

The City section: To Your Health

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## **HYPNOSIS HELPS PEOPLE MAKE LIFESTYLE CHANGES**

Quitting smoking, losing weight and making other positive changes that will improve your health isn't easy. Many people make multiple attempts without success. However, an increasing number of people are turning to hypnosis to achieve their lifestyle goals.

"Hypnosis is a totally natural state that we all move in and out of several times a day," says Susan Gayle, founder of the New Behavior Institute in Manhattan. "Whenever you have been totally absorbed while reading a book, painting a picture or watching movie, you have been in a state of self-induced hypnosis. This state of focused attention is similar to what happens to you during hypnosis."

## **MANY PEOPLE USE THIS TECHNIQUE TO STOP SMOKING, LOSE WEIGHT AND DECREASE STRESS.**

Although scientists aren't sure how hypnosis works, it appears to affect how the brain communicates with the body through nerve impulse and chemicals to create a state of deep relaxation. The conscious mind, which controls everything from selecting foods to eat to deciding whether to exercise, is quieted, enabling the subconscious to become more open than usual to suggestions to lose weight or take walks.

To help clients achieve their goals, clinical hypnotists must be well trained and experienced. Gayle, who is certified by two national and two international organizations, has been practicing for seven years.

"Some people are reluctant to try hypnosis, because they fear that they will lose control when hypnotized," says Gayle. "This is a myth, because the hypnotist acts as a facilitator to help the person reach a deep, relaxed state that allows his or her subconscious mind to be more actively engaged. The hypnotist never - at any time - controls the person. In fact, the focus of hypnosis is to help the person be more in control of his or her mind, feelings and body to help make the changes the person wants to make."

Most people require one to four 90-minute sessions. Gayle and the client explore the reasons why the person wants to change. "We discuss what purpose the behavior plays in the person's life," she says. "A person may drink excessively after work to cope with the stress of an overbearing boss or on weekends because he is lonely. We come up with suggestions how he might change these patterns, like going to a gym instead of a bar after work and taking a course on Saturdays so he will find new friends and improve his self-esteem."

To help a person quit smoking, the hypnotist will put the smoker in a relaxed state, allowing the subconscious to accept new choices the person wants to make, such as taking a glass of water instead of lighting a cigarette.