

# **Stopping Marijuana Addiction Through Hypnosis\***

by

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I'm Anita Bonollo, head psychologist at Genesis Medical Centre.

Genesis Medical Centre is a GP clinic that specializes in alcohol and drug abuse patients.

My topic today is stopping marijuana addiction through hypnosis.

I'm going to talk about Janet ("Janet" is not her real name!). Janet is 34 years old, and has been a marijuana addict for 20 years. She is unemployed and the mother of two girls, aged 13 years and 10 years. She has been divorced for 10 years.

Janet informed me that she was smoking the minimum of 50 "bongs" a day, and up to 70 bongs a day of marijuana. Janet's appearance was thin and drawn. Her skin had a greyish tinge. When she spoke, her speech was slurred.

My immediate reaction was that I knew that she needed help and that I had to help her now.

Janet informed me that her marijuana habit was becoming worse. That her bong was her whole life. That she loved it; that she made it shiny and polished it. And that her pipe was her "lover." She was desperate. She told me that, on a daily basis, when the children were home, that she would smoke her bong behind her bedroom door and the girls knew that when she was in her bedroom, they were not allowed to go in and disturb her.

Janet informed me that she felt that her life was wasted and that she was a "loser." And that she would never be able to achieve anything. She told me that her peers had all moved forward and were all successful; and that she felt that she had been left behind. She informed me that she's not happy with her housing conditions: she'd like to live in a better house.

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She continued, telling me that she didn't go anywhere; and didn't do anything; and that she lacked motivation. She didn't have a car. She was too scared to find a job; and that she hadn't worked for years. She suffers from depression and anxiety. She feels helpless and hopeless.

My reaction was to get Janet out of this helpless and hopeless state that she felt she was in. To do this, I used an approach that I call "mind-to-mind resuscitation:" A patient who is addicted to drugs is like someone who is drowning: needing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation; they're dying.

In Janet's case, I engage and empower her by taking away the power of the drug and opening up possibilities. I do this by explaining to her that her past behaviour was not her fault but it was, in fact, the drug which was controlling her behaviour and emotions.

I empowered her by saying that that was all in the past. I said to her, "You can't change the past but you can learn from it. Leave all the bad behind and take all the good bits with you. You're a young woman and you have a whole lifetime ahead of you. Because that future hasn't happened, you *can* manipulate that future so that roughly speaking it turns out the way that you want it too."

Then I ask Janet whether she ever watched the cute TV series about a young man in his late twenties who gets the morning newspaper delivered on a daily basis and his ginger cat always meows to alert him that the paper has been delivered. However, that newspaper is not today's paper but is tomorrow's paper instead. The front-page headline always mentions some catastrophe:

Now because that disaster has not occurred yet, the young man runs around manipulating the situation so that the outcome changes to a positive one: and after he's succeeded in doing all this he notices that the front page of that newspaper has changed for the better. For example, instead of reading "Man Dies in Tragic Accident" the headline has changed to "Man Receives an Award."

I explained to Janet that her need to use marijuana involved a physiological need like hunger or thirst; that she used the marijuana against her own free-will.

I explained to Janet that in our brain and body we have millions of cells. And that in each one of those cells is a memory. So, in my opinion, when we start using substances of abuse such as marijuana, the memory of using that drug becomes encoded in the memory of our cells.

I said to Janet, “What happens is that that memory triggers and it causes your physiology to need to and want to use the drug against your own free will. However, for that memory to change, you need to replace the marijuana with something else on a daily basis.”

I continued, “There is no synthetic drug that can replace the chemical from the marijuana without the addictive side-effects. However, your own physiology does have chemicals which can replace the marijuana chemicals on a daily basis. They’re cheap. You don’t have to pay for them; you don’t have to go out looking for them; and the supply is endless.”

I explained to Janet, “While a person is under hypnosis, the physiology releases chemicals that replace the chemicals from the marijuana. The hypnosis needs to happen on a daily basis, just like you need to use marijuana on a daily basis. If you stop suddenly without replacing that chemical on a daily basis, the memory in the cells remains in a fragmented state.”

I continued, “That means that there are bits of memory of using the drug left over; which cause you to experience an underlying current of discomfort; and sometime down the track that fragmented memory will trigger and your physiology will release chemicals which will cause you to need to and want to use the drug. Whereas, if you replace that drug on a daily basis, that memory of using will be replaced with the memory of not using.”

After this, I already can see a change taking place in Janet. Her posture is more erect and there’s more determination; She looks more alert and not so helpless and hopeless; suddenly it makes sense. She’s not weak. It’s not her fault. There’s a physiological reason for it and it *can* be changed through her own physiology and through her own free will.

