

# Head to head: Under Hypnosis

If you're struggling with confidence issues or anxiety then have you considered hypnotherapy? Vanessa Britton goes head to head with hypnotherapist and psychotherapist Kirsty Hurrell to discover more about the practice and how it can be applied to riders.

**VB: For how long have you been a Psychotherapist and Hypnotherapist and what attracted you to the role in the first place?**

KH: I have been fully qualified for a year in Psychotherapy and Hypnotherapy but have been successfully using the techniques I have learnt from various courses over the past three years to help my friends and family. I had hypnotherapy myself a few years ago to stop me smoking and was amazed that after only

one session I stopped with no cravings. I was so impressed that I wanted to find out how and why it was so successful. I then began to realise how effective hypnotherapy was in curing such a wide range of problems. I really began to put it to the test with friends who had lost their confidence after a nasty fall or having an anxious horse, helping them to rebuild a relationship with their horse whilst feeling calm and relaxed whatever their horse was doing. It became obvious very quickly

that, if the rider is calm, patient and relaxed their horse would be too.

**VB: What attracted you to the role and what special qualifications and skills do you need?**

KH: Having hypnosis myself and seeing the remarkable changes was the thing that really inspired me. To be successful you need to be intuitive and be able to listen to people and, really hear what they are saying to you as well. You also need to be empathetic and encouraging. I don't rescue people: I help them get their confidence back so that they can do it for themselves.

**VB: What techniques are key for your clients to master?**

KH: Relaxation is key. I teach self hypnosis

## Kirsty Hurrell

■ **Official Occupation:** Hypnotherapist and Psychotherapist  
■ **Qualifications:** Dip Hyp Psych, NLP Masters, EFT Level 3 Practitioner  
■ **Lives:** Norwich Norfolk  
■ **Works:** Norwich City Centre and The Clinic on the Green, Old Buckenham  
■ **Background:** After working in the motor industry for over ten years, I decided I wanted a more fulfilling career. I had a burning passion to follow my heart and 'give something back'. Over the years I have seen so many people being held back from their full potential by their own limiting beliefs, I knew I could make a positive change to people's lives by helping them to help themselves live the life they deserved. After completing The Coaches Training Institute Fundamentals Coaching course, NLP (Neuro Linguistics Programming) Masters and EFT 3 (Emotional Freedom Technique) Practitioner, I studied further and gained a professional Diploma in hypnotherapy and psychotherapy. I specialise in treating nervous and anxious horse riders, PTSD (Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder) and phobias in a fast and very effective way. I treat a range of unwanted behaviours including over eating and weight loss, depression and anxiety. I can also help enhance sports performance.



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and a breathing technique called 7/11 too, which helps people keep calm in the saddle when they get nervous or feel their horse getting up tight. This involves breathing in through the nose for the count of 7, using the full capacity of the lungs and then out through the mouth for the count of 11. It is fast, very effective and calms you instantly. Then in turn your horse begins to relax. Try it any time you feel anxious or nervous, it's brilliant – yet

such a simple technique.

**VB:What does your day-to-day role entail?**

KH: No two days are ever the same. After feeding and riding my horses I am in the clinic in Norwich or The Clinic on the Green in Old Buckenham. I see people with a wide range of problems. I treat a vast range of issues, including depression, anxiety and phobias whilst also helping clients overcome their fears, which could be horse riding, the driving test or exam nerves etc.

I see all my clients in the clinic as under hypnosis, I can get them to visualise that they are on their horse, feeling calm and relaxed, taking them through all sorts of scenarios in the security of a comfortable chair. Obviously, for safety's sake they are never under hypnosis whilst on their horse. The main thing is to take it slowly. Stay calm and gradually push yourself out of your comfort zone (safely) a little bit more each time you ride to build up your confidence. By setting achievable goals with my clients for each session, progress is normally quite swift.

**VB:What area do you cover and how do you find clients/riders who need your help?**

KH: I work in a clinic in Norwich City Centre and from the beautiful Clinic on the Green in Old Buckenham near Attleborough. Most of the clients I see are from word of mouth or from my website [www.kirstyhurrellhypnotherapy.co.uk](http://www.kirstyhurrellhypnotherapy.co.uk)

**VB:What has been your most challenging or rewarding case to date?**

KH: I had a client that had taken a tumble, who became more and more nervous

My client would try and hack out and if she saw something in the bushes that she thought might spook her horse, she would get off and walk the horse back to the stables. So every time the horse got spooked it knew the rider was nervous because she got off and the horse jogged and messed about all the way home. My client loved her horse but was so torn that she was actually was going to sell it and give up for good. Now after three sessions with me she is happily riding out again alone and in company feeling calm, relaxed and in control of her emotions. Because of this her horse is now much less spooky and relaxed. They have rebuilt the trust and their relationship grows from strength to strength. It is so very rewarding to get a phone call or email from a client, hearing about the welcome change my help has brought about.

