

...Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy is often seen as an entertaining stage act but it is in fact an up and coming means of counselling as Heather Eckton found out...

LOOK into my eyes...look into my eyes. You might be forgiven for thinking I've taken up Little Britain impersonations but in fact I'm on a mission to find out more about Hypnotherapy and see if it really is a world of swaying clocks and stage acts.

The Staff Health and Wellbeing Centre has just started hypnotherapy sessions for staff and already the uptake has been phenomenal. So is everyone looking for the magic cure to a bad habit or is there more to this phenomenon than meets the eye? I met with Hypnopsychotherapist Sarah McCall and Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing Sue Grimshaw to find out.

Sarah has been a counsellor and hypnotherapist for around five years and has spent a large portion of that time treating patients with life altering illnesses. She said: "It's not magic and I don't use a swaying pendant or anything like that. I hypnotise people just by them closing their eyes and talking to them.

"The thing about stage hypnotism is that people have been very carefully chosen before hand and they are very susceptible to that sort of hypnosis. This hypnotherapy is completely different. I've had some of my best results with people who are sceptical about these techniques. Our patients are always completely in control, it's a myth that you get hypnotised and aren't in control, it's also a myth that you can get stuck in that state.

"People go into a hypnotic state everyday. For instance you could be driving along and go into 'automatic pilot' so you suddenly realise you aren't aware of driving and have no sense of how long you have been like that for and time can become a bit distorted.

"It's getting people into a relaxed state. When we are fully alert and conscious there is part of the brain called the critical sensor which evaluates what we do and when we are very relaxed this part of the brain isn't active so any suggestions are accepted by us at face value. Through hypnosis we bypass the brain that criticises and evaluates so we are more open to suggestion.

"It's for anyone who is suffering from anxiety, stress, chronic pain, insomnia or a lack of confidence for example and people can self refer.

"There is a big emphasis on realising you are in control of your own thoughts and not that your thoughts are controlling you."

Sue Grimshaw, Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing, said: "I always had a vision of the sort of service I wanted us to offer and thought it would be a good thing to offer hypnotherapy as some staff do not always need counselling but need control of their life when things are going wrong.



Sarah McCall

"Sarah and Carole Richardson and I are qualified hypnotherapists. Hypnotherapy is the practice of promoting healing or positive development and with it we hope to re-programme patterns of behaviour within the mind enabling such things as phobias, irrational fears, negative thoughts and suppressed emotions to be overcome.

"Hypnosis will not make you do anything that you don't want to but people need to want to change something in their life and be motivated to do it. The session is for no more than an hour and how many you need will depend on the individual!"

So there you have it, the Trust is not offering a service to make staff members dance around like a chicken at the ringing of a bell, but rather another form of therapeutic intervention which can help patients move on and take control of difficult points in their lives.

For more information or to book an appointment please call the Staff Health and Wellbeing Centre on Ext 6205 or email Nicola.Mustow@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk.