

## TRIED & TESTED

# HYPNOTHERAPY

Are you feeling sleepy yet?

tester: sarah hedley illustration: roué art

**WHAT IS IT?** Hypnosis is a 'talking therapy'. Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Meridian Therapy (sometimes referred to as Emotional Freedom Therapy or EFT) are among the tools used, but ask a therapist to explain what these terms actually mean, and you could waste the hour you've paid for.

Meridian therapy was first developed by the Chinese and refers to treatments that work on the body's energy points (meridians) to rebalance the body. This is the theory acupuncture is based on, but rather than sticking needles into meridians, a hypnotherapist will put pressure on these points using their fingertips.

NLP is rather more complicated. It's been in development for 30 years and began as a study of successful people and the notion that, if you can work out how they think, you can help others think the same way and therefore become successful too.

## 'You can't be re-programmed to seal your lips whenever you fancy a fag'

Practitioners are trained to ask questions in a certain way and reinforce positive suggestions so the client can alter their mindset in order to achieve their goals. All of this is done while in a state of hypnosis, or deep relaxation, so the information has a better chance of reaching the subconscious.

It's not like stage-show hypnotism; after one session you can't be re-programmed to seal your lips whenever you fancy a fag, or misinterpret the craving for a cream cake as a desire to do sit-ups. Hypnotherapy doesn't wipe the hard drive, and it doesn't work for everyone. In the last year, *Scarlet* has sent two writers for hypnotherapy – one wanted to give up smoking, the other wanted to stop binge drinking. Immediately after treatment they reported encouraging results, but a month later they were back to keeping Silk Cut and Smirnoff in business.

As well as addictions and phobias, hypnotherapy can also be used for self-

improvement such as honing public speaking skills, so this issue we thought we'd give it one last go – this time for wedding nerves.

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENS?

I was due to be married in a month and was convinced I was going to fluff my vows. My main fear was that I would cry uncontrollably and be unable to speak, particularly as I was 'on' directly after my mother – a brilliant public speaker, guaranteed to deliver a heart-rending reading.

I booked an appointment with esteemed hypnotherapist Monica Black and explained the situation. She asked me to recall moments of joy in my life and

try to retain that feeling while holding my thumbs and forefingers together. I could later repeat this move to trigger memories of a happier state of mind when needed.

Monica then named these moments on scraps of paper, placed them in a row on the floor and asked me to step on them as I focused on the joy. I felt a little self-conscious at the time, but in retrospect wondered whether she was emulating the moment of walking down the aisle.

Next, it was time for the "your eyes are feeling very heavy" countdown many of us associate with hypnosis. While 'under' I felt I was making an effort to look more relaxed than I actually was, and I couldn't help wondering whether other people were better at chilling out than I was.

As I flopped in the chair, Monica occasionally fingered my meridians (sounds a lot kinkier than it actually is) while talking me through my imminent wedding day, asking me to imagine myself there, composed and graceful.

Earlier, I'd recounted a tale from a

friend's wedding where a guest speaker had been so overcome by emotion she'd sobbed and spluttered through 10 painful minutes of a reading, while the congregation did their collective best not to laugh. Monica told me to superimpose the lady's face onto my mother's during her reading so I would laugh rather than cry then too.

After that, Monica counted me back into the world of sitting upright, and I was on my way.

**DID IT WORK?** The experience felt more like getting advice from an older sister than brainwashing. On the big day, I stayed away from alcohol (always makes me emotional) and kept Monica's words in mind, and though my mother's emotive reading had everyone else in tears, I got through it dry-eyed, and even had to suppress a little giggle, as the snapshot above shows. The vows were an equal success, and – clichéd as it sounds – I had the best day of my life. So, if you're a nervous bride-to-be without a big sister to guide you, perhaps this is the treatment for you.

Hypnotherapy sessions with Monica Black start from £95, the number of sessions required depends on the issue. For more information call Hampstead Hypnotherapy on 020 7794 4112 or visit [www.HampsteadHypnotherapy.com](http://www.HampsteadHypnotherapy.com).

