

Does hypnotherapy really work for weight loss?

I am very often asked this question: Does hypnotherapy really help? The answer is yes..... and no! It depends what is done in hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy is just a very general name for any therapy performed in hypnosis.

You can also ask the question if hospitalisation helps for pneumonia. It helps, and it does not, depending on what is done in the hospital and how sick the patient is.

With pneumonia, sometimes even placing the patient in a warm bed and providing rest and balanced meals will help. In mild cases, sooner or later, the patient will recover just by resting. Even that is not always true, because not every hospital will provide a calm place to rest; it can be a very stressful place indeed. What really helps for pneumonia is the treatment in the hospital, the proper diagnosis, the skilful doctor, the proper medication, the availability of proper equipment and the care from qualified medical staff.

The same applies to hypnotherapy for weight loss. The only common denominator for hypnotherapy is the use of hypnosis. Hypnosis itself does not help with weight loss; hypnosis is just the state of the mind. Hypnosis can be used for stage entertainment – you can learn how to quack like a duck – but this may not help you with weight loss, unless you quack a lot and use a lot of energy.

The success of hypnotherapy for weight loss depends on the skills of the hypnotherapist and what is done in the therapy, but it also depends on the client and on the severity of the client's issues. Is the client severely obese or just slightly overweight; how long has the problem existed; is the client mentally obsessed with weight and looks; are there any medical conditions present; how is the client's mental health; and much more.

Hypnosis has a huge potential for making lasting therapeutic changes. The essence of hypnosis is the intense concentration on the chosen object to the exclusion of everything else. In this state the subconscious mind is opened to therapy. The deepest levels of your mind can be reached – the big storage of memories and feelings – so your perceptions, thoughts, behaviours and emotions can be changed. You can also use your subconscious mind to connect with your body and make changes on the body level.

There are many ways the hypnotic state can be used to assist with weight loss.

The very basic approach is to use hypnosis for relaxation and to teach the client to relax properly. Hypnosis allows the client to reach a state of mind and body relaxation not comparable with any other technique, and every hypnotherapist is skilled in this basic technique. Learning how to relax helps with sleeping; and when you are relaxed and feel good, comfort eating decreases. For many clients it will work – the same way that bed rest helps to regain health.

The other very basic approach is to give some suggestions about eating and exercise when you are in a hypnotic state. Again, even basic suggestions may work because

your subconscious mind is opened, and if you really want to lose weight, even when the therapists say “eat less” you will be simply eating less. Most hypnotherapists do more than that: they ask you questions before the session and help you to follow the eating pattern and exercise regime which suits you best.

The more experienced hypnotherapist may restore the natural connection between the body and mind for natural eating, increasing the metabolic rate, making the client naturally crave what the body needs, feeling the body satisfaction and stopping not when full, but when the natural hunger is satisfied.

The next level is to use hypnotherapy for motivation – there are many ways it can be done in hypnosis. The hypnotherapist can take you to the future where you will be enjoying your future body, being in your new slim body, enjoying the movement, watching your reflection in the mirror. This is a very uplifting experience, allowing you to trust and believe in success. You already feel slimmer and lighter.

All the above approaches will work for many clients, and the success rate is usually high. As a clinical hypnotherapist I usually teach relaxation and help the client to reconnect with their body for natural eating, and add some motivation imaging in the first session. It is enough for about 70% of clients to start losing weight.

Some hypnotherapists use hypnosis to implement mentally some specific restrictive diets, or even the medical procedures for weight loss. One example is hypnobanding, where the hypnotherapist makes you believe that you have the physical band placed around the stomach, restricting food intake. It works in the same way that gastric banding surgery works (not very well in the long term), but at least it does not have the dangers that are associated with real surgery.

However, the weight problem is usually a mental problem, and very often the above is not enough for the lasting weight loss.

This is where hypnotherapy can really help. The overeating and obesity is usually caused by mental issues like depression, anxiety, insecurity, lack of confidence, some past trauma, worries about the future, or overwhelming emotions. Those mental reasons are sometimes the cause of obsession with body and food, emotional eating or binge eating, just to name a few.

Hypnotherapy uses a hypnotic state allowing quick realisation of the reasons for being overweight, and a way to solve them. However, this requires skill; in the same way only a specialist doctor can perform brain surgery, only a well-trained and experienced hypnotherapist can help you with deep mental issues.

How do you find a hypnotherapist that will help you lose weight?

It is important that the hypnotherapist talks with you and that you have an initial consultation where you can describe your original issues. It is important that you are understood and that you are treated as an individual. The skilful therapist will make you feel better as the therapy starts: you will feel that you can trust them, you will feel safe, and you will open up and say everything you need to say. You and your

hypnotherapist will work together as a team, but at the end it is you who will make the hypnotherapy work.

It is also important that the therapist is a member of a hypnotherapist association that verifies their skills and requires continuous professional development.

Does hypnotherapy really help with weight loss? Generally, it works very well, and even simple hypnotherapy for relaxation will help because it will make you feel better. Hypnotherapy will work even better when you find a skilful and experienced hypnotherapist.