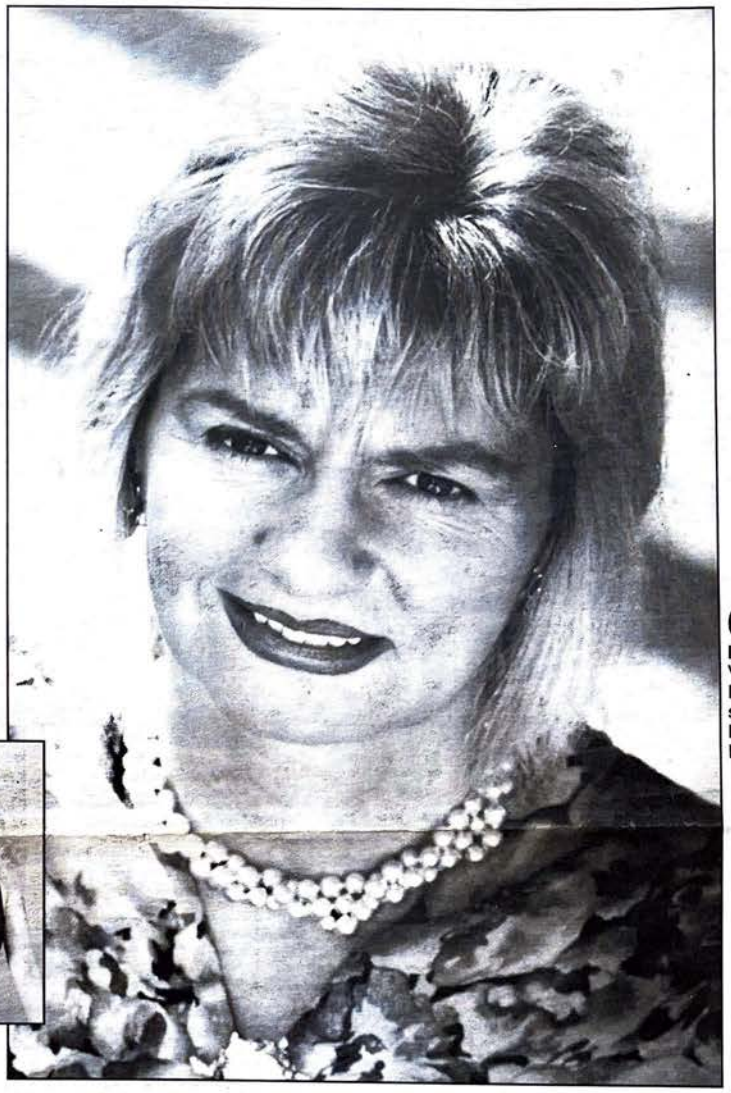
A dream come true for dieters?

Slimming while you sleep may sound a little far-fetched, but as hypnotherapist Valerie Austin told JANE HALL, it is possible to melt away those unwanted pounds without really trying.



Weighting game: Hypnotherapist Valerie Austin has written a slimming book based on sleep hypnosis.



Shapely: Fiona Wright, left, before she sought help from Valerie Austin, and right, after her treatment.

VALERIE Austin knows all about the weighty problems associated with piling on those unwanted pounds and inches.

Having been on the pill for seven years her doctor suddenly changed her to a new brand, and she watched as her trim size 10 figure ballooned to a size 14 thanks to the effects of water retention.

And as a former journalist and promotions executive in Hollywood she worked closely with the film industry, and saw for herself the mental and physical anguish suffered by models, beauty queens and actresses obsessed with trying to stay trim and slim.

Like many people, Valerie, a hypnotherapist who runs two clinics in London, has grave concerns about what she terms the numerous 'faddy diets' that come on the market virtually every day.

For the vast majority of the population they don't work. People find themselves trapped in the never-ending spiral of dieting, losing weight for a while, relapsing, piling on the pounds again, trying yet another miracle diet, losing weight, putting it on, and so on...

Not only can it be a depressing vicious circle, but as we now know, such diets can be detrimental to our health, and cause mental frustration.

