



Hypnotised!

TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF OUR MINDS

We repeat in our heads a lot of negative suggestions, and a lot of my work is reversing that, says *Gabrielle Turner*, in an interview with *Vani Saraswathi*.

With a little bit of scepticism and a lot of curiosity I prepared to meet Gabrielle Turner, who came to Doha less than a year ago and has already harnessed quite a lot of interest in her hypnotherapy practice.

On the eve of our scheduled meeting, at a networking event, I sat next to a lady of indeterminate age. She stood out in the rather aggressive and extroverted group of professional women in the lounge. She had a brilliant smile and the kindest eyes, politely curious about and attentive to the people around her. And the name tag read 'Gabrielle'.

What are the chances that of all the professional women in Qatar who chose to attend the event, I would sit next to the lady I would be meeting officially the next morning? Actually, given that this is Doha, I would say a good chance. It's a tiny city, after all.

We both held back from turning the exchange into an interview. But we had enough interaction for me to be rid of almost all my scepticism. She sure didn't look like she was going to get me to jump through hoops or speak in foreign accents.

An occupational therapist by vocation, that's the field Gabrielle worked in for much of her career in the UK, specialising in mental health. This included working in a therapeutic community for people suffering from eating disorders and managing a mental health day hospital.

Her focus was on integrating the mentally ill back into society and workplace. About 14 years ago she moved to Thailand with her partner (now husband) and daughters, where her journey into alternative therapies picked up pace.

EARLY FASCINATION

She trained as a doula (birthing partner), after shelving plans to become a midwife. The doula uses hypnosis as a powerful tool. As Gabrielle became increasingly fascinated with hypnotherapy, she tried it herself as a client to help get rid the 20-odd kilos she had been carrying since the first of her three pregnancies. With the help of hypnosis she applied it to herself and succeeded in reaching her ideal body weight.

She trained as a fully qualified hypnotherapist in Thailand and is registered with the UK National Guild of Hypnotists.

"It is amazing, the power of our own minds and the positive changes we can make by harnessing that power through hypnotherapy. I trained as a hypnotherapist and then master hypnotist and now see clients for a variety of issues and changes they

would like to make. I love the work that I do, from the initial hypnosis exercises when clients suddenly realise what they can accomplish, and then to see them moving on in their lives, effectively and confidently making changes," says Gabrielle.

THE BUSINESS OF WELLBEING

Over the course of 13 years in Bangkok, she had an opportunity to pursue different passions – "all of them linked to women's health and wellbeing," she stresses.

"The first was to launch a lingerie company, SmoochieSmoochie, aiming specifically at the Western women who were not able to buy their sizes in Bangkok and who were left feeling frustrated and huge (having very different figures than the petite Thai ladies!) We ran a very popular company and had fun putting on fashion shows which included one at our launch party with over 600 guests!

"At the same time I followed my passion for supporting women in having positive, empowering birth experiences, training and working as a doula spe-

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cialising in hypnosis for birth. This meant amazing experience after amazing experience as I witnessed and supported women in the most personal and moving moments of their lives." (see box)

Gabrielle sees hypnotherapy as a form of focussed attention, and says it's as much about stopping people from hypnotising themselves with negative suggestions, as it is about positive suggestion.

NEGATIVE VS POSITIVE SUGGESTIONS

"We repeat in our heads a lot of negative suggestions, and a lot of my work is reversing that. Nearly everybody has experienced hypnosis. For instance, it's like arriving at our destination without remembering the journey. It's about how we choose to see certain aspects in us or others, and choose to ignore other aspects. We are conditioning our mind..."

She stresses that our very first hypnotists are our parents. What they suggest is what influences us all our lives. A stern reminder as parents to watch what

PARENT AS A HYPNOTIST

Our every chide and encouragement, every word and action, has an impact on our children. And while communicating with our kids, we need to remember three hypnotic powers. Coming from a mother of three daughters (ages 17, 15 and 9), Gabrielle's take on successfully using each hypnotic power with our child is not to be taken lightly. She refers to thoughts from the book *Three Hypnotic Powers: A Guide for Parents* by Jennifer Norris, who visits Doha this June.

