



Hypnotherapy for the Treatment of IBS

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More and more gastroenterologists are diagnosing their patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) than merely a decade ago. There is also evidence that one in three people in the UK suffer from some sort of digestive illness. And while the initial cause of IBS is not yet known, a slow onset of IBS over a longer period points to a correlation with stress disorders such as anxiety or depression, pointing to the fact that there may be a psychological basis for the condition.

Symptoms:

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with IBS, then you probably know the symptoms all too well. There may be pain in different parts of the abdomen; bloating, constipation or diarrhoea or both; nausea; tiredness or headaches, along with various other symptoms. For some IBS sufferers, there is also an urgency to go to the toilet that seems to come out of nowhere, making some social situations awkward or avoided altogether. This can then lead the sufferer to live a more restricted life, which can then lead to other problems such as low self-esteem, depression, lack of confidence or, at the most extreme, agoraphobia.

Treatments:

At the moment, there are few medical options available to treat IBS. Many doctors will prescribe medications, such as antispasmodics, antidiarrhoeals, soluble fibre or antidepressants, but these tend to only ease pain temporarily or have unpleasant side-effects. That is why the NHS, and many GPs and gastroenterologists, are now recommending a treatment that is not only safe and effective, but is longer-lasting with no side-effects. That treatment is hypnotherapy.

Research that hypnotherapy is effective in treating IBS has been around in published form since the 1980s, although there is some evidence that hypnosis was used for treatment even earlier than that. There is no doubt that the mind and the body are connected, sending signals back and forth all the time, but it also seems apparent that the connection between the brain and the gut is the strongest. You may be aware of the way your stomach feels when you are encountering a range of different emotions – perhaps “butterflies” when nervous, “flip-flops” when excited, or a more nauseous feeling when scared or worried. This is down to what scientists call the “Gut-Brain.”

Gut-Brain:

The way this “gut-brain” connection comes about is evidenced by the fact our guts and brains derive from the same clump of tissue, which divides during foetal development . One section of this mass turns into the central nervous system, while the other piece becomes the enteric nervous system (which can be found in sheaths of tissue lining the oesophagus, stomach, small intestine and colon). Both of these systems are then connected by the vagus nerve, which meanders from the brain stem through the neck and finally ends up in the abdomen, thus creating the “gut-brain” connection.

How Hypnotherapy Can Help:

So if the “gut-brain” connection explains why negative thoughts can create negative feelings, how can hypnotherapy help where medications fall short? Well, there a number of reasons. One is that the hypnotherapy process itself is a very relaxing one and clients can, therefore, be taught how to replicate the relaxation methods in everyday life to keep stress and anxiety at bay. Another reason is that through hypnotic visualisation, the unconscious mind can begin sending different, more positive messages to the gut so that the system can begin to regulate itself properly. And lastly, but most importantly, is that hypnotherapy gets to the bottom of a client’s problem so that negative thinking, unnecessary worrying, low self esteem, depression or anxiety can be alleviated, thereby eradicating the source of the IBS and allowing the client to live a normal life once again – free from the debilitating effects of the IBS.

Further Information:

Typically, four sessions of hypnotherapy and NLP is the average number for treating IBS effectively. However, some client s may need more or less sessions depending on their personal history and progress. It is also very important to seek the advice of a gastroenterologist or your GP if you think you have IBS. It is never a good idea to self diagnose. And finally, whilst hypnotherapy is very effective in treating IBS, clients are still advised to take the advice of their medical practitioners, which may mean continuing with medications until symptoms of IBS are completely eradicated.



About the Practitioner:

I have been practising hypnotherapy and NLP since 2006 and have been working at the Health Zone Clinic in Wimbledon since 2009. I have specialist training in using Hypnotherapy in the treatment of IBS and have a certificate from the Academy of Clinical and Medical Hypnosis in Working with IBS.