

EXTREME BEAUTY

The Gastric Mind Band

Fed up with being overweight, **LAURA GRAHAM** tried hypnosis and the power of suggestion to finally help her shed those excess pounds

I'VE NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH the way I look, so I was horrified when I hit 13st 8lb – a stone heavier than my 6ft-tall partner. I felt like I was the token fatty, and would want to turn around and go home whenever I did pluck up the courage to meet with friends.

As I became larger, I became unhappier and started to worry about my health. I work on a farm and you have to be fit, but I could only run a few feet without gasping for breath. It was a desperate situation, but I had no idea how to tackle it. People who have addictive relationships with drugs or alcohol can go to the doctor to get help, but it's much harder if you have an addictive relationship with food.

My sister mentioned a clinic in Spain, which promised weight loss through hypnotherapy. At first I laughed it off, but when I checked out the process on the clinic's website, everything I read made sense: I needed help with my attitude to food and no diet could fix that. I booked myself in and couldn't wait to get started.

At the first appointment, therapist Marion quizzed me in minute detail about my relationship with food – how I felt when I ate and afterwards, how I dealt with cravings and so on. She used cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to see where my addictive patterns came from. I was brought up in a sociable family with plenty of food and was taught not to be wasteful, to eat everything on my plate. Marion made me realise that, as an adult, I could make my own choices about what to eat.

At the next meeting we discussed health issues. Another therapist, Martin, showed me a jar of fat. It was disgusting

– it made me realise that I was abusing my body. Marion then showed me a video of a gastric-band operation. It was frightening, but it gave me a stark view of what happens during the procedure. She then hypnotised me into thinking that I had one fitted.

Hypnosis brings about a state of consciousness where you become highly responsive to positive suggestion or direction. In therapy, it is typically used to recover suppressed memories or bring about positive changes in patterns of thinking and behaviour. Once I was in a comfortable meditative state, Marion took me along a path to a crossroads. I had to make a choice between walking down a road where I wouldn't lose weight or a path where, in a year's time, I did and would be happier and more confident. Then, she very slowly talked me through what happens during

a gastric-band procedure. It was the weirdest sensation – I knew I hadn't had an operation, but afterwards I felt a tight, sensitive squeezing around my stomach. What surprised me is that even though I'm a worrier, I don't feel like someone's messed with my head. I had nothing but positive thoughts throughout the process.

Now, I just can't overeat. I immediately stop when I don't feel hungry. It's like I've been reprogrammed. I'm now 9st 8lb and I finally feel like the real me.

Everything you need to know

WHAT The Gastric Mind Band method is a safe, non-invasive option for people who want to gain control of their eating habits. Developed by therapists Martin and Marion Shirran, it uses a mix of hypnosis, cognitive behavioural therapy and neuro-linguistic

programming to help people reprogramme their relationship with food by breaking existing bad habits and replacing them with new, healthier ones.

HOW Treatment is carried out over four sessions at the Elite Clinic in Spain or The Benestar Centre in London (benestar.co.uk),

culminating with the Gastric Mind Band hypnosis session, where the client is led to believe they are undergoing gastric-band surgery. **COST** £2,500 (includes two follow-up treatments). Or you can read *Shirrans' Solution: The Gastric Mind Band* (£12.50, AuthorHouse).

