

# Fibro and Hypnosis

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Fibromyalgia (FMS) is a frustrating and seldom understood illness. It is a collection of confusing and often contradictory symptoms which come and go and vary in intensity. It's chief characteristic is widespread pain in the muscles, ligaments and tendons. It is also characterized by stiffness, fatigue and non-restorative sleep. While it is not life threatening, it is life changing. It can be as debilitating as rheumatoid arthritis. 25% of all FMS sufferers become disabled and 36% of all social security disability payments currently go for Fibromyalgia. It is a chronic illness with a hefty price tag. It accounts for 10% of all visits to physicians. Yet, there are no effective conventional medical treatments for this chronic illness.

FMS is particularly frustrating because the sufferer appears healthy and normal on the outside but feels miserable on the inside. Eight times more women are affected than men. It strikes all races, all ages, all socio-economic levels and all educational levels. It is often found in the company of other related illnesses such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), spastic bladder (urinary urge incontinence), chronic fatigue, headaches, migraines, allergies, myofascial pain syndrome, mitral valve prolapse and more.

Traditional treatments aim at improving the quality of sleep and reducing pain using a cocktail of medications. Unfortunately, the side effects of the medications can be as debilitating as the illness. Recent research confirms that a multi-disciplinary approach which includes cognitive behavioral therapies, such as hypnosis, provides the greatest relief from symptoms and the best prognosis for a return to more normal levels of functioning. This approach includes improving the quality of sleep, proper nutrition, physical conditioning and deep relaxation combined with positive mental imagery (techniques used in hypnotherapy). By combining therapies, the patient can frequently return to a healthier state and a more active lifestyle while lessening or, in some instances, eliminating the need for medications, especially pain medications. My clients have averaged a 46% reduction in pain medication usage.

In a study published in the Journal of Rheumatology, 40 refractory Fibromyalgia patients (FMS patients who had failed to relieve their symptoms with traditional medical treatments) were randomly assigned to treatment with either hypnotherapy or physical therapy. The patients in the hypnotherapy group showed a significantly better outcomes with respect to pain reduction, fatigue on awakening, sleep patterns and global assessments. In addition, those patients who received hypnotherapy showed a significant improvement in their overall levels of discomfort and were able to reduce their levels of pain medications. The authors concluded that hypnotherapy was effective in relieving the symptoms of Fibromyalgia.

This and similar studies corroborate what we have found at Alabama Hypnotherapy Center. We have been using and teaching hypnotherapy for the relief of FMS symptoms

since 1996. Over 96% of FMS patients have shown significant and lasting improvement in their overall symptoms, especially in the areas of pain reduction and increased energy levels. In addition, they have been able to reduce or eliminate their pain medication levels between 30% and 100% (average of 46%). All clients have been able to significantly increase their levels of daily functioning. Even more importantly, they have been able to maintain these improvements even after their hypnotherapy sessions end.

*If you have clients who have Fibromyalgia or are interested in using hypnotherapy to alleviate the symptoms of fibromyalgia and return FMS sufferers to a higher state of functioning, email me at [hypnosis@mindspring.com](mailto:hypnosis@mindspring.com) or call my office at 205/933-5705. The entire 8 hour training workshop is now on audio tape with a 85+ page workbook. Upon completion of the home study course you are added to a referral list. We average referring 4-7 clients a week to hypnotists on that list. In the past 14 months, 97% of my FMS clients have been able to reduce their usage of pain medications by greater than 60%. Some have been able to totally eliminate all their medications. Updated scripts for this are included in the workbook.*