Then I said to Janet, “If I was to wave a magic wand, and your life could be the way that you wanted it to be, what would it be like?” This is opening up possibilities by making prehypnotic suggestions. And Janet told me that she would like to have a job; to better her life; to be happy; to have money and a car; to have self-esteem and confidence. She wanted to stop using marijuana; stop smoking cigarettes; and have a nice partner and enjoy life.

Then I looked at Janet and I said to her, “*And as we speak, that process has already begun.*” I also say to her, “As you speak about how you would like your life to be, your physiology is releasing chemicals which

give you the inner resources and strength for those changes to occur.” I then repeat again that, “And as we speak, that process has already begun.”

Then I asked Janet, “As you go into hypnosis, what are the things that you’d like to focus on?” Janet told me that she’d like to have a job; money; a car; and no marijuana.

While Janet was under hypnosis, I made suggestions to her such as, “You can allow your unconscious to release neuropeptides and chemicals so that your unconscious can take you to a place where you can experience the life that you want. And in this place, you have no anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, helplessness or hopelessness; and you have no psychological, physiological, emotional, or state-dependent memories, which are dysfunctional to your present and your future.”

“And in this place, your physiology; your biochemistry; your immune system; your psychological and mental state of well-being; and every single cell are in a state of wellbeing – without disease, infection or dysfunction.”

“And in this place, you have a job; you have money and a car; and you have self-esteem and confidence; and you don’t need to and don’t want to use marijuana; and in this place, your life is exactly the way that you want it to be. You’re happy and contented; and you have the inner resources, energy, and motivation to change all of those things that you want to change – through your own free-will and in a way that you feel comfortable.” *“And that process has already begun.”*

“And you *can* allow your unconscious to release neuropeptides and chemicals and do whatever it needs to do; so that the experience and comfort of that life that you want and that state of well-being is and can continue to be with you in the present and the future.” *“And that process has already begun.”*

After the hypnosis, Janet told me that she felt, “Wow! Relaxed.” She said, “I can hardly lift my neck. I feel heavy and a bit confused.” I asked what her experience was while under hypnosis and she said, “Little voices tried to interrupt me. I’d lose your voice. I thought it’s still getting through. It tried to make me feel stupid. Then I’d focus and your words got in.”

The next day she came back for her second session; Janet said to me, “I only had three joints last night. I don’t care about the bong anymore. I have this feeling! I normally have to have ten bongs before I leave home.

This morning I haven't had a joint or a bong. Everything feels really clear. *I'm probably straight.* It was fun getting dressed this morning. I didn't need to have a bong. I felt I really didn't need to have a joint last night. It was a disgusting taste. It burnt my tongue. This morning I didn't want to roll it. I have not had a pipe for 24 hours."

Janet continued, "Yesterday, while I was under hypnosis, when you were talking about the 20-second method [time distortion technique], I kept getting really fast flashes – 100's of them – my eyes were twitching."

Janet then said, "I feel clearer in the head - this morning I was confused and now I'm not. I don't feel like I want to go home and have a bong. I used to have 50 bongs a day or more, up to 70. Everything is really clear. I can see the sky when I drive. I find myself taking deep breaths. I've had no cigarettes for the first time. This morning I left my bedroom door wide open. It felt so good. I didn't have to hide from my girls. All I had to do is get dressed and come to you. I didn't need to spend time smoking bongs. I can taste food. I have an appetite."

Then I said to Janet, "As you go into hypnosis, what would you like to focus on?" She said, "Not being confused. I don't need to and don't want to use marijuana. No frustration. I don't need to compensate for the marijuana. Today the voice didn't have a say at all."

After the hypnotic induction, Janet told me, "I'm feeling good. Better than I did when I woke yesterday. I feel really alert. It doesn't bother me."

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, Janet told me, "I'm feeling good. Definitely don't want to use it anymore. I have to organize getting myself a car. So I can be independent. This morning family members told me that my skin was glowing. I have no thoughts, no anxiety, no guilt and no frustration. It feels normal to be like this. I wake up fresh in the morning. I was actually able to speak with my family members without frustration. My guilt went. I'm almost guilt-free. I feel calm. I had your CD<sup>1</sup> on all day with earplugs. I was hyper."

For the 4<sup>th</sup> day, Janet said her focus was, "To have an appetite and to enjoy food again."

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<sup>1</sup> During the first session, I had given Janet a hypnosis CD that I had made and told her to listen to it everyday. I told Janet, "The hypnotic induction on this CD is similar to what we do here. I'd like you to play this CD at least once during the day (more if you feel like it), and at bedtime leave it on replay all night. You can hear my voice but you don't have to listen to what I say. It will help you sleep."

During the hypnosis, I asked her if she could experience any sensation in her body. She said, “All over; chest and the head.”

