



## Life-Enhancing Hypnosis:

Empowering people to achieve optimal mental, physical and emotional well-being.

Hypno-Healthgram: Issue 56

**June 2015**

### **A GYMNASTIC JOURNEY**

“Heath” had come to Hypno-Health a handful of times and achieved satisfying results. As he thought about his own earlier days as a very successful athlete, he wondered if hypnosis might be helpful for his son, Jarrod, who had become interested in gymnastics. He related that Jarrod was eight years old, had good athletic ability and really liked gymnastics, but was having difficulty mastering the round-off-back-hand-spring.

Heath brought Jarrod for his first visit on 11/15/2012. He was a wiry, strong, little guy who interacted comfortably. He easily went into a deep level of hypnosis ( 7 on a 1 - 12 scale), where he connected with his “magic mind”. Once there he placed his right hand across his stomach and that became his anchoring movement for returning to his hypnotic state whenever he wanted. That movement could also be used in the conscious state as an automatic reminder and reinforcer of the progress he had made while in the Hypno-Health office. I asked Jarrod to imagine he had an imaginary flashlight and was looking around inside his mind. He was checking out the wiring to see if there was anything broken that might have been causing him difficulty with the round-off-back-hand-spring. He said there was one broken wire, which I suggested he could fix. He did that by firmly taping it together with black tape. I gave him suggestions about confidently mastering the challenging technique and made a personalized CD filled with positive reinforcements. Heath played the recording each night as Jarrod went to sleep, knowing his “magic (subconscious) mind” would absorb it completely while he slept.

On 11/26/2012, Heath called to report that during the second practice after our office session, Jarrod did a perfect round-off-back-hand-spring with no assistance from his coach. The coach said something and he and Jarrod slapped High Fives! While waiting in line for his next turn, Jarrod was doing his anchoring movement, which Heath asked him about later. He said he was “getting ready for the routine with it”. Jarrod did a total of four perfect round-off-back-hand-springs and was beaming with pride afterward. His family visited his grandparents for Thanksgiving several days later and he proudly told everyone about his four perfect routines. The first competition would be several weeks later.

Heath called on 1/10/13 and said Jarrod had continued to do his back-flip routine perfectly – until the day before, when he did two good ones, tweaked his wrist a bit on the third, and nearly fell on the fourth. Using Jarrod as an example, the coach said to the other team members: “See what happened? Jarrod didn’t go hard and he almost got hurt”. Heath saw Jarrod’s body language “slump”. With the competition three days away, Heath and Jarrod returned to the office later that day. Jarrod repaired another wire that had snapped in his mind and imagined “a marble glowing like a yellow light”. He suggested using that image and the word “glow” to reinforce his confidence and give him courage while doing all his routines. We added to that the image of a protective bubble that Jarrod’s magic mind created. His magic mind would surround him with it whenever he needed it to protect him from uncomfortable words directed at him. He would then be able to do his best in comfortable, confident, unpressured ways. We reviewed all of Jarrod’s routines and reinforced him doing them the best he possibly could, always in comfortable, confident, unpressured ways. He quickly understood that the more relaxed and confident he felt, the more easily his body would do what he asked. He left with a new recording.

Jarrod had a solid competition and came back on 1/16/13 for more reinforcement. Heath called on 2/27/13 to say Jarrod had been doing “GREAT”. He fell a couple times recently, but Heath suggested (from listening to the CD) that Jarrod might do his anchoring movement and say his affirmation (glow) before each event and especially if he fell. He did so and bounced back after a fall with two great flips!

On 10/14/13, Jarrod returned to fine tune a few things. A fear of heights had crept in and seemed to be bothering him on the high bars and rings. We addressed that fairly easily. By this time he was much more comfortable working with his magic mind and bringing out its creativity. He imagined his own solar system, which he later drew in detail. His magic mind was at the center and various symbols were located between the concentric, expanding rings. They represented him being “on a roll, on fire, focused, seeing himself confidently doing his routines, and happily spending time with others”. Overall, he was integrating within himself a slow, deliberate, comfortable, confident rhythm. Interestingly, he was expanding his self image to aspects of his life beyond gymnastics.

Heath called to say Jarrod had “stuck everything” (did very well) in his first two meets. But he then began to lose his focus. His coach and dad knew he had lots of potential, but something seemed to be getting in the way. As we explored the “blocks” in his magic mind, on 1/22/14, it became apparent that changes at school were affecting him. He had recently moved to a more challenging classroom, but wasn’t comfortable there yet. He had tested educational boundaries in the past and was doing so more often recently. He was also feeling inadequate in his new setting. He was afraid to join the popular group and gravitated toward less-athletic and less academic friends. He had attended a big meet in a neighboring state and only placed in one event. Clearly, Jarrod had bottomed out! We focused on his reintegrating all his established academic and people skills (good reader, good poet, loves Geography, second best fourth-grade student on a surprise test, loves Science, good people skills, especially with adults, and is caring, honest, and

confident at school and with classmates), and disconnecting the impact of the blocks that had recently gotten in his way. We also reviewed and reestablished his dedicated work ethic and achievements in gymnastics, while disconnecting the impact of his poor showing in New Hampshire. The clear message included his confidence and competence at school and gymnastics. Jarrod also left with a new personalized recording.

