

You can process and change unhelpful and debilitating emotions

Many people have seemingly illogical fears and emotions that prevent them living their lives to the full. Maureen was an example of this. She was in her forties and had two children. For as long as she could remember she had avoided any situation where something unexpected might happen.

This was particularly true in social situations. She avoided going anywhere new, meeting anyone new, and when inevitably unexpected things did occur, she felt overcome with emotion and just had to get out of the situation.

This came to a head one weekend. She and her partner had agreed that she would drop him off at the house of some work colleagues after which they would stay in a hotel and have a pleasant weekend for two. As they drew up at the house, her partner said, "Why don't you come in and just say "Hello"". As he said that, Maureen just freaked out and had to go back home. She couldn't face her partner's colleagues and felt too upset to want to stay in the hotel.

The week after – she came to see me. Using a combination of hypnotherapy to induce calmness, and another process called EMDR which is one of the more effective methods for dealing with negative emotions, Maureen suddenly remembered a long forgotten event that she knew was the cause of her problem.

She was very young and at school. It seems that she had been hauled in front of the class and spanked. It was unexpected and she didn't know what she was being spanked for. She also remembered a dark cupboard that was open.

As the therapy session continued, the feelings of intense fear evaporated. The image in her mind of the teacher became more distant and benign. The dark cupboard turned into a normal stationery cupboard. Maureen said, "I feel normal now".

For Maureen it was as though a weight had been lifted.

She felt more confident. She no longer indulged in self criticism. She no longer felt the need to control situations to prevent anything unexpected happening.

She felt something amazing had happened.

There is no need to live with illogical and overwhelming fears. They can usually be processed and put into the past where they belong. And paradoxically, it is often the case that the more acute the fear is, the more quickly it can be dealt with.