



I met Deborah Marshall Warren, hypnotherapist, at the Gaiafest held last month at the Gaia foundation, which, by the way, was a great success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rudolf, Natasha and Sabrina, as well as all the staff, and volunteers, who worked hard to get the program together. It was lovely to meet so many interesting people from all walks of life in a relaxed, natural, educational and entertaining environment, and to see such a large attendance of Maltese and foreigners alike interested in alternative ways to improve their well-being. The festival was a gathering of kind and genuine practitioners, artists, musicians, merchants and buyers working for a common goal - the expansion of old modes of living into a more responsible, conscious lifestyle. Well done to all!

a dream come true

Hypnosis is an interesting subject; it conjectures thoughts of mysticism and to some: Fear. However the science behind it is not mystical at all and understanding this dispels all fear. Contrary to popular belief, hypnotism does not give the practitioner total control over the client's mind. The client, rather, remains in the driver's seat at all times, because being in the hypnotic state simply means that one goes into a dream like condition wherein he or she may wake up from at any time. So, if for example the therapist, whilst working on helping a client to eat less suggests that bricks were healthy and nutritious, the conscious mind would jump into action and refuse the statement, bringing the client out of hypnosis. This is because, in therapeutic hypnosis spoken suggestions must sit within the client's personal code of beliefs and values. On stage people are selected as those most willing to be entertainment fodder. If the subject really found using their shoe as a telephone really, really objectionable they would not do it.

The brain operates in four general states which are determined by the frequency of the electricity generated by the exchange of chemicals in the neural pathways. The four states include: Full Conscious Awareness, the Hypnotic State, the Dream State and the Sleep

state. These four states correspond to electrical activity in the brain and are defined by frequency ranges on an EEG. Full Conscious Awareness is where we spend most of our waking hours. In this state, our mind is attentive and uses logic to reason, evaluate, assess judge and make decisions. Unfortunately, when making life changes, the conscious mind often gets in the way. Memories and fears can take over causing us to make fear based decisions. Hypnosis induces a naturally occurring altered state of mind; this simply means that the reasoning and evaluating part of the mind is bypassed. While you might wonder how this possibly happens, we are exposed to it all the time. The advertising industry is dedicated to bypassing our critical judgment to influence our buying behavior. We also suspend our critical judgment at different times; actors do this when taking on a role, they have to suspend their critical faculty and ask the audience to do the same and to accept them being someone else.

Deborah explains that the work simply helps to access one's own inner wisdom and truth; "the therapist is merely a team player acting as a guide to help deepen relaxation and achieve fast results in building confidence and strengthening one's inner core". There is usually a core issue of lack of self-esteem and confidence in most problems. Hypnosis allows one

to relax enough so that the conscious mind, which keeps the problem "alive" (conscious) is sidestepped, as explained above.

The earliest references to hypnosis date back to ancient Egypt and Greece. Indeed, 'hypnos' is the Greek word for sleep. The modern father of hypnosis was an Austrian physician, Franz Mesmer (1734 - 1815), from whose name the word 'mesmerism' is derived. The mesmeric system must surely go down in history as one of the most interesting, and undoubtedly the most long-winded, ways of putting someone into a trance. Mesmer would stand his subjects quite still while he swept his arms across their body, sometimes for hours on end. I suspect that this probably had the effect of boring patients into a trance, but it was apparently quite effective. Research papers documenting the benefits of hypnotherapy and even a clinical textbook appeared in the 1930's. However, it wasn't until 1950's before both the American and British Medical Associations actually recommended hypnotherapy for a variety of both physical and emotional conditions. Hypnosis later reached a new level of acceptance by the scientific world in 1995, when the National Institutes of Health (NIH) assessment panel recommended that it be considered an element of the medical protocol. The process is a compassionate one,

and the feeling is delicious; "it's like a safe cocoon, a resting place where gentle negotiations can take place" says Deborah in her softly spoken manner and gentle way. "In fact most people come out of the hypnotic state feeling like they have been on holiday - soothed and relaxed". Deborah explains that she first meets with the client to understand their relationship with the obstacles they face, here she notes the client's vocabulary; it is this very important factor that makes the type of hypnosis she uses such a success. By using client's vocabulary and "sprinkling" it onto the suggestions made whilst under hypnosis, the individual will feel at ease and understand the language, hence sliding into the desired results without difficulty, the sessions are undertaken once weekly and the amount will vary in length according to the depth of the issue and responsiveness of the client. Public speaking, meetings or interviews, phobias, depression, weight-loss and smoking cessation are but a few of the situations this gentle and effective art may be applied to.

Thorsons published her bestselling book and audio-tape, "Mind Detox". Her new book, "I'm Afraid of Hypnosis But I Don't Know Why", is published by Whole-Being Books. Deborah is giving courses in Malta as well as one-to-one sessions.

Krista Henderson