After placing third in a meet on 1/27/14, Jarrod came for a fine-tuning session on 1/30/14, in preparation for the state meet in March. During the session, he changed his affirmation to I AM AWESOME (!) and left with an updated recording.

Heath called on 2/25/14. Jarrod seemed to be a bit pre-occupied at practice. Heath asked him about that and Jarrod said he was feeling uncomfortable with his dad there. Heath wanted Jarrod to be as unpressured as possible and told him he would stay outside during practices and meets – an intuitively astounding decision that removed Heath from being able to watch his son practice and perform and would hopefully enable him to be more comfortable. The state meet was scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup>.

I next met with Jarrod on 8/29/14, when I learned he had injured his elbow shortly before the state meet and was unable to compete. He still needed to keep his legs straight, especially on the front and back hand springs during floor exercises, as well as on every dismount and swing on other events. His legs had been bending on the hand stand part of the front and back hand springs. He imagined having learned to keep his legs straight on the vault and transferred that to the hand springs. A new recording reinforced all that.

On 12/11 14, Jarrod wanted to begin peaking for the state meet in April. We reviewed and reinforced his ability and achievement in all events (floor exercises, pommel horse, parallel bars, high bars, rings and vault) and emphasized his being comfortable, confident, focused and relaxed, while keeping his eye on the prize. He also imagined being concerned only with himself – not other people – and using his energy and ability the best he possibly could. Again, he left with the latest recording, which his dad continued to play after he went to sleep at night (as a way of reinforcing everything in an unpressured way). Included in the recording was Jarrod's image of himself standing on the podium at the state meet.

3/2/15 brought Jarrod back to the Hypno-Health office for his final tune-up before the state meet. He had not been scoring as strongly on the first event during recent meets and wanted to improve on that. He easily released the minor apprehension at the start of meets and imagined himself scoring equally well in all events and, once again, received a personalized recording to reinforce all aspects of his routines. I had thought it might be fun to see Jarrod in action at the state meet and asked him if that would be OK. He gave a resounding thumbs up and I made plans to be there. It was fun to see him do all the things we had worked on over the previous 29 months against the best age-group peers in the state. He scored his highest total ever for the six events and was awarded second place (only one point below the winner) and a neck-full of individual

medals. Since the first two scorers in each age group were eligible to go to the regional meet two weeks later, Jarrod was beaming with pride about what he had accomplished!

I learned later that Jarrod came down with the flu the day before the regional meet. His family and he went anyway, with the thought that he could watch if he wasn't feeling better. He awoke that morning with a fever, headache and nausea. His dad reassured him that he should not feel compelled to compete in his present condition – and that the decision was his to make. Jarrod said he wanted to try. Just before his first event, his family saw him throw up into a bucket behind his team bench. Then he did his first event – and every other one after that! While it was obvious he was sick and weakened, he somehow made it through all six events. The out-of-state competition was very strong, but Jarrod earned a higher score than he had in the state meet. That will certainly be a powerful motivation for him as he prepares for the Fall program, when he will move up to a new age group, which means more difficult routines.

5/7/15. Jarrod returned to work on perfecting his technique on the step-out-front-and-back-hand-springs and the round-off-front-and-back-tucks. If you ever saw a gymnastics meet, you might have noticed that performers running a long way before vaulting looked stiff, with upright posture and tight, straight-armed movements. They look very different from runners in track meets, especial sprinters – who lean forward and pump arms and legs powerfully and fluidly. The reason for that is the gymnasts are “positioning” themselves with the posture that will enable them to be successful at the vault and the floor exercises, which require a shorter run, but the same posture to position them for success.

When Seth was first getting interested in gymnastics during a summer recreation program, he was taught to lean forward with his chest out as he did a routine that started on an elevated trampoline and finished on a lower one. He practiced all summer and leaning forward with his chest and head became a habit. His first goal was to completely disconnect that habit. He did that by gathering up all aspects of the unwanted habit and pulling them out of his magic mind. He then fired “two dozen missiles from a missile-launcher into the habit and blew it away forever”. He began replacing the former habit with the new “comfortably stiff” running technique. He had been able to perfect it for his vault routine, but found it more difficult during the shorter approach on his floor exercises. We broke down the four parts of the floor exercises that required the comfortably stiff, upright approach and Jarrod practiced performing them in his mind, beginning with tightening his butt muscles, his back and chest muscles, and finally his neck and head muscles. Then he imagined combining the two consecutive parts of the step-out-front-and-back-hand-springs and the round-off-front-and-back-tucks. Jarrod agreed to watch videos of top gymnasts doing those routines to visually imprint the correct techniques in his mind. He also created the new affirmation “Back Flip Madness” to powerfully reinforce his success. We added the “practice-makes-perfect” slogan to his repertoire and broke it down to: practice builds muscle memory and confidence; confidence increases results; increased results produce success. Jarrod, once again received his personalized recording to powerfully reinforce his continued success.

Stay tuned for possible updates in future Hypno-Healthgrams.

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