After hypnosis I asked Janet how she was feeling. She said, “Oh my God! I feel so good.” I asked her what her experience was during the hypnosis. She said, “I felt it going through me this time. It was all this top section [of my body]. I thought – Oh yeah! I’m going to [be able] to sleep at night.”

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day, Janet told me, “I got my appetite back. Feeling OK. I want to get too many things done. I want a car. I’ve been getting up every morning. I never get up every morning.”

She told me her focus for today was, “Don’t be scared to approach people for jobs. I want a car. A job to get the car. I want goals. I want to get ahead. I want no panic. Not to have my mind racing before going to bed.”

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day, Janet said, “I’m feeling good. I’m still listening to your CD. I’m addicted to it. I’ve gone through sets of batteries.” Then I asked Janet what changes she’s noticed in herself. She said, “I feel much lighter. My appetite is so back. I feel more positive. I feel peaceful. When I start to panic, my mind doesn’t allow it to happen. I have self-esteem. I feel confident. I can achieve my goals. And [buying] a car will come! I have a clearer head and better memory.”

Then I asked Janet what she wanted to focus on while she was under hypnosis. She said, “I want to have a better memory. I want to heal my short-term memory; to give up cigarettes – It’s a week today that I haven’t smoked. And I don’t need to and I don’t want to.”

On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, Janet’s appeared very distraught and agitated. She was experiencing withdrawal symptoms from the marijuana. Janet told me, “I’ve had one or two joints and I’m very depressed.” I sent her to see the doctor. He prescribed Seroquel (an antipsychotic agent) which she took for about a month.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> day, She informed me that she was taking Seroquel and she said, “I have more energy. No depression. Feeling normal and no frustration. And the other day, I was lying down and I got a sensation from the top of my legs to my neck. And really around the stomach area. One time, I hypnotised myself and there was chemicals going through my body.”

As she went into hypnosis, Janet informed me that, “I want to feel good about being normal. I want to go ahead with everything I want to do and not be afraid; and feeling not worthy of it; and be able to accept help from others.”

For the 9<sup>th</sup> day, Janet told me, “I feel fine. No marijuana. No joints. No craving. No pipes. Two weeks tomorrow, I gave up the pipe. I’ve been joking all day.” Then I asked Janet what changes she had noticed in herself. She said, “A lot of positive things are happening. I’m getting a job. I’m panicked about the car. I’m motivated. I had my first early sleep last night. I have an appetite. I enjoy making dinner.” I observed that Janet looked healthy and her skin was glowing.

I asked Janet how she felt after the hypnosis and she said, “I feel really good. During the hypnosis, I experienced a floating sensation. I felt it right through me and I had a very heavy head.”

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and final day of the ten-day programme, Janet told me, “I’m feeling good. I’ve been listening to the CD. I’m continuing with positive changes. I feel much calmer. I’m feeling normal. No marijuana.”

I asked Janet what she wanted to focus on during the hypnosis. Janet told me her focus was, “to continue to keep staying positive; to keep dealing the way that I’m dealing with different emotions.”

After the hypnosis, Janet told me, “I experienced heaps during the hypnosis. I had a rushing through my arm and through the whole body; and the brain – the left side.”

After completing her ten-day programme, I continued to see Janet on a weekly basis for another 6 weeks:

After her ten sessions, Janet came to see me again a few days later: She said, “I’m excited. I’m thinking about going out. I have energy. I’m happy. I don’t panic. I want to achieve. I’m positive about the future. I’m not worried about the future. I have really good ‘oomph.’ I can sleep at night. And I’m sleeping right through the night. I wake up feeling refreshed.”

In a session a week later, Janet said, “I’m doing things everyday without thinking. I used to procrastinate about the smallest things; think about it, and then I wouldn’t end up doing it. Now I do many things. I answer the phone. Before I didn’t. I feel so good. I get up and go. I listen to your CD

twice a day and I leave it on replay at night. I can feel it inside me the adrenalin rush.”

In her next session, one week later, Janet told me, “I’m listening to the CD and feeling really good. I’m getting a job resume together. Doing a lot of things every day. Getting out more. I do spontaneous things. I’m feeling healthy. Waking up happy. Handling everyone around me really well.”

During Janet’s final session with me, which was 6 weeks after her ten-day programme, Janet said, “*I have a job! I’m going to work this afternoon.*” “Possibly getting a car [which she did].”

Last week, after 18 months, I met with Janet: She was very well groomed and very well dressed. She looked healthy, happy and was excited about her life. Her skin was glowing with health. She looked young and vibrant. She told me, “I’m still not using marijuana: I don’t need to and don’t want to. I’m happy and in control of my life. I live in a beautiful house. I’m happy raising my two girls. I have a very good job. And *I have a car!*”

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I would like to dedicate this work, with love and devotion, to my late mother, Teresa Gagliardi.

**End of Presentation**