

# MIND OVER MATTER



"I felt relaxed and confident":  
Amateur boxer Oriance  
spars at her gym.  
Right: sports hypnotherapist  
Hazel Gale

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SPORTS ENTHUSIAST LUCY FRY FINDS OUT HOW HYPNOTHERAPY CAN HELP YOU REACH YOUR FITNESS GOALS

If you're setting yourself a physical resolution this year – whether it's to get ripped like Pink or punch like Nicola Adams – the first priority should be re-shaping, not your triceps, but your mind.

It's a troubling paradox but sometimes we sabotage our most important goals. Ever wondered why, despite how great you feel post-workout, you often sack off the gym at the last moment, only to go home feeling rubbish anyway? Or perhaps you enter 10k races all the time, but never manage to train enough – or even turn up – so end up back at square one, with a sense of failure to boot?

"Often, the reason for this kind of self-defeating behaviour comes down to limiting core beliefs which we hold in our unconscious mind," says sports hypnotherapist, Hazel Gale.

As an amateur boxer herself, Gale underwent hypnotherapy after suffering adrenal fatigue. She learnt how to tackle underlying negative beliefs (such as the three most common; I'm not loveable, I'm not safe; or I'm not good enough) which had led her to overtrain and ultimately changed, not just her training, but her life in general. Now, a fully trained cognitive hypnotherapist, she helps others to do the same:

"With a little digging these beliefs can usually be identified and traced back to a significant emotional event in the client's past – often their childhood, either via regressive techniques or by using any number of other processes focussed on the problem as it is in the present (or sometimes even the future tense)."

So, how does it actually work? Imagine a footballer, wondering why they can't execute

a seemingly straightforward (but vital) tackle. Afterwards, in the locker room, she thinks: "What came over me? I know I can do it." The problem isn't usually one of ability, but relates to negative beliefs; fear of letting people down, or of failure perhaps.

Such beliefs don't necessarily operate at a conscious (or rational) level, so the hypnotherapist has to take the footballer's mind back to that particular belief's genesis or creation, and reframe the thought process from there (whilst she's in a naturally-occurring trance state).

## You feel great after a workout, so why do you sack off the gym?

"When it works, it's a bit like using a circuit breaker," Gale explains. "By changing the perception of one of the points in the process – be that the trigger, the emotion, the belief system or the behaviour – the problem circuit will cease to be able to fire."

Common issues where this kind of treatment can be effective include performance anxiety (in those who compete at any level) or distracting/negative self-talk (You probably know how it goes: "I'm rubbish at this. Why am I bothering?") That sort of unhelpful chatter.)

Then there are more specific fears and phobias (things like fear of open water swimming, or cycling downhill) and / or self-sabotaging behaviour, where people get to the point when they're just about to achieve enough to really feel like they're winning (or proving themselves), only to discover an unexplained injury, a bout of unconscious overeating, procrastination, or any number of other damaging actions.

It can be very, very dispiriting – not to mention confusing – when you're the one holding yourself back. But things can, and do, change, as 23-year-old amateur boxer Oriance found out: "I was confident in my skill and technique but I doubted my fitness and ability to deal with opponents who apply a lot of pressure."

So she tried hypnosis, and after just three sessions with Gale emerged, victorious. "During the bout, I felt relaxed and confident in both my fitness and ability to deal with anything thrown at me," she says. "Everything Hazel worked on in the session worked for me in the ring (and I won!)." 

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