1 WORDS: We are all at our most suggestible as we are falling asleep or in our drowsy waking moments. Use this time to plant positive thoughts in your child's mind about themselves, the day to come, or even changes that you would like them to make. For example: "Tomorrow you are going to wake up in your lovely, dry bed." (if bedwetting is an issue)

2 PERCEPTIONS AND FEELINGS: Hypnosis is all about the use of concentrated focus, so using the idea 'where the focus goes it grows', change the focus from the behaviour you don't want to what you do want. If you would like your child to greet people with a "hello", have fun together spotting other children who already model that behaviour.

3 IMAGINATION: Listening to stories engages the imaginations which is one of the fastest ways to the subconscious mind. While reading to your child, plant suggestions in their mind which associate positive qualities in the story's character with those of your child which you would like to encourage, eg "Cinderella worked hard and always saw the best in people just like you."



Gabrielle, with her mother, before she used the power of her mind to come to grips with her food issues and lose the extra weight she had been carrying around.

NATURAL BIRTH AT ITS BEST

In hypnosis for birth, parents can work through their fears about labour and birth – which enables them to approach birth in a relaxed and calm way. It gives them confidence in themselves to overcome any social conditioning and negative suggestions which they may have experienced from others. It allows the mother to be in a state of deep relaxation which ensures that her body will function at its optimum level, releasing the endorphins which are our natural anaesthesia.

Hypnosis also acts as a natural form of anaesthesia and allows the mother to alter her perception of any discomfort she may experience from the surges of energy with which she works in harmony.

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we say and do, and pay even more attention to what we emphasise as parents (see box).

As a hypnotherapist, the most common issues Gabrielle works on are: confidence, fears, low self esteem, weight loss, addictions, living with chronic pain, anger management, dealing with grief. "People come to me to solve their problem. But I am just a guide, the solution lies within them."

FORGIVE

In terms of anger management, Gabrielle says a lot of the work is about forgiveness. "By forgiving you are letting go of anger, guilt or fear, and you are gaining back control. You don't have to vocally or publicly forgive, you just need to do it in your mind.

She shares the rules of forgiveness that she discusses with her clients:

- You don't have to tell the person that you forgive them.
- You don't have to like or condone what that person has done.
- You don't have to forget.
- By holding onto anger and hate you are only hurting yourself.
- Forgiveness is the erasure of anger, hate and fear.
- All the energy that you have been giving will be released for you to have a great life.
- By not forgiving, you allow someone else to control your emotions and actions.

ENERGISED, NOT DRAINED

Dealing with our issues is burden enough, but how much more taxing must it be to listen and guide others through their festering problems? Gabrielle seems strangely energised and calm after sessions, and I've seen her in the moments between back to back consultations. "I am on a high after a session. When you aid somebody in making a long term

change, especially to do with health, it is highly satisfying. I also do a lot of self-hypnosis."

When she is working on mental health problems, she always refers back to her supervisor.

The first session with Gabrielle lasts about 90 minutes. You are introduced to hypnotherapy, after which she sets out to explore what the client wishes to achieve or change. Depending on what the issue in hand is, the number of sessions is determined: On an average, between 1 and 3 sessions to give up smoking, 4-6 sessions for weight loss, six for birthing and so on.

WHAT IS THE HYPNOTIC STATE?

Though I was worried that I would embarrass myself in a state of deep hypnotism, I soon realised what we see on television are shows, and demand that kind of drama. But in an actual session, you are in a deep state of relaxation, fully aware of self and following the therapist's suggestions. Your mind wanders, and there are some who have even taken a cat nap, but Gabrielle assures me that our subconscious is very much awake and alert.

She does not force the men (mainly for addictions and anger management) and women (weight loss and stress) who seek her expertise to open up. She needs them to share just enough so that she can decide her next step. "I free them up to do their own work. Some people are very self conscious..."

Though details of my session are beyond the realm of this story, suffice it to say predictable reactions stop at the tip of your tongue, past evidence falls apart, and you sense an unconscious change in attitude – the only deliberate action being the drive to her house in Al Waab, and taking the seat in her therapy room.

Like most alternative therapy that has no million dollar research backing, this too has to be embraced more on trust than evidence. "Though it must be said that hypnotherapy has received more acceptance than the rest from mainstream medicine. What's not understood is how or why it works. There is so much about our minds that we don't understand," says Gabrielle.

It may be tough to decide to seek the services of a hypnotherapist, given that you may have to have between three and five sessions a month. So what will probably get you to take the first step would be a combination of desperation and frustration because all else has failed. Following up with more sessions will definitely be because of trust in the crinkly eyed, smiling Gabrielle, whose voice (both soft and deep) wields an incredibly soothing power 🌿