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Shannon Ezer, 13, gets a treatment from hypnotist Debbie Papadakis. The hypnosis has helped Shannon deal with repeated injections she must receive to treat a brain cyst.

# Going deep for the answers

On World Hypnotism Day, practitioners battle misconceptions while helping patients conquer their fears

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Toronto Sun

Like most kids, Shannon Ezer hates needles.

But the 13-year-old girl has endured about 100 injections in her head since June because of craniopharyngioma, a cyst derived from pituitary gland tissue. In order to shrink the cyst, doctors inject Interferon into her head.

Sometimes the fear of needles is too much to bear.

"There were so many needles that there was so much anxiety and I just knew that we needed to do something because I had to shout and hold her down every time there was a needle," said Shannon's mother, Robyn, 43.

"I heard of another little girl who needed surgery to be done and they weren't able to anesthetize her and I heard a hypnotist was able to help numb the pain."

Doctors first diagnosed Shannon's brain cyst in June and for the past couple of weeks, the teen has been seeing Debbie Papadakis, a hypnotist consultant in the Keele-Dundas Sts. area for 15 years.

"She's helped me by teaching me to not panic and calm down. She's also taught me how to numb myself so if I'm

going to have a needle there, then I can numb (myself) instead of having it hurt."

Not only that, it's taught her to take control of her body.

"I think the anger (she's feeling) comes because of the invasion to the body and feeling of a lack of control because you never know when the next needle is," Robyn said.

"Debbie has given her the ability to realize she is in control."

More people are considering hypnosis as a method of medical healing.

In fact, hypnotists will be celebrating World Hypnotism Day today, the sixth-annual event that spreads awareness of the healing power of hypnosis and works to dispel some of the myths of the practice.

All around the world, hypnotists will be hosting events to promote hypnosis. And that doesn't always involve a swinging pendulum.

"A misconception is people think they're never going to wake up or that we're going to know all their hidden secrets," said Papadakis. "There are fears that we'll mess them up. But my clients come to me because they want to heal their relationships or get rid of fears or anger — or sleep better."

Shannon demonstrates

numbing her hand by taking deep breaths and rubbing her skin in a continuous circular motion while repeating, "Numb, numb, numb." A few seconds later, she says she doesn't feel anything in that area.

"Go ahead, pinch me," she smiles. "You just have to focus yourself and take a couple deep breaths. I was petrified of needles and now when I go to needles, I'm so much more calm and I don't have a background of fear."

Another client of Papadakis, Freeda Hussain, 49, said hypnosis has helped with quitting smoking, allowed her to put her needs first before others' and built stronger emotional bridges with her mother.

"To me, it's like an answer

from God," said Hussain, a financial advisor. "I always used to see my mom as bigger than life; now, I just see her like another human being. The distance I've come ... there aren't blocks anymore."

Hypnotism can unlock root problems caused by such things as traumatic childhood incidents or past lives, Papadakis said.

"We're looking to resolve those; sometimes people will go back to even when they're in the womb or in genealogy where the issues are," she said. "We're looking for the root cause of things."

Many of hypnotist Georgina Cannon's clients also come to her with phobias.

"Hypnotism is about the power of your own mind, it's about focus," said Cannon, a

hypnotist for the past 12 years in the Yorkville area.

"It's about accessing your own subconscious mind to make changes in the life that you want. It has to be what you want, because we can't do it unless you want it."

For this year's World Hypnotism Day event, she plans on giving back to the community.

"We're working with the professionals at Sunnybrook hospital to help them de-stress themselves and help them learn self-hypnosis so they can feel comfortable, no matter what stress is happening," she said.

"Once you learn it, it's like a gift you've given yourself for life."

Cannon assured me that it's even easy for me to get over my inane fear of insects. She

sat me down in a chair and counted back from 20 to zero and told me to picture a safe place. I immediately thought of a beach I recently visited in Hong Kong.

She told me to try and think back to the first instance when I was afraid of a bug and told me to visualize the terrifying six-legged fly as something none-threatening and cartoon-like.

Eventually, as she brought me back to reality, the relaxation left me a bit dazed. I'm interested to see if it will work; we'll see when I have to face a spider in the bathtub.

"We can usually release phobias in one or two sessions, but if it's something more complex — like, 'Why do I keep choosing the wrong person?' — that can take eight to 10 sessions. Hypnotism is becoming more mainstream and people don't hide it."

For more information, go to [www.worldhypnotismday.com](http://www.worldhypnotismday.com).

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## YOU'RE GETTING SLEEPY

Debunking hypno-myths

- World Hypnotism Day is celebrated Jan. 4 and its mission is to debunk myths and misconceptions of hypnosis
- Hypnotherapy dates to ancient Greece and was modernized in the 18th century

- Hypnotists assure people that it's not like sessions seen on TV: Patients don't cluck like chickens or reveal secrets under a spell
- Subjects in a hypnotic trance are not slaves to a master. They are fully aware of their surroundings.

- For events going on for WHD in Toronto, go to [www.worldhypnotismday.com](http://www.worldhypnotismday.com), [www.debbiepapadakis.com](http://www.debbiepapadakis.com) or [www.ont-hypnosis-centre.com](http://www.ont-hypnosis-centre.com)

[Howstuffworks.com](http://Howstuffworks.com),  
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