

# The power of the mind

*Hypnosis is key to weight loss, smoking cessation for some*



Lisa Seaton

**HYPNOSIS.** William Mitchell, founder/managing director of Personal Motivation Hypnosis Clinic, helps Laurie Jones, a weight loss client. Jones lost 40 pounds on the hypnosis program.

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As obesity in the United States reaches epidemic proportions, more and more people are searching for ways to shed the excess pounds.

Advocates of hypnosis believe the key to weight loss starts with unlocking the power of the mind.

"A lot of people come in and say they can't imagine losing the weight," said William Mitchell, founder and managing director of Personal Motivation Hypnosis Clinic. "With hypnosis, they can imagine."

Mitchell, an ordained minister, was living in Missouri and

serving a church in Hannibal when he first opened the business back in January 2003.

"I was pleased and surprised to see that it just took off," he said. "Within three months, I had a full calendar five days a week."

With a full schedule at the clinic, Mitchell resigned his duties at church and made the

move to Springfield. He then opened another clinic in Crystal Lake, a Chicago suburb, and in 2004, added clinics in Bloomington and Fairview Heights.

His interest in hypnosis was spurred by his own weight loss.

"Initially I was skeptical like everyone else," Mitchell said. "Then I lost a bunch of weight with hypnosis, so I really experienced it. Then I started learning more about it, and once I saw the results people were getting with it I got very interested."

Mitchell now has an unaccredited doctorate in hypnotherapy, which is common among hypnotherapists.

The United States Department of Labor defines a hypnotherapist as one who induces a hypnotic state in a client to increase motivation or alter behavior patterns through hypnosis.

For success, motivation is the key.

"When most people come in they know what they're doing wrong, they just need the motivation to make the changes," Mitchell said.

Laurie Jones, a weight loss client, who found success with hypnosis, said that was true for her. She has lost 40 pounds using the program.

"When you're left on your



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**THEN AND NOW.** Laurie Jones poses for a photo before joining the hypnosis program, at left. The photo on the right shows her success so far.

own, you get busy with your family and your work. Hypnosis really keeps you focused," she said.

Although weight loss accounts for the majority of the business, the clinic also addresses smoking cessation,

stress reduction, and other issues. About 75 percent of clients are weight loss, 20 percent are smoking cessation, leaving about 5 percent who come for other reasons, Mitchell said.

"We feel like we're better off

specializing in a few things we do well," he said.

Based on the success rate, this approach seems to be working. Mitchell said 60 percent of clients don't smoke at all after their first session.

"With the weight, I think we have a higher percentage of success," Mitchell said. "Most dieticians would say if you lose 10 percent of your body weight, that's a significant weight loss. I would say well above 50 percent of our clients lose a significant amount of weight."

While Mitchell has many successful clients, he stresses that weight loss takes time.

"The unfortunate part about weight loss clients is that many of them come in and they've heard all this hype about losing 30 pounds in 30 days," he said. "In fact, the average adult can only lose one to two pounds per week. So we have to re-educate them from the beginning."

At the clinic the focus is slow, steady, progressive weight loss.

"We might see a person over the course of six, eight, even ten months until they are reaching their goals," Mitchell said.

Between sessions, clients employ self-hypnosis to remain focused, a skill that Mitchell begins teaching at the

first session. People who have the most success, practice self-hypnosis between sessions, he added.

For Jones, self-hypnosis has been essential in keeping the weight off.

"I probably do it two or three times a week. It keeps me on track," she said.

Mitchell said 75 percent of people are reasonably good hypnotic subjects.

"I can't tell you how many people come in and go through the screening process and say, 'I'm amazed; I didn't think I'd be able to be hypnotized,'" he said. "A lot of people think if you have a strong mind you wouldn't be a good hypnotic subject. It's just the reverse. It's the person with the weak mind who's not a good subject. If you've got a strong mind, I've got more to work with."

Jones' appearance in some of the clinic's advertisements has worked to convince some of the skeptics among her friends.

"My friends said 'Oh, we've never known anybody in those advertisements; we thought they were all fake.' And I said, 'Yep, it really works.'"

Whether it's weight loss, smoking cessation or simple stress reduction, hypnosis can offer an alternative to or complement traditional methods.