

THE PATH TO POSITIVE THINKING

Despite some negative associations, hypnotherapy is a highly respected therapy, which can shift problems, such as anxiety, without drugs. Here, a colleague reports on her experience of consulting Ursula James, vice president of the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis.

10 Nov It's my long-term inability to make decisions that makes me really anxious. Should I take that job or this? Say yes or no to that date? It leaves me with an aching pain in my chest and feeling out of control. At my first session, Ursula reassures me that hypnotherapy won't mess with my mind – another fear. I will be deeply relaxed, my unconscious brain more alert and open to suggestion. I will only take on board what we discuss.

We agree that I want focus, calm and concentration. I lie back, eyes closed, as she starts the relaxation. I'm intensely aware of my breathing, her soothing intonation and my limbs feeling heavy. Her voice speeds up, encouraging me to picture myself confident, with an inner smile, safe and in control. Fifty minutes later, I emerge giggling, much of what she said already hazy. My boisterous good mood lasts for three days.

19 Nov Ursula says a session is a useful kick-start but most 'work' is done on your own afterwards. Have

listened twice to her self-hypnosis *Controlling Anxiety* CD, which has relaxing and positive suggestions. Both times I fall asleep, but apparently that's OK. The chest pain hasn't returned. I feel calm, even when thinking about 'the future' – a habitual source of stress.

24 Nov Ursula e-mails me for feedback. I've been slack about listening to the CD but she says five times in 21 days is fine. Still no chest pain, and definitely feeling more relaxed.

29 Nov My (optional) follow-up session, focusing on confidence. Find it tricky to visualise turning on 'confidence switches' in my brain's control room.

10 Dec One month on. Feel more confident – I can work through things steadily and not get het up when faced with decisions. Feeling calmer makes all the difference, slowing my thinking and preventing anxious panic. In turn this means I concentrate better. If confidence fluctuates, I listen to Ursula's *Performance Enhancement* CD.

22 Dec Anxiety still returns in stressful situations but I can control it better. My chest pain has never returned – hooray! Hypnotherapy isn't a miracle cure, but definitely an effective mental boost that helps positive thinking. *Appointments cost £180, call 020 7262 1659 (www.ursulajames.com); CDs cost £25 each, plus p&p, call 0845 055 9191*



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