

Sherree Ginger, BHS AI & ISM, Clinical hypnotherapist, NLP therapist, life coach and Lightning Process Trainer.
www.sherreeginger.co.uk
gingers@springacres.fsnet.co.uk
 01403 865338

From fear to fun

Sarah came to see me because she had developed a fear of jumping. She explains...



"I have gradually lost my confidence over the years with my jumping. Eight years ago and more I used to SJ Newcomers quite confidently on a spooky, difficult horse and riding a different horse would do Open XC, and he was a mental horse! After a few nasty experiences with various horses and my advancing years (!) I find myself desperate to showjump again, as I now have a horse (Rocky) who is not spooky, difficult or mental and he has the ability and desire to jump!

I found myself in a quandary. I have tried different instructors who have all been immensely patient whilst I over-analyse every little inch, where we were not quite at the perfect take off spot (major problem in my head), or the sand was deep, or the going slippery, or I have a cold, you name it every little thing affected me. I must thank those instructors un-reservedly, but on the way to a jump I would imagine in my head every little thing which could go wrong as I seemed to feel that it was necessary to do this so that I was ready for it. And I did try not to do this but have you ever tried not to do something which just happens automatically? I am very lucky that Rocky did not take advantage of this but it hasn't done his confidence any good. The really silly thing is I know I am a good enough and instinctive enough rider to deal with any situation as it occurs anyway."

When your safety is threatened, the part of your brain responsible for the "fight or flight" survival response, kicks in and over-rides the more rational and "higher" brain functions of experiencing pleasure, fun and joy. If the trigger to this response is not reset, or over-ridden, it continues to run in the background. So every time you get on your horse, think about jumping, or competition, or whatever your particular trigger is, this programme will start to run unchecked, becoming a fast and strong neurological highway. The irony is also, that as your cells get used to receiving this particular "fear" peptide (a chemical produced by the hypothalamus in the brain) is produced. And the cells develop more receptors for this peptide and actually become addicted to it, shouting unconscious messages to the brain, like "...I feel worried - lets think of a reason to be frightened" - in order to get the brain to release more peptide. Unless this is checked!

An emotional response is an unconscious response, but unfortunately most people don't realise that they do have a choice about the emotional state they want to be in, or how they can change it.

What is the most appropriate state of mind for the job or situation of the moment? If we are stuck in a traffic jam, is the best state of mind to be in: impatience, anger or intolerance? Perhaps a more useful state would be one where we could relax, and accept that we've now got another 10 minutes in the day to do something for ourselves, like write a letter or focus on a project, or just to relax and listen to music?

Hypnosis is defined as being in an altered state of mind, so we are actually in hypnotic states in everyday life. For example, when we've driven home, having little recollection of the journey because our thoughts were focused on another issue, or when we're watching television or reading a book and feel our emotions changing - remember an emotional response is an unconscious response.

During hypnotherapy the most useful state is one where you are focused internally and can communicate with the unconscious mind, and also with the therapist, so you are always in control. It is not about being in such a deep trance that you are almost asleep, and being told what to do or how to act by the therapist. It is about helping you to unlock the power of your unconscious mind and discover where you already have the skills you need to move your life forwards.

What would be the most appropriate, useful or rewarding state of mind to be in when riding? Probably one that's calm, joyful, possibly focusing on your

communication and partnership with your horse with the anticipation of a great outcome.

As Sarah and I worked together we focused her conscious and unconscious mind on how she used to feel when she really enjoyed her riding. We concentrated on the qualities she enjoyed, what skills she unconsciously brought to it, the feelings in her body, her state of mind and how she was communicating with her horse. We then looked at the nasty memories, and I taught her a very simple technique to disrupt the trigger in her mind that was unconsciously leading her thoughts back to those bad memories, and consequently her emotions to fear. She was then able to re-connect to all those good memories and nice feelings that she wanted to regain to enable her to love her riding again.

Sarah says - "...I visited Sherree on a Monday in May at her house, we had a cup of coffee (I needed that or gin!) and a general chat then Sherree started to write down my answers to her questions, trying to find out my thought processes and where my fears come from and how they affect me (all very simple and friendly, I promise). We then commenced the hypnotherapy and for those who have never done it before there are no ticking clocks and you do not suddenly think you are Elvis either! I was sitting back in a comfy chair with my eyes closed and I was completely aware of everything going on, I was not in any form of unconscious state, just in a quiet state of mind. Sherree just talked to me asking questions and getting me to imagine things (all pleasant!). The session lasted about 1 1/2 hours and cost me £60.

