


# Hypnosis Offers a Helping Hand

*By Nicholas Morehead*

In an unremarkable two-story office building off Halsey Avenue and Montauk

Highway in East Quogue, Judith  Rose is helping people distance themselves from a host of anxieties, one hour at a time.

Since 1999, the Hampton Bays native has been offering private hypnotherapy sessions to clients, helping people lose weight, prepare for surgery, improve a golf swing or quit smoking.

"If you come motivated for a change, hypnosis is magical," Ms. Rose said. The former nurse and social worker admits that she used to think that "the right doctor and the right pill" were the only formula for medical success.

But her medical education and background in counseling and social work led her to an epiphany at a 1995 Psychiatric Congress in Washington, D.C. "I realized there existed a way to more quickly help people with certain psychological problems," she said. At one of the conference workshops on hypnosis, the leader asked for a volunteer. Ms. Rose, who said she had serious anxiety issues with driving, thought to herself, "What do I have to lose except the anxiety?"

After one session with Stanford University psychologist David Spiegel, Ms. Rose said, she felt relieved of about 75 percent of her anxiety about driving. Four years later, she was certified in hypnotherapy and opened her own practice. Ever since, she has been working to help others ease anxieties of their own.

There was the man who wanted to improve his golf game. It turned out he had a hesitation at the top of his swing that he was able to work out via hypnosis and visualization. Another bit his nails and, after a few sessions, still was skeptical. "So I asked him had he bitten his nails recently, and he said, 'Not for about a week,'" she said.

The popular perception of hypnosis is not very accurate, Ms. Rose said. Hollywood and the media have created an image of stage shows or parlor tricks with the proverbial dangling pocket watch. "I can't tell you how many times I've had people walk in here and ask me if I was going to make them quack like a duck," she said. "But the truth is, it's made out to look like a lot more than it is.

"We all go through hypnotic states all the time," she said, whether driving, falling asleep or even just reading a book. "The difference is, I'm helping to induce that state and use it to suggest changes that you would want to achieve."

"I was one of the many people who began smoking far too young," said George Guldi of Westhampton Beach, a former Suffolk County legislator and a former client of Ms. Rose who successfully quit smoking after one session. He'd quit before—going cold turkey once and quitting for 16 years before lapsing. "On and off, I've tried all kinds of approaches: medical, Nicorette, you name it."

Finally, about three and a half years ago, Mr. Guldi went to see Ms. Rose "on August 11, 2002, at about 5:51 p.m.," he said. "It was a fairly seamless process, quasi-meditative, really. I wouldn't say I was unconscious, but I wouldn't say I was fully conscious either. There wasn't anything approaching the old black-and-white movies where people are in a zombie-like state."

What stuck out the most for him, was "the hypnotic suggestion. It really created a certain smoking aversion for me. That was critical in my success in quitting," Mr. Guldi said. What was also effective was that the process didn't leave him alone after he quit. "She really helped me get the mindset to deal with the physical effects that

come after you quit," he said, such as the concentration and relaxation to deal with an increased appetite or withdrawal symptoms.

"Look, you have to want to quit" if hypnotherapy is going to work for you, Mr. Guldi said. And for many of his friends who do want to quit, he hasn't hesitated in recommending Ms. Rose to them. "I've heard that there have been great results," he added. Ms. Rose said she achieves an approximately 70-percent success rate for smokers who want to quit.

Kathleen W, an area nurse practitioner who didn't want her full name used, tried hypnotherapy to better deal with something she had to face: surgery. "I was very anxious and nervous—I wasn't sleeping well," she said.

The insomnia was affecting her health. For her, the hypnotherapy brought a certain sense of relaxation through a self-empowerment of positive thinking. Instead of focusing on the nervous, anxious thoughts about the surgery, she learned how to focus and concentrate on positive, relaxing thoughts to the point where she was able to sleep again. "And better sleep means a healthier patient," she said.

Without revealing any trade secrets, Ms. Rose broke down what she called her "five-minute technique." Here's how it works: A client has anxiety about something in her life. Ms. Rose gets her to relax using breathing techniques and emphasizing visual focus on a particular object. Next, Ms. Rose has the patient visualize herself in a totally different environment—one that's ultimately relaxing, such as the beach. Ms. Rose has the client walk through specifics to get her to dwell on the visualization. Does she hear waves? Is there sand below her feet? Is the sun shining strong upon her?

"By doing this, they take themselves out of their state of anxiety and marginalize it. And if you do that once, they know that they can do it again," Ms. Rose said.

She admits there is no great secret, just a focused, motivated use of a combination of age-old relaxation and concentration techniques. "Hypnosis, meditation, visualization—the biggest difference between these is really just the way you spell them," she said.

Hypnosis has been growing both in popularity and acceptance in the world of mainstream medicine. Hospitals around the country have increasingly been incorporating hypnosis into their pain management departments as well as for treatment of conditions from irritable bowel syndrome to severe burns.

"The public has definitely become more accepting of hypnosis in recent years," said John Kasper, executive vice president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, a Bloomingdale, Illinois, organization. "Whereas five years ago we received about 100 referral requests per week on our website, we're getting between 250 and 400 a week now," he said.



Hypnotherapist Judith Rose explains her technique at her office in East Quogue. **DANA SHAW**