

Hypnotically healthy

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STAFF WRITER



Sandy McCollum

Richard and Jayne Holcomb love to eat and it showed. They were overweight. Not just a little – a lot.

Richard was in his late 50s in December 2005. He and his doctor were concerned about his increasing blood pressure and cholesterol levels. He was also worried about his risk of developing diabetes. On Jan. 1, 2006, Dick and Jayne resolved to do something about their weight. They saw an ad for the Personal Motivation Hypnosis Clinic and thought they'd give it a try.

The next morning, they called the clinic and got an appointment that afternoon.

It wasn't long before William Mitchell, founder/managing director of Personal Motivation Hypnosis Clinic, asked them a series of questions to determine if they were really motivated and susceptible to hypnosis. Some of the population cannot be hypnotized – most can be – and about 10 percent qualify as "highly hypnotizable."

Dick and Jayne were good candidates. Mitchell helped them set up a nine-month course of hypnosis sessions beginning with 12 weekly sessions, then once a month for six months. He sent the couple home with a CD.

On Jan. 12, they started hypnosis sessions. Each was placed

in a separate room; they put on headphones and listened to a CD along with the voice of one of the staff members. The first session was on portion control.

"It was amazing," Jayne says. "When we got home that night, I made dinner, and we couldn't finish it."

Adds Dick: "We ate less than half of what we would normally eat, and we were full."

Mitchell explains that hypnosis is not about sleeping or being under someone else's control. Instead, it's a state of super awareness. The client may look like he's asleep, but what's really going on is that he has relaxed and is concentrating on the inner world, not the outside world. Mitchell and his brother, Terry, gave the Holcombs a suggestion.

"I directed them to change their perspective of food portions – that a very small amount of food would be incredibly filling," Mitchell says.

"Now this is really amazing because we were big eaters," Dick says. "We'd have ribeye steaks, and each one of us would have one – 14 ounces each."

These days, they divide a ribeye in half – twice.

"All we can eat is a quarter of a steak at a time," Jayne says.

AMAZING RESULTS. Richard and Jayne Holcomb lost more than 160 pounds between them, using common sense, commitment and hypnosis.

"Sunday night was pizza night; we'd get a medium pizza and eat the whole thing. Now we get personal pizzas from

Schwann's with a whole wheat crust, and that's just fine." As the months went on, the couple learned to eat more

fruits and vegetables, skip fast food, exercise, eat less and drink more water. Each time they had a new session and learned a behavior, they added it to their growing repertoire of healthy skills.

"I can't explain it exactly. We already knew all of the things we needed to do, but somehow, when you're in a relaxed state, listening to what you need to do, it really takes hold," Jayne says.

Dick hasn't eaten French fries since that first January. Jayne can't even pull into a fast food restaurant.

"I can go to Subway, but I can't even think about turning into McDonald's or Hardee's or Burger King's parking lots – just the thought of it makes me sick," she says.

Neither of the Holcombs has eaten sweets since their first session.

Some other things the Holcombs have noticed: more energy, much more room in airplane seats, less wear in the living room furniture, a willingness to try new things, better sleep, more fun playing with grandchildren and more choices during clothes shopping. Best of all, of course, is when people don't recognize them.

Both the Holcombs and Mitchell say hypnosis was part of the weight-loss success. The other part was the couple's commitment to making it work. Here's a quick look at some of the things that were due to hypnosis and some that were due to commitment.

Listening to tapes – commitment. Feeling full on very small portions – hypnosis. Daily exercise – commitment and hypnosis. Eating more fruits and vegetables – hypnosis. Aversion to sweets, fast food and French fries – hypnosis. Continuing weight loss after nine months – commitment.

Mitchell says he has an arsenal of hypnotic tools to help change behavior, but a hypnotic suggestion doesn't last a lifetime. It's a short-term tool to help make a long-term change.

"Some people want to see hypnosis as mental liposuction," Mitchell says. "Hypnosis looks mysterious, but it makes so much sense scientifically."

Mitchell says he has used positive images (where you see something that isn't there),

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Nurse
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first one, 11 years ago," Johnson says.

This year's Relay For Life of Illinois will be held June 16 and 17 at the Illinois Department of Transportation in Springfield. Goals include participation of more than 500 survivors and 163 teams, lighting the track with



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designed to find and stop cancer, it's no coincidence.

"I figure if I can help anyone along their journey, it's a blessing to do it," she says. "I've been with all sorts of people, some starting their walk, some ending it. They've taught me how to live and that family is pretty important."

"The most important part of the job is people – just helping other people."

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negative images (where you don't see something that is there), amnesia (where you forget about something that is derailing your healthy efforts), and others.

For one patient who would go to the grocery store and load up on junk food, Mitchell gave a hypnotic suggestion that the client would not be able to see the junk food but would be able to see the produce section. Sure enough, the client stopped buying sweets and fatty foods and began loading up on fruits and vegetables.

For a woman who wanted to quit smoking but didn't have a very strong will, he suggested to her under hypnosis that whenever she went to the convenience store to buy cigarettes, she wouldn't be able to remember why she was there. It worked, and the woman quit smoking.

Mitchell has a client who would eat three full dinners every night. The client would make a dinner, go to the store, buy food, make and eat another dinner and then do it again.

The client "must have self-hypnotized at some time," Mitchell says. "It was a very odd, ingrained behavior."

What Mitchell did was suggest amnesia – the client would forget about food after the first dinner. It worked. The client only ate one meal, even when attending a party with a favorite food, pizza.

Jayne and Dick Holcomb are very excited about their new, healthy lifestyle. When friends see their success, they want to have success, too. The Holcombs say some of them have been disappointed.

"Do you listen to the CDs?" Dick will ask.

"No," is the answer, "I don't have time."

"Do you exercise?" Jayne will ask.

"No, I don't have time," Jayne hears.

"Well, we don't have time either," Dick says, "so we get up at 4 in the morning and do it."

Mitchell emphasizes that clients don't generally get up at 4 a.m. to exercise, but he's proud of the Holcombs for making it a part of their routine.

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