I came away thinking, hhhmmm I don't feel any different but hey ho.

I had a jumping lesson booked on the Wednesday, combined with trying out a new saddle. Rocky jumped OK and it wasn't until later that day that I realised I asked to jump an upright again before finishing the lesson. Now that might not sound strange to you reading this but I had jumped this upright very nicely already and before my hypno I would never have asked to jump it again for fear of doing it wrong! Hmmm now was this just a coincidence?

Well, I then jumped again on the Saturday, at home with a friend (not jumping instructor) doing the jumps for me. Three jumps in the school set out as a little course. Rocky was in one of his very keen moods where he kicks out over the top of every jump and then bucks on landing with his tail going around like a helicopter. Very funny to watch but extremely unseating and previously to hypno would have caused me to give up, particularly as there wasn't a jumping instructor with me. I just kept jumping him around these 3 jumps with no break and waited until he gave up being exuberant and jumped neatly. This took many rounds as Rocky is rather more used to me giving up! However, we achieved this and it wasn't until I stopped that I realised I would never have done this before hypno! None of those thoughts of what might go wrong went through my head on the way to the jumps and the sand was deep and my pigmy goats were next to the arena head-butting each other as only goats can do - these things would normally have affected my confidence greatly.

I also took my little young mare XC on the following Monday (1 week after hypno) and I jumped lots of bigger jumps and I jumped down a step - something I would never have done before hypno, if you don't believe me ask my instructor, she was amazed. I was full of confidence and again I didn't have any of those doubting thoughts going through my head on the way to the jumps.

I cannot thank Sherree enough. Apparently my confidence should continue to grow as I do more jumping but I know I am 'cured' already. Who knows, I might even be brave enough to be on a jumping team next year!

How much easier it is to mount up or compete, thinking about how much fun you are going to have, rather than your survival!

EQUESTRIAN

Study shows that rider hypnotherapy improves confidence and performance

A LACK of confidence in riding can be the difference between success and failure, but a new study has found that just one session of hypnosis could significantly improve a rider's confidence.

This is according to research conducted by Sherree Russell Ginger, a clinical hypnotherapist, riding teacher and sports performance coach based near Horsham.

"Our findings showed that confidence could be increased by up to 51 per cent with just one session of hypnosis," said Sherree.

To date, there has been very little scientific research specifically into horse riding confidence.

Participants of the study were 21 female volunteer horse riders aged from 20 to 62. Participation was open to riders of any level and experience, of either sex, aged between 18 and 65 years (interestingly only females applied). Riding experience ranged from novice to professional and no participant had

received hypnosis for horse riding confidence prior to this study.

Participants were randomly assigned to two groups and all completed a prior questionnaire.

Questions were designed to measure sporting confidence with answers recorded by use of a subjective numeric scale.

One group received a single session of hypnosis. The other group (the control group) was given an educational presentation about fear, anxiety, the stress response, and sports psychology.

Both groups were then sent away to take part in their normal riding activities, and were required to complete the same questionnaire approximately two weeks later. The data measured was the overall increase of each participant's score on this numeric scale.

The results demonstrated that ten of the eleven participants in the Hypnosis Group reported an increase in their confidence score,

on average a 16 per cent increase.

One participant commented: "I understand why I get scared now, which is a massive help."

Sherree explained: "Horses are acutely aware of a rider's emotional state, with feelings transmitted to them via unconscious muscular responses, sensory, chemical and energetic messages. As sporting confidence has been linked in many previous studies to sporting performance, hypnosis has the potential to help increase the performance of our competition riders."

The project was part of her recent Bachelor of Sciences First Class Honours Degree in Clinical Hypnotherapy.

She has worked with riders from Novice to Olympic level, and currently runs un-mounted group workshops and individual sessions, incorporating Hypnosis, NLP, and Sports Performance Coaching. See www.shereeginger.co.uk or call 07531 229322 for more.

What if tomorrow YOU COULDN'T GET OUT OF BED?

WHEN THAT HAPPENED TO (HYPER)ACTIVE MAGGIE ALDERSON, SHE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO LEARN TO RESPECT HER BODY'S LIMITS

PHOTOGRAPHS ALUN CALLENDER



Maggie and her eight-year-old daughter, Peggy

It was the day I had to drag half a trolley of shopping over to the customer services in Sainsbury's and say I was really sorry, but I couldn't continue shopping, that I finally took notice of my body's warning signs. I didn't have enough energy to do the family food shop. It was serious.

