

Hypnosis For Weight Loss? Fat Chance



By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — September 2, 2016



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We here at the council enjoy debunking health fads. We especially enjoy debunking — *in both print and video* — weight loss fads. In fact, just [last week I debunked](#) ^[1] one of the hottest trends in weight loss: body wraps. I don't know why this is, but something about selling unrealistic goals to vulnerable consumers for financial gain that only benefits the person at the top of the pyramid scheme really irks me.

Enter hypnosis for weight loss. While driving to work the other day, a radio commercial came on about an upcoming seminar for hypnotism to help you lose weight. "Hypnosis helped me shed the pounds and keep them off," exclaimed one testimonial. "The seminars work! I didn't even have to exercise!" claimed the other. Before my fingers could react, I found myself listening to this comical infomercial from start to finish.

But it did get me wondering how many people would actually attend this seminar. And how much would it cost? Turns out, only \$49.99! It was tempting, but I didn't go. Because A) I am not seeking counseling for weight loss, B) I know better, and C) have you *seen* these guns???

I can't decide which is worse: spending \$50 to have someone scare the living cravings out of you, or using the money to buy the body wrap — a glorified saran wrap. But before we knock it (*too late..*) let's see what hypnosis for weight loss is all about:

According to the seminar's official website, here is how hypnosis would work: Through "**guided visual imagery**" and "**nutritional technologies**" the hypnotist will help you "**destroy cravings**," "**compulsive emotional behaviors**," and will get you "**back in control**" of your weight, while being in a trance. That strategy sounds a lot like nutritional counseling (without the trance part), which is what many people seeking to lose weight do, in addition to eating healthy and exercising.

In the seminar, you will also be taught the "**latest scientific research designed to increase your Basal Metabolic Rate (resting metabolism)**"; You can do that by doing more cardio.

Now on to the science: There *isn't* any. A [few studies](#) [2] that have looked at the value of hypnosis for weight loss haven't shown any benefit, only perhaps minimal weight loss — an average of six pounds over 18 months. Even those findings are questionable, since it is most likely confirmation bias that plays a role in shedding the pounds, but the weight usually comes back, and quickly.

Celebrities make it hard to ignore health fads. Oprah hasn't met a weight loss fad she doesn't like — including hypnosis. On her website, a psychotherapist [explains](#) [3] that hypnosis can help people achieve the mind-over-body approach to losing weight:

"People tend to achieve what they think they can achieve. That even applies to hypnosis."

Well, yeah. If I really, really, *really* want to lose weight, and I am determined enough to do it, and I stick with a plan of healthy meals and exercise, chances are I will see a difference. It's no different than not wanting to lose weight, and not putting forth an effort to do it.

Realistically, weight loss trends may bring some instant satisfaction, and they may kick start your efforts to get healthy. But the best way to lose weight is with diet and exercise. No wraps, no magic tricks, no trance.

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Links

[1] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/08/26/fad-friday-ditch-the-body-wrap>

[2] <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/expert-answers/weight-loss-hypnosis/faq-20058291>

[3] <http://www.oprah.com/health/Hypnosis-for-Weight-Loss-Can-Hypnosis-Help-You-Lose-Weight>