

HOME » HEALTH » WELLBEING

## Weight loss without dieting

If it worked for Lily Allen, hypno-dieting is worth a try, says Lucy Atkins.



Hip hypnotherapist: Susan Hepburn Photo: Debbie Rowe

By Lucy Atkins

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Harley Street hypnotherapist Susan Hepburn recently hit the headlines for helping pop star Lily Allen to slim from a size 14 to a size 8, thereby making hypno-dieting the weight-loss buzz word of 2009. A-listers such as Sophie Dahl and Geri Halliwell supposedly also keep slim this way and the trend is booming on both sides of the Atlantic.

Hepburn, who keeps her celebrity client list firmly under wraps, claims to have a 98 per cent success rate. Lily Allen is just the tip of the iceberg. WAGS and it-girls, famous actors and several other pop stars have flocked to her offices. "They recommend each other," says Hepburn, who makes me promise not to name names.

A smartly dressed woman with a faint northern accent and no hint of patchouli or whale music, she is down-to-earth about her techniques. "I can't stand diets. They don't work. They mess you up. What I do isn't a diet. It's just a way of putting thoughts into a person's mind. If you want to exercise or make healthy choices, I simply put that into your subconscious mind: I make you believe you can do it."

She talks about "deleting files" in the subconscious (bad eating habits formed in childhood), but despite her background as a psychotherapist, she has no truck with self-analysis. "It's very simple," she says. "You don't need to analyse – you just change your behaviour."

Her techniques work, she says, on virtually anything. She accompanied the England football team to the 2002 World Cup, claims to have cured a boxing champ of his fear of being hit in the face and even once treated a banana-phobe who insisted on a room sweep for hidden bananas before she entered.

Our hour-long session starts with a talk about my eating and exercise habits. Hepburn veers off on frequent tangents and is delightful: gossipy but discreet about her A-listers (she is good friends with people like Annie Lennox and the Duchess of York, it turns out, but will certainly not confirm whether they are clients). She also offers rapid-fire tips: "Swing your arms as you walk. It tones you up – I've never had bingo wings." "Slice your cheese thinly – you get the same taste with fewer calories."

I lie in her vibrating chair and her voice becomes soporific as she gives me relaxation instructions. After a bit she turns the chair off and there is a weird floating feeling. She tells me that I will only eat when hungry and stop when full; I will embrace exercise. She makes me envisage myself with the honed body of Kate Winslet (my "goal" body of choice). I never feel like I'm "under" or altered or out of control – she reassures me that this is normal.

I depart with instructions for daily self-hypnosis (15-minute relaxations where you visualise your dream body) and a list of tips (cut down on booze and put away the bathroom scales). I also get a food diary in which to record what I eat.

Later, feeling peckish in Marylebone High Street, I sweep past the pâtisseries and buy myself a banana instead. Though this level of self-discipline does not last, I do feel slightly less greedy nowadays: four squares of Green and Black's rather than 10. It's a start.

Susan Hepburn recommends three one hour sessions at £275 per hour (020 7487 5200).

F\*\*\* Diets by Susan Hepburn (self-published) is available from [www.susanhepburn.com](http://www.susanhepburn.com) at £17.99.

### Wacky weight loss trends

**Mindful Eating** Oprah Winfrey kicked off the year by ditching diets in favour of "mindful eating": a heightened awareness of "the now".

**The Saatchi Diet** Charles Saatchi lost four stone last year by refusing his wife Nigella's cooking and eating only eggs.

**Master Cleanse** You drink saline followed by maple syrup, cayenne pepper, water and lemon juice. The A-lister detox of choice.

**Tapping** Also called the Emotional Freedom Technique, you tap your body to remind yourself to eat healthily.

**Fitflops** Footwear designed to make your muscles work harder as you walk, thereby burning more calories [www.thefitflop.com](http://www.thefitflop.com)

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