I don't know how I drove home that day but, once I got there, I hauled myself up the 11 stairs to bed – when you're that knackered, you know exactly how many steps there are – and there I stayed for the next three months. When I wasn't lying on the sofa.

At my lowest ebb, I had to crawl from the bed to the loo and back. With rests along the way. Sometimes accompanied by sobs at what I was reduced to.

I had no idea what had put me in that state, but my GP and acupuncturist both

said I had Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome. From their descriptions, it sounded like the ongoing exhaustion people are left with after virus-based illnesses, such as glandular fever and shingles.

I haven't had either of those, but the doctor reckoned my condition went back a while – and the acupuncturist reminded me I had been seeing her on and off for four years, with episodes of random exhaustion. So, it must have been some long-forgotten virus that did me in.

Or, I now understand, did I do *myself* in? By not taking that relatively minor flu – or whatever it was – seriously while I had it? By not allowing myself the time to be ill – and certainly not the time to recover. As far as I was concerned, “convalescence” was for wimps and fainting Victorians – all beef tea, air baths and junket.

Because what made my months of bed- and sofa-rest so particularly weird, and so hard for friends and family to understand – they mostly thought I was depressed, I think – is that I'm normally the most active of people. Actually, you could put a “hype-” in there.

My husband used to call me the Duracell bunny. After we'd done a day's work, made dinner, cleared up and put our daughter to bed, he'd lie on the sofa watching telly, or reading, like a normal person.

I'd still be charging up and down the stairs – all 33 of them, not just the 11 from the hall to the bedroom – non-stop, with never-ending little jobs to do. The only time my legs were still was when my fingers were hyperactive on this laptop.

This ceaseless activity is not something I was proud of. It wasn't undertaken in a

spirit of goody-goody overachieving – it was actually fuelled by terror.

Because, deep down, I'm convinced I'm a lazy baggage, and I've always been certain if I let that tendency even get its foot in the door, I would spend the rest of my life lying on the sofa, watching daytime TV. Which is exactly what I ended up doing, of course – although the irony is, it was the hyperactivity that put me there, not the inner slacker I was so afraid of.

But, while I managed to force myself into exactly the situation I have spent my entire adult life (literally) running away from, something odd happened once I got there. I liked it. I really liked it.

As I kept telling anyone who rang (very few came to visit, like it was some kind of plague house), I was having an enforced lie-down and I was, weirdly, loving it.

In the past 20 years, I have hardly watched television. Not out of snobbery, but because sitting still for that long made me too anxious. I wasn't getting anything done! The chaos goblins could be rampaging through the house and I wouldn't know, because I was sitting staring at the telly. Sitting still. That dangerous occupation.

The same mindset made it impossible for me to enjoy holidays. My husband turns into a basking lizard immediately on arrival in a warm climate but, most of the time, I would be getting stressed, planning which activities to take part in – I'd have to do a flow chart – or making lists of which bits of local rubble to visit. When no distractions were available, on a trip to a Florida island gloriously devoid of activities or culture, I spent most of the time doing laundry. Honestly.

Although I didn't realise it at the time, this manic pace, which I thought was just my personality, was in fact a deteriorating condition. In the last couple of years, I had got to the point where even reading magazines and papers made me anxious.

It's something I absolutely have to do for my work, but because it wasn't producing any tangible physical result – a finished newspaper column, another chapter, a tidied desk, a cake – I felt I was wasting time by doing it. By the point of my collapse, I could read a book for just five minutes before



'As far as I was concerned, "convalescence" was for wimps and fainting Victorians'

falling asleep. For a novelist, this is verging on self-sabotage.

So, what did I do with those days of exhausted inertia? There were quite a few when I just lay groaning, the curtains closed, a pillow over my eyes to keep out the daylight. There were times I wept because I couldn't take my daughter to the swings, or dance with her in the kitchen, like we used to, and wondered if I'd ever be able to do those things again. I had melodramatic thoughts about being at her wedding on a stretcher.

Those were the lowest ebbs. The rest of the time I felt a slightly elated relief to be freed from my self-imposed treadmill. The washing needed doing? Whatever.

I wasn't malingering – I really couldn't do anything physical – but on good days, I happily watched the first two series of *Mad Men*, a cultural moment I had entirely missed out on. I also read my way through the pile of dust-covered books on my bedside table and started a blog about them.

There's a revelation! It was only as I wrote that last paragraph I realised that, even in the depths of my illness, I was carrying on in my old vein, which caused it: I've got to *use* this time productively.

