

UNUSUAL SERVICE

Hypnotherapist offers motivation for clients' positive life changes

by Julie Devine

“My clients don't need education about their problems — they need motivation,” says Cynthia Beaven, the lone hypnotherapist for APP, a company she founded 25 years ago to help people quit smoking, lose weight, manage stress, build confidence, enhance memory and concentration and overcome anxiety disorders. “I'm 50 percent of the equation. The client is the other 50 percent. It's about taking control of your life, not about me making you do something. If I could control people, I'd be a wealthy woman.”

After studying psychology at Indiana University for four years and earning a certificate from the Indiana Institute of Hypnosis, Beaven opened her practice. She now holds sessions in a fifth-floor private conference room in the Parkwood Crossing business center at 96th and Meridian streets.

During the first half of each one-hour session, she discusses why clients want to change behaviors, the extent of their problems and the triggers for their habits. She then uses progressive relaxation, instructing clients to relax each part of their body, moving from the feet to the head. “It's not a trance. You're not unconscious,” she says. “Hypnosis is a state of mental and physical relaxation in which the subconscious mind is more open to suggestion than normal. You still have a tremendous sense of awareness and hear everything I say. If any suggestions are

outside of what you're comfortable with, you'll disregard them.”

Clients sink into different levels of hypnosis, and less than 15 percent of her clientele can't relax enough to be hypnotized, Beaven explains. “Some people are just more suggestible, more easily relaxed or more trusting, [while others] are resistant to the process and not ready to change.”

Even some nonbelievers find success. “Through the whole thing, I was thinking, ‘Here goes my money,’” says Tony Hanslits, a chef living in Broad Ripple who used hypnosis to quit smoking and lose weight. “But when I opened my eyes, I felt a rush from the bottom of my spine to the top of my head. It was like a big boost of willpower. It empowers you to do the right thing.”

George Pillow, owner of Pillow Express Logistics in Indianapolis, also quit smoking despite his doubts about hypnosis. “It wasn't something I believed in,” he says. “But when you really want to stop, you think, ‘Maybe I should try something out of the [ordinary].’” After one session with Beaven, Pillow ceased smoking. “Two weeks later, when his craving for cigarettes returned, he scheduled a follow-up.” After the second session, “I've had no more cigarettes, and that was more than 12 years ago.”

During each 25-minute hypnosis induction, Beaven makes suggestions to create an aversion to the problem. If a client wants to stop smoking, her suggestions might include, “If you attempt to smoke, you'll think of the



Cynthia Beaven (right) guides Sandy Fox through progressive relaxation in preparation for hypnosis to better manage everyday stress.

most disgusting smell you've ever experienced. It will taste like drinking rancid, sour milk.” She also paints a very positive picture of not smoking, saying things such as, “Your skin will be clearer and brighter. You won't worry about discolored teeth and smelly clothes.”

At the end of each session, Beaven tells clients on the count of three they'll be wide-awake and feeling good. She then leaves them with a few words of caution, saying, “Be on guard against your own human nature. Change is frightening. It's tempting to stick with old behaviors because they're familiar, even though they're bad.”

With all hypnoses, her success rate depends on the person's commitment to change, she says. Although she normally sees clients just once, sometimes adding a single follow-up session, six out of 10 quit smoking on a long-term basis. Likewise, those attempting to shed pounds reach their goal about 60 percent of the time. “It's a quick fix, not a long process,” Beaven says. “If it's going to work, it'll work.” ♦

We currently have no reports on APP. If you have used her services, please let us know.

contact information

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