Valerie says: "Diets based on food deprivation, or only eating certain types of food, vary from the silly to the downright dangerous, but they all have one thing in common, they relate to a purely physical approach to slimming and ignore the mental element.

"However, there is growing evidence that being overweight is a state of mind. Lack of willpower is widely acknowledged as the principal reason why so many slimmers 'fall off the wagon'.

"What is needed is an approach to weight loss that combines sensible eating with a disciplined programme of mental self-help and self-control."

Which is what Valerie has come up with. *Slim While You Sleep* is a unique diet book and tape that involves programming your mind while you sleep to help you lose weight.

Valerie said: "In a powerful, two-word phrase, the key to successfully losing weight – and, more importantly, maintaining the loss – is mind power.

"Once you reprogramme your mind to root out the bad, negative habits and replace them with dynamic, new positive ones, then you should be able to eliminate your weight problem for ever.

"Think of the mind as a highly sophisticated computer – it's a question of getting rid of the outdated software and inputting a new programme to change attitudes."

'There is growing evidence that being overweight is a state of mind.'

If it seems too good to be true, Valerie has scores of patients who can testify to its success, including model Fiona Wright – probably best known for her headline making affair in 1987 with the former Burton Group chairman Sir Ralph Halpern – who lost three stones after seeking the hypnotherapist's help.

Fiona had suffered many years of repeatedly gaining and losing weight and was in Valerie's words "definitely large" when she sought her help.

She said: "When I first saw Fiona it was a real shock because I remembered her from her professional days when she was really slim. And here she was, stones overweight. I had heard she had put on a lot of weight, but I wasn't prepared for how much."

Valerie says she was able to help Fiona not just with her weight, but other problems that were worrying her – such as appearing on TV – and affecting her general well being.

Hypnosis, Valerie says, is the most natural self-healing tool known to mankind. "Using hypnosis, those bad habits and lack of self-discipline that lead to over-eating can be eliminated and replaced by positive mental attitudes, resulting in a more balanced approach to a sensible diet and permanent control of your weight problem."

Slim While You Sleep is the result of a series of fortuitous accidents.

Valerie was asked to write a slimming book just before she went to America for a hypnotherapy convention early last year, but admits that she had little or no idea what she was going to do.

One of the first lectures she attended was on sleep hypnosis. She had just lost her father and was suffering some mental problems that were affecting her life. But she said: "I had some treatment and all my problems disappeared.

"I learnt all about it and then started trying it on people. The results were extraordinary. It is such a new technique and to my knowledge isn't being used in this country."

'The key to successfully losing weight is mind power.'

She adapted the *Slim While You Sleep* programme from the Hypno-Sleep Therapy she learnt from American hypnotherapist Jack Mason, and the technique requires the commitment of only a few minutes every day for about three weeks to ensure that you will eat in a more positive and natural way.

So what is sleep hypnosis? Valerie explains: "Sleep hypnosis enables a person to direct the inner mind to do the work even before your subconscious is active.

"To use an analogy, suppose you consult a hypnotherapist to seek help for a problem – the advanced hypnotherapist has been likened to a computer expert who shows you how to work your computer and run the software.

"Sleep hypnosis like being directly in touch with the designer to correct the malfunctions and solve the problems at source.

"Your specially designed hypnotic suggestion is rather like the computer expert explaining to the designer what problems result because of the design fault. The designer then makes an adjustment to ensure the smooth running of the equipment."

But is it dangerous? There has been much talk in the media in recent months that hypnosis – and especially stage acts – can be dangerous.

Valerie says: "Many people are understandably fearful of allowing themselves to be hypnotised, but it is most unlikely that any harm could be done. If they are asked to do something they don't want to, their mind will reject it and they will simply wake up.

"One thing though, if you decide to enlist the help of another party to act as your guide to assist you into hypnosis, which is one method I suggest, then you must be sure to choose someone whom you trust completely."

■ *Slim While You Sleep* by Valerie Austin is published by Blake at £10. Anyone wanting more information about weight loss, how to stop smoking, stress, traumas and phobias, can contact Valerie on (0171) 637- 1320 or fax (0171) 580-8838.