But, while that's true, I was also learning to watch TV and read again. Those were things I truly needed to relearn, and now I'm fully recovered from my knackerment, I'm still doing them. And just for pleasure (although I am still doing the blog).

So, how did I get back on my feet? After hearing


impressive first-person testimonials from three completely unconnected friends-of-friends, and a lot of research on Google, I did a thing called the Lightning Process (lightningprocess.com).

It's controversial (and, costing from £560, it's expensive) but, after three days of coaching, I had learnt how to reprogramme my brain not to be in the permanent state of adrenalin rush that had made me so increasingly manic – and leached my body's reserves in the process.

The technique is simple in itself; there's just a lot to understand about how it operates (and it is based on sound neuroscience, not New Age claptrap). Suffice to say, for me it worked. And very quickly. It's still working, and I now feel better than I did even before

I got ill – and a lot more balanced. And my "artistic temperament" (mardy arse) mood swings have evened out.

Whether it's a result of using that system, or spurred by the fright of the months on my back, I've also learnt to let things go. To accept it if I don't have a vegetable in the house to make sure my daughter has her five-a-day. Once, I'd have driven 20 minutes to get broccoli; now, I shrug and say she can have six tomorrow.

I've learnt to breathe out – and even, from time to time, to sit still. And the next time I get any kind of a virus, I will allow myself a proper old-school convalescence. Because better three days in bed than another three months.' 

JUST TIRED OR SERIOUSLY FATIGUED?

What is Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome?

'PVFS has many symptoms: lightheadedness, dizziness, fatigue, an alteration in periods, aches and pains in the muscles, numbness and tingling, frequent infections,' says Dr Wendy Denning (thehealthdoctors.co.uk). 'You may also get an alteration of sleep patterns, so you sleep during the day, not at night. Or, you could be sleeping all the time, but still very tired. Some people get Irritable Bowel Syndrome symptoms – bloating and gas. PVFS is not usually considered serious until six months after the original virus,' she says.

So, what can you do about it?

'What you need to do most is pace yourself,' says Dr Denning. 'The people who get PVFS tend to be busy overachievers. Work out what you can do, and do a little less every day. Magnesium and probiotics supplements can make a difference, too.'

Q&A

CONFIDENCE BUILDING

I had a bad fall when I took a corner too tight and ended up with a fence post stuck between my leg and the saddle, making the horse spook.

I got back on again two months later, and while I feel OK sitting on a horse, if my leg touches a fence I panic.

How I can get my confidence back?

Jodie Burnett, Mid Glamorgan



Ditch the nerves by focusing on the good times you've had while riding



Sherree Russell Ginger, clinical hypnotherapist, says:

I understand how frustrating it is when a fear or anxiety stops you from doing something you desperately want to do.

What you are feeling is a perfectly normal, but a totally unconscious, nervous response.

It might seem strange, but your mind is demonstrating how good it is at keeping you safe and how quickly it learns to look out for things that could be a threat in the future, especially if they are connected to a previous injury.

Hypnotic techniques would enable you to communicate with your unconscious mind and allow you to take the emotional charge off the memory of the accident, and reduce its power to trigger the fear response. Then you can re-establish and strengthen the links to your memories of having fun on a horse.

A good exercise is to dig out photos that show you enjoying riding. Recall everything about the time, as if you are watching a film. Step into the movie and relive what you saw, heard and felt.

Allow the positive feelings to wash over and through you, building more powerfully as they update every cell in your body.

Link the positive experience to a colour and the next time you ride, think of the colour to help you recall the amazing feeling.



Clare Chamberlayne, sports psychology consultant, says:

Think back to the many times, prior to your accident, when you rode past or against fencing without a problem.

Recall all the positive things you felt about riding and use these to help you overcome any panic sensations that arise.

Take control of your breathing as well, because panic is driven by an excess intake of oxygen, which in turn fuels adrenaline.

If you feel yourself starting to panic, slow your breathing down to enable yourself to stay relaxed.

Then put in place a desensitising programme, which involves rating the activities that you want to do with your horse from one to 10.

Something that makes you panic, such as trotting alongside the arena fence, would be rated as a 10.

Now think of small stages that will help you progress towards your goal. For example, holding your horse in the middle of the school could be rated as a one. This will give you an action plan to build your confidence back to where it was.

Work gradually from item one up to 10, drawing on your positive images to keep you going.

3 STEPS TO RESTORING CONFIDENCE



Enlist the support of a good instructor or sympathetic friend who can help and encourage you to achieve your goals.



