

In recent years, the thinking on hypnosis has swayed one of two ways: chicken dances at entertainment festivals or hypnotherapy as a healing tool to complement traditional western medicine treatments and support good health and well-being.

In actuality, it is an ancient practice and gained popularity in the 1800s so it's been around longer than some current medical practices. Perhaps that's why it regained popularity in the 1900s and in 1958 the American Medical Association approved a report on the medical uses of hypnosis and two years later the American Psychological Association endorsed hypnosis as a branch of psychology. And research by the National Institute of Health (www.nih.gov) and other health organizations around the world continues to explore how hypnosis supports health and well-being. Hardly a dog and pony show.

So how did hypnosis get so misunderstood? Just take a look at the silver screen or center stage and it might be a bit clearer (*Office Space* anyone?). Movies exaggerate reality and sometimes don't even resemble reality, we all know this.

During a normal hypnosis session you are guided through a series of relaxation techniques, so your subconscious can better utilize mental images and suggestions to accelerate positive results. But this does not make you putty, easily moldable into various animals (or a person with no work ethic). Hypnosis works by addressing things in the subconscious that reoccur during our conscious (waking) state; ie. habits.

Basically, when something happens to us, we respond with a particular behavior. When those things repeatedly happen, we attach physical and emotional reactions to that memory. And, in some cases, those behaviors can become unhealthy or self-sabotage ones. Those are the behaviors hypnosis can address to help create healthier, better ones.

And with this better understanding of hypnosis as an assist for positive change, it may come as no surprise that everyone from Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill to Ben Affleck and Matt Damon have used hypnosis as a tool to manage unwanted behaviors. And you can too.