

Hypnotising the fat away

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Pallavi Mohan claims she lost 4.2kg after three hypnosis sessions.

HER weight problem began when she was a teenager. At just 15, Pallavi Mohan weighed 69kg. That was when she decided to try out popular weight loss programmes. However, it was a losing battle for the now 28-year-old make-up artist.

"After losing weight from one diet, I would regain it quickly and then try another diet. After some time, I realised I had gained even more weight."

Tipping the scales at more than 112kg last year, she decided something drastic had to be done.

"My engagement was coming up and I planned to get married in January next year. I had to look good on both these occasions."

"I did not want to go on another diet programme so I looked for other options."

While surfing the Internet, she came across a new method -- weight loss through hypnosis.

"At first, I was doubtful. However, after extensive reading and chatting online with some friends, I decided to give it a try."

Pallavi lost 4.2kg in one month after three hypnosis sessions. The sessions helped her visualise a slim body and subconsciously, she began to do things to achieve this new look.

"Besides the hypnosis sessions, the therapist also guided me on good eating habits and exercise."

"If before I was reluctant to exercise, now I find myself eager and ready to exercise every day. I go for long walks in the morning and have better control over my eating habits," she said.

Pallavi is optimistic that she will be able to bring her weight down to 75kg.

Another believer in hypnosis is Farhan (not his real name). Since young, he had never liked to exercise. He was also a binge eater.

"During my college days, I weighed between 115 and 120kg. That was when I decided to try working out in the gym but I gave up after one session. I loved food, especially those that were deep fried," he said .

Recently, however, after much persuasion from a friend, the 25-year old engineer decided to seek the help of a hypnotherapist.

"Since I did not like diets or exercise, my friend suggested that I meet a hypnotherapist to take away my inner resistance to making changes.

"At first, I laughed at the idea but later, a chance meeting with the hypnotherapist gave me some confidence to try it out.

"I told him that I did not have the time to work out and would rather lose weight by controlling my food intake.

"The therapist then designed a programme that replaced quantity eating with quality eating," he said.

Farhan said after the first hypnosis session, he looked for only healthy food.

"I have a different attitude now. My colleagues at work notice how I have become selective about the type of food I eat. They don't know that I go for hypnotherapy and I don't intend to tell anyone yet.

"But in just three months, my weight dropped from 133kg to 128kg."

He then went for a second session.

"I lost 5kg without exercise. Now, I have been taught to do some light exercises and with this, I hope to bring my weight down to about 100kg by December. My ideal weight is 80kg."

So, how does hypnosis help in weight loss and does it really work?

Julian Leicester, a subconscious specialist and consultant at a hypnotherapy centre, said hypnosis helps to place suggestions in a person's subconscious mind to change their lifestyles.

"Most often we think that we are conscious- driven but the truth is we are unconscious-driven. The subconscious mind operates 95 per cent of the time while the conscious mind only operates five per cent of the time.

"Our subconscious mind holds our belief structure, inner values and memories which contribute to the way we behave from day to day. So, if you smoke or eat excessively, it is an automatic reaction to memories that are stored in your subconscious mind.

"A person with a weight problem finds it difficult to keep to a good diet and exercise because of past conditioning. If you keep resisting change, it is likely your subconscious mind is responsible."

"Healthy eating, a good daily exercise routine and a balanced outlook and lifestyle can help anyone lose weight but for some people these are difficult to do.

"The natural satisfaction from eating should be for survival but those with weight problems are programmed to eat for other reasons. To change, the subconscious needs to be persuaded that this strategy no longer serves a useful purpose," said Leicester, who is also the hypnotherapy leader for the Malaysian Society for Complementary Medicine.

To change the behaviour pattern, he said, it is necessary to "take back" the person to the very first time they started eating for reasons other than to nourish their bodies.

"It can be due to either comfort, fear, trauma or protection. In order to alter this, we have to find the source of the thought."

He said while in hypnosis, the subconscious can bring forward a memory on request "as every memory is recorded".

"We can bring this information to the attention of the conscious mind and then suggest to the subconscious mind the next action plan.

"Since the person is in a heightened state of awareness, he or she will be ready to accept suggestions. The

subconscious mind then can be told to eat more rationally, eat lower calories and healthier food.

"The subconscious mind does what it is told, shown, or imagined until it becomes a habit."

However, Leicester stressed that a hypnotherapist can never make a person do anything he or she does not want.

Trained by famous medical hypnotherapist and surgeon Dr Jack Gibson, Leicester also said hypnosis does not offer a quick-fix solution, but a change in attitude.

He said hypnotherapy has been successfully used worldwide to help smokers quit the habit.

"Hypnotherapy is now enjoying growing acceptance as alternative healthcare. People are also seeking hypnotherapy for stress relief and management of pain."

Taking hypnosis further

WHAT'S hot these days is gastric band hypnosis.

Instead of going through gastric band surgery to lose weight, this type of hypnosis involves convincing the unconscious mind that surgery has taken place, hence the name — gastric band hypnosis.

On a conscious level, a person will be aware of the hypnotherapy, but on a subconscious level he or she will believe surgery has taken place.

It is a technique similar to the normal weight loss hypnosis except that a person will actually feel as if they have a gastric band in their stomach. With that, the person hypnotised will begin to eat less and lose weight.

Q: What is hypnosis?

A: Hypnosis is a natural state of consciousness like the waking and sleeping states. It is a state of deep relaxation in which the conscious mind is distracted, producing heightened suggestibility and increased awareness.

Q: Can I be hypnotised against my will?

A: Negative

Q: Can anyone be hypnotised?

A: Most people can learn to enter the trance state quickly. Some people take a longer time to learn the skill. Essentially, everyone who willingly wants to, can, over a period of practising.

Q: What are the dangers of hypnosis?

A: There has been no documented case of harm coming to anyone from the use of hypnosis.

Q: What is hypnosis like?

A: If we have ever "become lost" in a TV programme, movie or book, we have been hypnotised. The person experiencing hypnosis may lose his sense of time, feeling that hours have passed in seconds or that seconds have passed in hours. At one time or another we have all had these hypnotic experiences while driving. Some of us may experience this condition while working, particularly if we are deeply involved in our work (or if it is extremely repetitive and boring). Other characteristics of hypnosis may include losing awareness of one's body or one's location. Anyone can be hypnotised, but some people do seem to make better subjects than others. Writers, artists, and others involved in creative activities seem to be unusually skilled at achieving a deep trance state quickly.