



Sherree Ginger, BHS AI & ISM, Clinical hypnotherapist, NLP therapist, life coach and Lightning Process Trainer.
www.sherreeginger.co.uk
gingers@springacres.fsnet.co.uk
 01403 865338

From fear to fun

Sarah came to see me because she had developed a fear of jumping. She explains...



"I have gradually lost my confidence over the years with my jumping. Eight years ago and more I used to SJ Newcomers quite confidently on a spooky, difficult horse and riding a different horse would do Open XC, and he was a mental horse! After a few nasty experiences with various horses and my advancing years (!) I find myself desperate to showjump again, as I now have a horse (Rocky) who is not spooky, difficult or mental and he has the ability and desire to jump!

I found myself in a quandary. I have tried different instructors who have all been immensely patient whilst I over-analyse every little inch, where we were not quite at the perfect take off spot (major problem in my head), or the sand was deep, or the going slippery, or I have a cold, you name it every little thing affected me. I must thank those instructors un-reservedly, but on the way to a jump I would imagine in my head every little thing which could go wrong as I seemed to feel that it was necessary to do this so that I was ready for it. And I did try not to do this but have you ever tried not to do something which just happens automatically? I am very lucky that Rocky did not take advantage of this but it hasn't done his confidence any good. The really silly thing is I know I am a good enough and instinctive enough rider to deal with any situation as it occurs anyway."

When your safety is threatened, the part of your brain responsible for the "fight or flight" survival response, kicks in and over-rides the more rational and "higher" brain functions of experiencing pleasure, fun and joy. If the trigger to this response is not reset, or over-ridden, it continues to run in the background. So every time you get on your horse, think about jumping, or competition, or whatever your particular trigger is, this programme will start to run unchecked, becoming a fast and strong neurological highway. The irony is also, that as your cells get used to receiving this particular "fear" peptide (a chemical produced by the hypothalamus in the brain) is produced. And the cells develop more receptors for this peptide and actually become addicted to it, shouting unconscious messages to the brain, like "...I feel worried - lets think of a reason to be frightened" - in order to get the brain to release more peptide. Unless this is checked!

An emotional response is an unconscious response, but unfortunately most people don't realise that they do have a choice about the emotional state they want to be in, or how they can change it.

What is the most appropriate state of mind for the job or situation of the moment? If we are stuck in a traffic jam, is the best state of mind to be in: impatience, anger or intolerance? Perhaps a more useful state would be one where we could relax, and accept that we've now got another 10 minutes in the day to do something for ourselves, like write a letter or focus on a project, or just to relax and listen to music?

Hypnosis is defined as being in an altered state of mind, so we are actually in hypnotic states in everyday life. For example, when we've driven home, having little recollection of the journey because our thoughts were focused on another issue, or when we're watching television or reading a book and feel our emotions changing - remember an emotional response is an unconscious response.

During hypnotherapy the most useful state is one where you are focused internally and can communicate with the unconscious mind, and also with the therapist, so you are always in control. It is not about being in such a deep trance that you are almost asleep, and being told what to do or how to act by the therapist. It is about helping you to unlock the power of your unconscious mind and discover where you already have the skills you need to move your life forwards.

What would be the most appropriate, useful or rewarding state of mind to be in when riding? Probably one that's calm, joyful, possibly focusing on your

communication and partnership with your horse with the anticipation of a great outcome.

As Sarah and I worked together we focused her conscious and unconscious mind on how she used to feel when she really enjoyed her riding. We concentrated on the qualities she enjoyed, what skills she unconsciously brought to it, the feelings in her body, her state of mind and how she was communicating with her horse. We then looked at the nasty memories, and I taught her a very simple technique to disrupt the trigger in her mind that was unconsciously leading her thoughts back to those bad memories, and consequently her emotions to fear. She was then able to re-connect to all those good memories and nice feelings that she wanted to regain to enable her to love her riding again.

Sarah says - "...I visited Sherree on a Monday in May at her house, we had a cup of coffee (I needed that or gin!) and a general chat then Sherree started to write down my answers to her questions, trying to find out my thought processes and where my fears come from and how they affect me (all very simple and friendly, I promise). We then commenced the hypnotherapy and for those who have never done it before there are no ticking clocks and you do not suddenly think you are Elvis either! I was sitting back in a comfy chair with my eyes closed and I was completely aware of everything going on, I was not in any form of unconscious state, just in a quiet state of mind. Sherree just talked to me asking questions and getting me to imagine things (all pleasant!). The session lasted about 1 ½ hours and cost me £60.

I came away thinking, hhhmmm I don't feel any different but hey ho.

I had a jumping lesson booked on the Wednesday, combined with trying out a new saddle. Rocky jumped OK and it wasn't until later that day that I realised I asked to jump an upright again before finishing the lesson. Now that might not sound strange to you reading this but I had jumped this upright very nicely already and before my hypno I would never have asked to jump it again for fear of doing it wrong! Hmmm now was this just a coincidence?

Well, I then jumped again on the Saturday, at home with a friend (not jumping instructor) doing the jumps for me. Three jumps in the school set out as a little course. Rocky was in one of his very keen moods where he kicks out over the top of every jump and then bucks on landing with his tail going around like a helicopter. Very funny to watch but extremely unseating and previously to hypno would have caused me to give up, particularly as there wasn't a jumping instructor with me. I just kept jumping him around these 3 jumps with no break and waited until he gave up being exuberant and jumped neatly. This took many rounds as Rocky is rather more used to me giving up! However, we achieved this and it wasn't until I stopped that I realised I would never have done this before hypno! None of those thoughts of what might go wrong went through my head on the way to the jumps and the sand was deep and my pigmy goats were next to the arena head-butting each other as only goats can do - these things would normally have affected my confidence greatly.

I also took my little young mare XC on the following Monday (1 week after hypno) and I jumped lots of bigger jumps and I jumped down a step - something I would never have done before hypno, if you don't believe me ask my instructor, she was amazed. I was full of confidence and again I didn't have any of those doubting thoughts going through my head on the way to the jumps.

I cannot thank Sherree enough. Apparently my confidence should continue to grow as I do more jumping but I know I am 'cured' already. Who knows, I might even be brave enough to be on a jumping team next year!

How much easier it is to mount up or compete, thinking about how much fun you are going to have, rather than your survival!