

You can learn to control how you feel

Most of us are already adept at self-hypnosis. Not only are we constantly receiving subliminal messages from the news, advertisements, our friends, the workplace, many of which sink in without our being aware of it; most of us are good at self talk too. Who hasn't had the thought "I can do this", or "I can't do that". Who hasn't told themselves how bored/fearful/anxious we are going to be at that party or in that meeting and felt bored, fearful or anxious as a result.

What I find with many of my patients is that they just don't realize the extent to which they are psyching themselves up (or down); nor do they realize quite how they are doing it.

I was talking to a chap the other day, who was feeling very anxious about an upcoming meeting. "How are you thinking about this meeting?" I asked him. "Well, I'm not looking forward to it", he replied. "Yes, but how are you not looking forward to it?" I asked. "What's going on in your head? How are you imagining this meeting in your mind's eye? What are you saying to yourself about this meeting that you haven't had yet?"

It turned out that he could imagine sitting at the head of the table, with everyone looking at him with expectant and hostile expressions. He was telling himself that he was going to panic, that his mind was going to go blank. He could even imagine breaking down in public. No wonder he didn't feel good.

I then asked him to describe a memory of some good meeting he had had in the past. His face relaxed as he drifted back mentally to another gathering with different people that had gone well. He remembered their smiling faces, the kind things they were saying and how good he had felt.

"What would it be like if you felt like that in your upcoming meeting?" I asked. "Great" he replied.

We had a short session of hypnotherapy during which he collected some good confident memories from the past and projected them into the imagined future meeting.

A few days later I asked him how the meeting had gone. "Great." He replied.

How we think about things makes a massive difference to how we feel about them. It could be meeting a friend, going on holiday, dealing with parents in law or neighbours. How we think about it beforehand determines how we deal with it at the time.

Hypnosis including self hypnosis is a wonderful tool for changing the way we feel and behave. The good news is that if we can psyche ourselves down, we can psyche ourselves up. We just have to learn how. And you can.