

'At last! I can get a good night's sleep again'

Following the birth of her second son, Paula Richardson, 42, had such a chronic sleep problem she began dreading going to bed at all – until she discovered hypnotherapy



Paula, a bookkeeper from Woldingham, Surrey, is married to Chris, 40, an IT project manager, and has two children Jack, 10, and Tom, 7.

I was really lucky with my first baby Jack; he was a very good sleeper and I didn't really have the usual new-born-baby nights. That's why it was such a shock when I had Tom, who woke several times a night and shot my sleep pattern to pieces!

Overnight, I became a much lighter sleeper and started finding it hard getting off to sleep at bedtime – despite being exhausted. It was quite a weird feeling: I'd be on the verge of dropping off, and then I'd get a sharp physical jerk. It was a bit like that free-fall sensation when you're dreaming and wake up suddenly. This would happen perhaps 40 or more times a night, and I'd hardly get any sleep at all.

In the daytime I'd be too tired to play with the children, and be moody and snappy with my husband Chris. It was like having the worst kind of PMT. It was really quite nightmarish for me – I craved sleep, but whatever I did, I just couldn't drop off.

I tried milky drinks before bedtime and winding down in a warm bath, but still couldn't get over this barrier of jerking awake. Herbal remedies just made me feel groggy the next day. I went to my GP, but all he could reluctantly suggest was sleeping pills, which I refused because I was worried I wouldn't hear the children wake at night.

These sleep problems came and went for over a year and I began to get really desperate and dreaded going to bed at night. There was no set pattern to how they would start; I just couldn't fathom it out. The more worked up I felt about not

sleeping, the worse the problem became.

Eventually, a friend recommended I try seeing her hypnotherapist Lynda Hudson, who has a practice in my area. A lot of people have the wrong impression about hypnotherapy – they think you're put into a trance and are unable to control your actions – but it's just like being in a deeply relaxed state, and you are aware of everything that is happening to you.

Lynda had a chat with me about my sleep problems and took notes. She then asked me to stare at my hand so that I would drift into a state of deep relaxation. Lynda then made suggestions to me about changing my sleep pattern, using words and descriptions I'd mentioned earlier. Apparently, this is a very important part of hypnosis – it has to be something that you really want to do. She told me: 'When you feel the urge to jerk

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awake, instead choose to ignore it or use it as a trigger to go into a deeper sleep.'

That was all she said, but it worked like magic and that night I fell asleep straight away. If I ever get a recurrence I listen to the tape of the consultation that Lynda gave me, and I find that it works at once. It cost £80 for an hour-and-a-half consultation, but it was worth every penny to be able to sleep at night again.

*Lynda Hudson is available for consultations on 020 8402 1928. Her hypnosis CD *Rest and Sleep*, £12.95, is available from firstwayforward.com. Contact the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis on 01262 403 103; bsch.org.uk.

Top tips for a good night's rest

tip Don't eat or exercise too close to bedtime. Unwind by soaking in a warm bath with soft music and subdued lighting.

tip Take valerian, known for its sleep-inducing properties. Try **Medic Herb Valerina Night-Time**, £5.99 for 80 tablets, from Boots.

tip Sip a milky drink. Try **Boots Sleep Warming Chocolate Drink with Chamomile**, £3.55 for 7x30g.

tip Spray your pillow with an essential oil to soothe your senses. Try **Sleep Pillow Mist in Geranium or Lavender**, £5.55 for 100ml, from Boots.

