

HAYDOCK
... quit smoking



HISHAM
... sound sleep



TANIDA
... worthwhile



SHEARMAN
... impressed



AUSTIN ... you are fully aware of what you are doing while being hypnotised

Spellbound by hypnotherapy

Participants of a short course on hypnotherapy came away feeling on top of the world recently, finally finding the solution to problems ranging from heavy smoking to chronic stress. And all the while being in control of their thoughts and actions. PANG YIN FONG reports.

THEY all seemed convinced that it works. The seven-day intensive course on hypnotherapy, led by British hypnosis expert Valerie Austin, had done wonders for them, claimed the participants.

Two of them, advertising prop-maker Paul Haydock and management consultant See Foon Chan-Koppen, lost their craving for cigarettes overnight.

They had been heavy smokers and had tried to quit several times. This time, after several sessions of hypnotherapy, Haydock and Chan-Koppen are convinced that they have finally kicked the habit.

Another participant, Hisham Zainal, says that hypnotherapy has improved his productivity and relieved him of years of stress.

"Since my father's death many years ago, I'd been having disturbed sleep. But after six sessions of hypnotherapy, I now enjoy sound sleep.

"Hypnosis actually helps people to change negative habits to positive ones. At no time under hypnosis did we surrender our will or did anything that was against our wishes," says Hisham, executive chairman of his own economic planning and corporate finance company.

Singapore-based acupuncturist Patricia Shearman attended the course, held recently in Langkawi, after watching Austin being interviewed on TV3.

"I'm impressed with the results that can be obtained from hypnotherapy. I'm aware that not everybody's mind is open to hypnosis but I believe I can combine what I've learnt about hypnotherapy with my regular work.

"I'm going to test it out on my son who is sitting for his university exams in June. I'll be totally convinced if he scores with flying colours!"

The potential of the human mind has always interested London-based astrology student Toshiko Tanida. After reading one of Austin's books on hypnosis, Tanida decided to expand her knowledge by attending Austin's course.

"Although I don't fully understand everything because of my poor English, I still think it was worthwhile for me to travel all the way here to learn about hypnotherapy. The subconscious has always interested me," says Tanida.

Austin, who plans to conduct another advanced hypnosis course here in June, is living proof that hypnotherapy works. Under Hollywood hypnotherapist Dr Gil Boyne, she was cured of amnesia which resulted from a near-fatal car accident some 15 years ago.

She was later trained by Boyne. Today, she practises hypnotherapy in London's Harley Street where she treats clients for bad habits, stress, insomnia, weight problems and severe depression.

This former journalist believes that hypnotherapy works well in conjunction with psychology and psychiatry and dispels the common misconception that once under hypnosis, a person is no longer in control of his or her thoughts and actions.

"Many people think that hypnosis is dangerous because it can lead you to do things against your belief system. That's not true because you are fully aware of what you are doing while being hypnotised.

"However, if you combine drugs, pain and hypnosis together, then you can brainwash someone."

According to Austin, many people go for her "Stop Smoking" programme which has a 90 per cent success rate after just an hour-long session of advanced hypnotherapy. The client must first be committed to overcoming the problem.

Through the years, this soft-spoken hypnotherapist has developed her own "Austin technique" which blends the brain's heightened state of awareness with the "alpha state".

The technique, says Austin, re-trains and persuades the subconscious to transfer the satisfaction derived from a bad habit, like smoking, to that of a good habit like exercise, or having good health.

Austin's first two books are *Self-Hypnosis — The Key to Success and Happiness* and *Slim While You Sleep*. She is planning to write a book on how to stop smoking.

She is also eager to turn her novel called *The Therapist* (loosely based on her own life) into a movie. Meanwhile, she continues to run courses to help people improve their productivity and efficiency.

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