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You can't
have your
cake . . .
so think

RELAX: IT CAN BE PERFECT

There was a time when a glass of champagne would do the trick of calming the nerves of a bride-to-be, but it appears that people are now getting so worked up before the big day, they're resorting to more extreme measures, such as hypnotherapy.

According to the hypnotherapist Deborah Marshall-Warren, who refers to her sessions as "fast-track psychotherapy", the focus of a bride and groom-to-be is no longer solely on how good they look on the day, but also on how good they feel. "People want to be in control of their emotions and the situation, rather than out of control due to anxiety or alcohol," she says.

Marshall-Warren, who

likens hypnosis to a heightened state of awareness, maintains that it can boost inner resources, such as self-confidence and self-belief, as well as foster a positive outlook.

"It lets you dress-rehearse the wedding moment by moment, by going beyond the rational and conscious to the engine room of the mind — the subconscious. You install the positive experience of the wedding in your mind, almost like software, so that you cruise through the day feeling joyous and calm."

Unlike traditional hypnotherapy, Marshall-Warren works in a participative way — the client is in a state of deep relaxation rather than deep sleep and is expected to speak during the process. What's more, the client

remembers everything that occurs during the 90-minute session and can generally be treated in two to three sessions.

Afraid that she'd burst into tears walking down the aisle, Melanie Hackwell, 39, an office manager, was keen to get her emotions under control. "I was nervous about how I was going to react in church, but hypnotherapy took me through the entire process, like a dress rehearsal, and dealt with all my fears," she says. "On the day itself, I was beaming from the moment I heard the music and walked down the aisle. Friends said they'd never seen a happier bride."

Although he sails through presentations at work every day, Christopher Smith, 31, an investment banker, was

so nervous about making a speech in front of his peers that he sidestepped his scepticism and booked a session. "I was surprised by the results," he says. "Everything went brilliantly on the day and I enjoyed giving the speech."

So if you feel a pang of pre-wedding panic, perhaps help is at hand. As Hackwell says: "When you're haemorrhaging money, a couple of hundred pounds extra won't break the bank."

For more information on Deborah Marshall-Warren's Whole-Being Interactive Hypnotherapy sessions, call 020-7432 0307 or visit www.marshall-warren.com. One session costs £130.

ANNE-CELINE JAEGER