



Real Lives: Hypnotised out of my chocolate addiction

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Janet Tansley talks to the slimmer who conquered her dairy habit – and lost four stones



Betty Southern from Litherland who was a chocaholic then had hypnotherapy to lose the cravings and has since lost weight. Photo by Colin Lane

When it came to Easter, Betty Southern would happily eat half her own body weight in chocolate eggs.

"If I started one, I would have to eat it all," laughs Betty. "But one would never be enough!"

Now, though, after hypnotherapy, the self-confessed chocaholic has cracked her addiction and hasn't been able to touch a drop of the sweet stuff since.

"Even the smell of chocolate makes me feel ill," says the 63-year-old from **Litherland**. "I have lost 65lbs (four and a half stones) in weight, I'm lighter than I have ever been, and I feel so much better.

"I've discovered I've got shoulder blades – and bones in my bum!" she laughs.

Betty went for a first consultation with hypnotherapist Russell Hoyles in December 2012.

After trying virtually every other diet, she admits she was "desperate": "And I knew if I didn't do anything I'd be looking at another stone over Christmas.



Betty Southern from Litherland who was a chocaholic then had hypnotherapy to lose the cravings and has since lost weight. Photo by Colin Lane

"I had tried other weight loss plans and, while I lost weight, I would always put it right back on. So I researched hypnotherapy for about a year and, eventually, my sister-in-law just said 'go for it'

I've never eaten a piece of chocolate since!"

Betty says she has never been slim – "I was born fat!" – but had seen her weight soar over the years.

At her worst she was around 18 stones and pushing a size 30.

When she first went to Russell, she weighed 15st 10lb – and now tips the scales at just 11st.

Betty has been retired for five years but used to work for a vending machine firm which made it too easy for her, she admits, was like carrying a giant lunch box around with her and too easy to indulge in her favourite food.

"I used to eat loads of junk food and, while I didn't eat masses of chocolate I would have it every day. I did try to buy little bars like Freddos. But you buy them in packs of six and I could easily go through the whole pack while driving around!

"It didn't matter what it was as long as it was chocolate.

"At Easter I would eat loads of chocolate eggs and, at Christmas, tins of chocolates and selection boxes."

Add her chocolate craving to a poor daily diet: breakfast was often thick buttered toast with sausages and bacon; lunch cheese sandwiches with scones and cakes or a McDonald's and, tea, 'something' with chips, and it isn't difficult to see why she struggled with her weight – and her health.

"I have had a quadruple heart by-pass and suffered bowel cancer in the past, caused, I believe, by my unhealthy diet. And that was the main reason for wanting to lose weight and do something about what I was eating.

"Chocolate was my biggest downfall – although don't tell Cadbury's or they'll be sending the hit squad out to me as public enemy number one - and I had absolutely no willpower."

Until she went to Russell.

The clinical hypnotherapist and mind management coach, who works at Spire Liverpool Hospital, says: "I have worked with Betty using a combination of hypnotherapy, including the hypnotic gastric band, and mind management strategies.

"This allowed her to make both conscious and subconscious changes in her relationship with food.

"Her addiction to chocolate was addressed using hypnotic aversion therapy. She engaged really well and will, without doubt, sustain the changes she has made."

Betty has totally changed her daily diet.

Breakfast is now fruit salad with maybe a small bowl of porridge later; lunch is a bowl of soup or Ryvita crackers and tea is chicken with veg.

"I still have a big appetite, and I will occasionally have a chippie tea treat. I have still got a sweet tooth, but now it's sugar free jellies, yoghurts and fruit I eat. But that's okay because they are not full of fat like chocolate."

Betty can see the results in her weight loss, and she can feel them too.

"I have reduced the medication for my heart condition because I don't need as much any more and, where before I was puffing and panting when I got to the top of the stairs and the road I live on suddenly seemed like a hill, I have now got so much energy.

"I even go swimming every day. And I can't tell you how lovely it is to be able to go in shops other than Evans for my clothes!"

She adds: "Most of all, I am now in control.

"It has changed my life.

"I have never touched chocolate since. I am carer for my 95-year-old dad and I make hot chocolate for him but even the smell of that makes me feel ill.

"So, this Easter, you can keep your chocolate eggs and I'll keep feeling fabulous.

"My reward instead of an Easter egg - being able to run around like a spring chicken!"

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