

Nailing my bad habit

UGLY, bitten finger nails have haunted me all my life.

When meeting new people through work I hurry to shake their hands in the hope no one spots my fingers.

I've tried every trick in the book – false nails, anti-nail biting paint – you name it, I've tried it.

Even at my best, I've managed to grow just three fingers nails on each hand – with my little finger and my index fingers always left badly bitten.

At high school, I once held the class record for having the longest thumb nail, measuring 3cm from root to tip!

But that was 15 years ago and short-lived. It was time to tackle the problem and when I was offered a hypnosis session as a solution, I thought it couldn't do any harm.

Terrified of what might happen, I tried to push the scare stories to the back of my mind as I laid down on a heated bed, under a duvet.

Handed a headset, I was asked to focus my eyes on a crystal hanging from the window, while I concentrated on my breathing, before closing my eyes.

Soft sounds were played through my headset and hypnotherapist Susan Lawrence began her programme of speaking to me.

I did not have to respond verbally, but just simply react physically to what instructions I was being given.

After about ten minutes, I felt myself becoming more and more relaxed and my mind was being guided through different relaxing scenarios.

About 20 minutes into the session, my arms began to feel heavy and numb.

At one point I remember a feeling came over me as if I was about to drop into a deep sleep, like the falling feeling that comes with this. But the jump that usually wakes you never came. My body actually felt as if it was gently rocking back and forth in a swinging motion and the butterflies that come with playing on a swing were present.

Next, I visualised floating in a pool with petals on the surface before being launched into the root of my habit.

I was told to think about how lovely my nails would look and warned that if I was to bite them in the future, I would have a nasty taste in my mouth.

Susan said the taste would get worse and worse and eventually I would have a sickly feeling in the pit of my stomach.

I was also told that if I persisted, my hands would turn round and I would have to twist them in order to get to my fingernails.

Some 50 minutes later, with a countdown from ten, I opened my eyes.

In the days after my treatment I had lost the urge to put my nails anywhere near my mouth. And as I tried to bite them as a test, I found my jaw reluctant to close and chomp them. It was almost as if someone suggested I bite my toenails – an act I could never face doing.

But then I became able to put my fingers in my mouth as a comfort but the urge to bite was still missing.

I am shocked at the way in which my nails are growing – the way I always dreamed of.

I am looking forward to the weeks and months to come and the hunt to find the perfect place to treat myself to what will be my first manicure.



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