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Hypnotising sleep

YOU are feeling sleepy. When you count to 10, you will fall asleep. You will only hear my voice and you will do whatever I say. Sounds familiar? You might have seen a hypnotist performing on TV but that should not be confused with what a hypnotherapist does.

Hypnotherapist Julian A. Leicester says that while hypnosis may be stage-managed for entertainment, hypnotherapy is more clinical and is a collection of techniques which deal with the subconscious.



Hypnotherapist Julian A. Leicester: 'People with insomnia are trapped in a vicious circle.'

"A trained hypnotherapist needs a few years of accredited study and proper practice to work with clients on symptoms and causes. Hypnotherapy is different from counselling or psychology, which deals with the conscious approach," says Leicester.

He adds that there are people who pass themselves off as hypnotherapists after attending a two- or three-day course given by someone who might not even be qualified.

If you have any doubt, check with the Malaysian Society for Complementary Therapy (www.complementarytherapist.org/ 03-7955 7554) of which Leicester is the honorary secretary and the chapter leader for hypnotherapy. The society, which is approved by

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the Health Ministry, certifies practitioners before allowing them to join.

But what is hypnosis? According to Leicester, it is a state of relaxation and heightened awareness during which the mind is more open to ideas and suggestions.

Leicester has worked with the Health Ministry in using hypnotherapy to help people quit smoking and he has clients who can vouch for the effectiveness of such therapy. He has also worked with people who have had severe cases of insomnia.

“It is about mental relaxation for that is when the subconscious takes over. People with insomnia are trapped in a vicious circle whereby their conscious mind is not relaxed and is processing thoughts. Before they know it, their subconscious does not take over and they can't sleep. They get so obsessed over not sleeping that it becomes their conscious thought that they have to sleep, so it becomes an added stress.”

Leicester says he gets his patients to learn to relax and learn that the bed is for sleep (and intimate activities) and nothing else. He uses hypnotic ideas to motivate the subconscious to get the patient back to normal sleeping patterns.

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