, none of which worked. I also knew I needed to change my resistance to exercise: I was always making excuses about not having enough time because of my work.

I had to change my approach to my health, so I decided to try hypnotherapy – nothing else had worked! I was a bit nervous before my first session, as I didn't know what to expect, but Zoe quickly put me at ease.

We started with a chat about my health history and my attitudes towards food and

exercise. I mentioned my weakness when it came to temptation, and the fact I always found excuses not to exercise. Then Zoe told me to lie down on the couch and relax.

At first, I didn't think it would work, as my mind was racing for the first 10 minutes, but then I found my entire body sinking into the sofa as I listened to Zoe's voice. She began by bringing my focus on to each part of my body in turn, telling me to imagine it relaxing.

I started to feel quite sleepy, as though I was in a daydream, but I knew exactly what was happening. I could answer Zoe's questions easily and without getting upset or agitated, because I was so relaxed. I felt as if I was having a very easy conversation, not a therapy session.

During my four sessions, I became much better at relaxing and entering the hypnotic

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state each time. Through Zoe's questioning, we found that I relied on food as an emotional crutch, as well as a way of giving me energy. Rather than using healthier food or my own confidence and self-belief, I treated food as a way to communicate with others – hence the numerous long business lunches!

After just four sessions, I really noticed the change in my weight and attitude to food and exercise. I now know that it's OK to say no to certain foods, or drinking at lunchtime, without people thinking badly of me. I don't have to give in to the cravings or impulses to eat the wrong thing.

My desire to overeat or to gorge on chocolate has gone, and I'm much more motivated to exercise, which is something I really struggled with previously. Zoe also taught me alternative ways to deal with stress, rather than reaching for food, which was my previous method!

I'm now just below 10st and I'm still losing weight at a steady, healthy rate, using the tools Zoe taught me and listening to the CDs I got from the sessions. I'll be happy when I reach 9st 7lb, and I'm really confident I'll get there. I'd definitely use hypnotherapy again. I actually wish I'd used it before, instead of battling with my eating habits for so long. **SPIRIT&DESTINY**



When pop singer Lily Allen slimmed down to a petite size eight, it wasn't down to quick-fix diet pills or a faddy eating plan. Instead, Lily relied on hypno-techniques that helped her find the motivation to exercise. 'After the hypnotism, I want to go to the gym every day, otherwise I feel really bad,' she said. 'I just want to get more toned and healthy. I've never been happier.'

Slimming by hypnosis is a seductive prospect, and Lily's success has brought this technique into the spotlight as a tool to help us lead healthier lives.

Hypnosis has long been thought of as a stage act, where hypnotists would embarrass audience members by turning them into clucking chickens or neighing horses. But hypnotherapy is now a recognised treatment for a range of addictions, such as smoking, and phobias like fear of flying. It's also gaining credibility within mainstream medicine, particularly for long-term health problems such as IBS and as an effective method of pain management.

So how can hypnotherapy help? The actual process involves putting the patient into a trance state, using a series of instructions known as hypnotic induction.

'Hypnotherapy is based on the belief that our conscious and unconscious minds govern our health and well-being,' says Zoe Clews, a qualified hypnotherapist and neurolinguistic programming (NLP) practitioner. 'Through a series of relaxation techniques, you're able to access deep-seated emotions or memories. This also allows the patient to manifest changes and be open to new behavioural patterns.'

Weight control

‘We all carry memories from childhood which affect our relationship towards food and our body image,’ says Zoe Clews. ‘Hypnotherapy works by helping you retrain your attitude towards your relationship with food and how you see it works in relation to your body.’

For instance, if you consider chocolate or sweets as a ‘treat’, you’re more likely to reach for them when you’re feeling down or depressed. ‘Once you uncover how you see food – whether it’s a reward or a punishment – you’ll have a clearer approach to eating healthily for your body, rather than your emotions,’ Zoe says.

A weight-control hypnotherapy session will take into account your attitude towards food and eating, whether you regard it as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ thing, and your goals. ‘We then take you slowly through various steps: changing your attitude towards food, and uncovering what’s holding you back from achieving your ideal weight or fitness level,’ Zoe explains.

• *For more information about Zoe’s work, visit www.zoeclews-hypnotherapy.co.uk*