

**Quotes from "Forging the Mind" by Bethany Emerson
Illustrations by David Busby**



"Dr. Larry Volz, says one concern that skeptics raise about hypnotherapy is reaction to an upsetting memory. But he says the worst thing he's encountered is that some patients may cry while they talk. "It is a healing process if done right. ... It is so life changing," he says. "I have seen so much good in so many people." Volz adds that hypnotherapists must be talented and skilled to lead a patient through those conversations."

"Proponents of hypnosis say it has proven to be a successful treatment option for those wanting to kick bad habits. For smokers striving to quit, hypnosis holds about an 85 percent success rate with one-on-one sessions, and more than a 20 percent success rate for group hypnosis, Volz says, citing several university studies. For those trying to lose weight, hypnosis treatments are proven to be 30 times more effective than average diets or weight loss programs, he adds. "The statistics for hypnosis [success] really outshine any other treatment."

West End resident Todd Kurtz agrees. He wanted to punt his decade-long addiction to chewing tobacco. After trying to quit and experiencing severe mood swings, Kurz researched hypnotherapy, and decided to try it in 2004.

"I sat down through a half hour of hypnotherapy, and I have not touched chewing tobacco since and have not had a mood swing," says Kurz, an insurance sales representative.

Last year, Kurz experienced another major life change, the loss of more than 55 pounds. A lifelong athlete, and a football player through high school and college at Illinois State University, Kurz had gained about 70 pounds after sustaining a knee injury. The Adkins and South Beach diets worked for Kurz, but only temporarily.

A year ago, he visited Volz, and he says the session helped him immediately to begin to perceive his eating habits differently. "The day after I went to see Dr. Volz, I was at lunch with clients, and I looked at the chef salad. I was at a barbecue joint, and all I [used] to want to eat was barbecue. ...I ate that salad, and I was full, and it was good for me."

Kurz says the hypnotherapy sessions helped break his lifelong habit of cleaning his plate and overeating. Afterward, when the rare temptation to overeat arose, he reinforced his sessions by listening to a recording of his hypnosis sessions while going to sleep -- a practice that many hypnotherapists recommend.

So how exactly does the therapist assist the patient in breaking habits? Volz says it begins with an hour-and-a-half session in which he listens to the patient's challenges and works on a treatment plan. Only after that conversation would Volz have the patient do some deep breathing and enter a state of sub consciousness.

The subconscious mind is a repository for established thoughts, habits and behaviors. To alter these behaviors, therapists help patients establish new thoughts and behaviors by reinforcing them in the subconscious mind. This is achieved through techniques such as therapists discussing which situations the client would like to change, repeating facts or picture associations while the patient is in the subconscious state. Also, therapists may have a dialogue with the patient or engage in role playing.

Another hypnotherapy technique is to relive a situation that may be causing trauma, such as a car accident that has made someone fearful of driving, Volz says. He practices regression back to the moment to which the patient wants to change his or her response.

Kurz says he enthusiastically recommends hypnotherapy to acquaintances. "If you have never been hypnotized, you think your brain is going to go crazy," he says. "But you can completely hear everything going on. You can hear cars driving by outside or people in the hall-way... It is the most relaxing thing I have ever been through. It is fantastic."