**VB: Is it always beginner riders that you help, or do you have something to offer those with 'issues' or who have lost their confidence, perhaps due to an accident?**

KH: Most riders I see are experienced riders that have lost their confidence, either due to a fall or seeing someone else fall or over horsing themselves and becoming nervous and anxious.

**VB: Do you only operate on a one-to-one basis, or is there any benefit in group sessions?**

KH: I work on a one to one basis so



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about riding her horse. Every time she got on she dreaded it. She would become so nervous that all the enjoyment and the relationship she had with her horse had gone. My client kept replaying over and over what she thought might happen when she rode her horse. This is what anxiety is. It is rehearsing over and over a future that you do not want to happen.





that my client can be fully relaxed and feel able to speak openly. Once we have sorted their issues out with their horse they may want to talk to me about other concerns such as weight loss or giving up smoking.

**VB: Do you own your own horse/s and do you ride or compete yourself?**

KH: I share two horses with a very dear friend Emma Broom on her farm in Swannington. She has eight in total including Dora, a two-year-old that we saw being born. We are taking her to the five day Intelligent Horsemanship course with Kelly Marks next March which we are really looking forward to. I have been riding since the age of four. I like competing and have entered

numerous hunter trials over the years as well as show jumping and I have just finished my first dressage season this summer at the Carousel Riding Club. My passion is hunting and I'm out with the

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Dunston Harriers every week or the East Anglian Bloodhounds – fast, fun and so exhilarating!

**VB: Who, or what is your biggest inspiration in equestrianism?**

KH: I could sit and watch the beauty of Carl Hester on Utopia all day. He is amazing – so calm and always in total control. He knows how to get the very best out of his horses in such a gentle way. I also really admire Mary King and I used to have her posters on my wall when I was growing up.

**VB: Do you always work in isolation, or do other equine professionals have anything to bring to your operation?**

KH: It's important that any anxiety doesn't stem from pain in either the horse or the rider. I recommend Ken Skinner, a vet and equine chiropractor to check the horse over and if the rider has had a fall, or is just



in pain, then I recommend one of the Osteopaths at the Clinic on the Green who both ride and understand the forces involved in falling from horses and the physical work involved in caring for them.

**VB: Did you follow the Olympics and if so where you able to take anything from it in order to help you and your pupils in the future?**

KH: I was extremely lucky to be given a ticket to see the dressage in Greenwich Park as a fabulous Christmas present from my cousin. It was such an amazing, emotional and inspirational day. I got to see Mary King, which was a dream come true. I firmly believe that we can all achieve so much more than we ever expect of ourselves with the right motivation, whether that be competing at a local show, riding on the beach or taking any of the equestrian disciplines to the next level. I really enjoy coaching people to help improve their sports performance – and seeing the results. That too is so rewarding.



## Quick fire

- **Best bit about your role:** Seeing a great change in a short space of time.
- **Worst bit about your role:** Usually I am the last port of call. People leave it far too long and suffer too long before they seek help. There is no shame in it. We can all do with a little help now and again. I use self hypnosis and relaxation techniques on myself after a fall, for psyching myself up to jump a big ditch out hunting or just pushing myself to be a better, more relaxed rider on a young or spooky horse.
- **Best experience:** Seeing one of my clients who was terrified to ride her horse and very nervous when she got in the show jumping ring, jump a big course at the Norfolk Show with effortless ease. A very proud day. It's the feeling of elation when you know you have helped someone change their life.
- **Worst experience:** Seeing clients that have suffered alone for too long. Sometimes we do find that the client has over horsed themselves and would be better off getting something more suitable. Saying that, we can make a huge difference in so many cases.
- **Hobbies:** I love nothing more than hacking out with friends and taking the dogs with us riding around the stunning countryside in and around Swannington, such a lovely part of Norfolk. I also enjoy going to the gym every week.
- **Favourite holiday destination:** I absolutely love Australia, I lived there for a year in 2000 and I went back for my honeymoon in 2005 and we are going back again next year for a family holiday. There is nothing quite like riding western style along the beach in Australia with rain forest to your left and the Great Barrier Reef to your right...heaven!
- **Current horses and pets:** Two dogs; a Weimaraner and a pointer cross lab, two horses; one Thoroughbred gelding and one Irish Sports Horse mare.