

# HYPNOTHERAPY

*By Simon O'Duffy*

Though still commonly perceived as the domain of dodgy magicians making eejits out of hapless audience members on a stage, the art of hypnosis has fast become a widely accepted form of alternative psychotherapy in the medical world, and one that is now being practised here in Nenagh by licensed hypnotherapist Katja Keane.

An ancient practice that can be dated all the way back to early days of the Egyptian Empire, hypnotherapy focuses on one of the four general states of the brain, they being the fully conscious state of awareness, of which we are all aware, and the much less understood dream, sleep, and hypnotic states. By concentrating on the hypnotic state, a hypnotherapist endeavours to open a doorway between the conscious and subconscious of our minds, allowing easier access to our memories and making room for information storage.

It all sounds very complicated or even a bit airy fairy depending on your perspective, but in the hands of a trained expert hypnotherapy has proved a remarkable tool in curing such afflictions of the mind as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia. The so-called magician's trick has helped people give up smoking, lose weight, improve memory, combat all manner of fears and phobias, sexual problems, family problems and even the most deep rooted of emotional distress. Hypnotherapy can even relieve such physical ailments as headaches, migraines, rashes and eczema.

Nenagh woman Katja Keane is one such trained expert, and she has spent the past year working the pun intended magic of hypnotherapy in this town from her New Dawn Clinic off Kenyon St. Having harboured an interest in psychology and psychotherapy from an early age, Katja received comprehensive training in the workings of the human mind at the Institute of Hypnotherapy and Psychotherapy in Cork, and is now a fully qualified hypnotherapist working part-time in Nenagh.

"It works through the subconscious mind", she explains of her discipline, one that is often misunderstood because of its broad range of focus. "The hypnotherapist deals with the subconscious, or unconscious mind, which is everything that you wouldn't necessarily be aware of in your normal day-to-day life.

"If, for example, you are making a decision about whether you're going to the cinema tonight or going out for a meal, there is some motivation there that you're not necessarily aware of. As humans we can't be aware of all these emotions lying underneath that drive us to do things. But with hypnosis, which is really just a form of deep relaxation – and very un-mythical! – you can concentrate on what does lie below that surface and the rational thinking mind."

Sort of like thinking without questioning, hypnosis allows us to temporarily suspend rationality and exist outside of the social constraints in which we live and which force us to think only in certain ways. The experience has been described as reverting our minds back to the purity of early childhood, at a time before we were corrupted by the conformist rules of society, when thought is not interfered with by external influence.

"By doing this you can focus on your internal problems and issues", says Katja. "On the other hand you can also enhance what lies beneath to improve things, such as

memory, and by using positively phrased suggestions the unconscious mind can adapt them and change accordingly.”

When you say the word ‘hypnosis’ most people still tend to conjure up the image of some bloke in a top hat waving a pocket chain watch and counting backwards from ten, but Katja insists there is only a minimal reliability on props used to enter the hypnotic state at her New Dawn Clinic. Sometimes she will get a client to focus their eyes on a point in order to affect what is known as ‘physical induction’, but ultimately Katja simply uses her voice to coax the client into the most relaxed state possible, relaxation being the name of the game in hypnotherapy.

“The real emphasis is on relaxation”, she states. “When you’re relaxed, like when you’re in bed and drifting off to sleep, the activity in your mind slows down, bringing all your innermost thoughts to the surface where the therapist can deal with them. That’s really what hypnotherapy is all about.”

And it is a practice that has seen no small amount of success at Katja’s New Dawn Clinic either, where she has already treated with positive results a whole plethora of Nenagh people with a range of problems. Typical clients at the clinic have sought treatment for weight loss, and Katja has also used hypnotherapy to put paid to sufferings of anxiety and depression in Nenagh as well as stress maligned Leaving Cert students, many of whom returned to find hypnotherapy a useful aid in coping with the emotional strain of relationships, peer pressure and bullying. Katja works with young children as well and specialises in the treatment of victims of sexual abuse.

But in spite of all this hypnotherapy continues to be filed under the alternative medicine category, attracting the sort of negative connotations not always associated with conventional medical practices and certainly shrouding the discipline in ambiguity somewhat. Even though it has rapidly gained popularity over the last fifty-odd years among both practitioners and clients of psychoanalysis as a faster and arguably more affective form of therapy, the average Joe remains slightly sceptical about hypnotherapy, which is why Katja is quick to cast reassurances over her practice.

“The biggest myth about hypnosis is the whole aspect of control and of not being able to wake up from it”, she says. “This is something I go through with each client before we start to ensure them that it is safe. It is absolutely risk-free. Even in those few circumstances when it is actually impossible to do anything for the client, it is still good for he/she to relax because they will find a lot of things will balance out and fall into place for them anyway. So whether you can be cured or not the knock-on affect of hypnotherapy is always positive. There certainly are no negative side affects.”

Some might say that you have to lose yourself in order to find yourself, and hypnotherapy would certainly appear to be one of the most practical ways of doing that in Nenagh. Fully insured and adhering to the Institute of Hypnotherapy and Psychotherapy’s code of ethics, Katja Keane sees clients twice a week at her New Dawn Clinic off Kenyon St. All sessions begin with a free introductory consultation, wherein the hypnotherapist discusses what her client wishes to achieve before talking money. You can call Katja for an appointment and free brochure on 086 8124276.