Doing groundwork enables you to develop a better bond with your horse, and feel more confident around him.



Take your riding right back to basics, building up in gradual stages. And don't attempt too much too soon.

Sophia, 12, opens up about an often misunderstood illness

PICTURE: TERRY APPLIN

TA9212B2



GOOD RECOVERY: Sophia Trewick, pictured with her mum Julia

My battle to recover from debilitating ME

dren's Hospital in Brighton. She had suffered a virus in August 2009 from which she never seemed to recover.

There was little treatment the hospital could offer, apart from medication for her migraines and monitoring.

She also tried an alternative treatment, called the Lightning Process, with the help of life coach Sherree Ginger.

With all the support and back-up treatment, Sophia managed to battle her way back to health and is now doing well at school.

Here she talks about the impact the condition had on her life.

"When I had ME I felt very tired and achy in my legs.

Sometimes I would have to sit out of sport at school and when I tried to play tennis because my body got tired so fast.

I didn't want people to think I was weak so sometimes I would try and carry on.

It didn't work, I just felt much worse later.

I often found it hard to get to sleep and trying to work on the computer made me feel sick too.

Sometimes I felt very sick and had a churning tummy and this made me not want to eat, which was not like me at all.

Primary school was a very different thing for me because I couldn't do the things I loved anymore.

My friends were surprised because this was not like me at all.

I told some of them what was happening but only a couple of them actually understood.

Dr Patel only wanted me to go to school part-time and I had to build that up very slowly to half a day, which was even weirder for my friends.

They thought if I was well

RESEARCH has revealed that one in 100 schoolchildren across Sussex may be affected by the debilitating condition ME. But the condition remains undiagnosed for many, prompting calls for a dedicated specialist service to be set up in the county.

Sophia Trewick, 12, from Brighton, was successfully treated for ME after being diagnosed two years ago. She tells health reporter SIOBHAN RYAN her story.

enough to do half a day then why couldn't I do a whole day?

I ended up only doing maths and English at primary school which was alright for a while because I enjoy English, but I was missing things like art, music, history and PE.

I think the teachers did their best.

They hadn't had a pupil on half days before but some of them didn't seem to understand that I didn't want to be treated as special or different. I wanted to be treated like all the other kids.

I know I was a bit different at that time and sometimes it was difficult to concentrate if I wasn't feeling right but I didn't want the teacher to over focus on me.

All I needed was for them to

know but not make it obvious.

Sometimes if I felt really unwell my face would go a grey colour and it helped if some of them would recognise this.

I have played tennis for a long time and it was very frustrating for me not playing.

When I was very ill I think half the reason that I got better was because I had lots of different goals that pushed me forwards and they gave me the motivation to try.

My tennis coach supported me for the whole time and I am very grateful to her for helping me.

Dr Patel told my mum and dad about the Lightning Process which I did at the end of that school year when I was ill.

Sherree Ginger is incredible and

I would recommend her to anyone, young or old.

She taught me some techniques and strategies for dealing with my symptoms and they have stuck with me ever since. I still use them today.

On my first day with Sherree she told me to go swimming with my mum, something that I hadn't done in ages. It was brilliant.

I just used my newfound strategies and I was OK.

When I do big trips or go away from home on a school trip without my parents, I can get very scared and tired and worried that ME might come back.

I think I had grown reliant on my parents when I had ME and to be split off from them makes me not feel so confident in myself.

I use the things I learnt when I was doing the Lightning Process so that I feel more confident.

Now I am at Dorothy Stringer School in Brighton and I am doing all the things I like to do with my new friends.

I am back at school full-time and I have been since the beginning of Year 6.

Finally, I think the most important thing for me was the support I got. Not just from home, from everyone."

● Have you or someone you know been affected by ME? Tell us your stories by emailing siohban.ryan@theargus.co.uk or leaving a comment at theargus.co.uk/news

● For more information about health services in your area go to theargus.co.uk/localinfo

Call for specialist services

THE Sussex ME Society is calling for more specialist services to be made available for children in the county.

They are backed by charity patron and Hove MP Mike Weatherley.

NHS Brighton and Hove says the way in which children in Sussex with suspected ME will be assessed and diagnosed and then supported in the

community is changing, but patients will not be deprived of a service.

Children will continue to be assessed and diagnosed at the Royal Alex but will do this via a team of paediatricians rather than just via one consultant, Dr Patel. Dr Patel will continue to be a part of this service and will be a source of expertise for the wider paediatric team.