

Kathy Doner MD

"Making the Change that Makes the Difference"



Sebastian Sun
**TAKING CHARGE:
"WEIGHT LOSS BY HYPNOSIS:
USING YOUR MIND FOR A CHANGE"**

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SEBASTIAN -- It's entitled "Weight Loss by Hypnosis: Using Your Mind for a Change," but it's much more than that, at least according to some of the people who have tried it so far.

The consensus is that one's own desire and Dr. Kathy Doner, who conducts the once-a-week, four-week sessions at Sebastian River Medical Center, are the keys to the success of the program. Doner, who practiced Internal Medicine at SRMC for more than 21 years, gave up her practice a year and a half ago to concentrate on her hypnotherapy practice.

Basically, with about 35 people in each session, those interviewed agree that they eat less and enjoy it more, they are more relaxed and they have easily mastered self-hypnosis.

A Barefoot Bay couple, Al and Carrie Lehman, who will celebrate their 56th wedding anniversary this year, were former patients of Doner and had an idea of what to expect when they enrolled in the "Weight Loss" program.

"Al and I both started to watch our weight a couple of weeks before starting the sessions," Carrie Lehman explained. "We've each lost about 7 pounds in the first three weeks and we really haven't been hungry. But what was most surprising was how well self-hypnosis has worked for me. I've used it for other things. She teaches the method very well and you can do it very easily and you can use it forever."

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Al Lehman, at age 77 a year older than his wife, said his problem was simple: Eating too much.

"I was the biggest stuffer you ever met in your life," he said. "She'd (Carrie) always make extra and I'd always eat it. I was like the garbage can.

"But what's amazing about this program is you certainly eat healthier and you eat less and yet you're not hungry. I think the self-hypnosis sessions help, too. You're not walking around in a fog or anything like that. You hear things around you, but you're not really paying attention to them. Before sitting down to eat, I try to hypnotize myself to be aware of how much I'm eating. That's the bottom line."

However, said Al Lehman, he discovered another bottom line.

"I'd recommend this program to anyone," he said. "For 99 bucks, you can't go wrong. It was money well spent."

Terry Barth, who works at Sebastian River Medical Center, best summarized the benefits of the program after her four-week session.

"I think the program was far more than anyone ever imagined," she said. "It's not going to make you lose weight. You're going to have to want to do it. I didn't adhere to everything, but I did lose 5 pounds and it was virtually with no effort.

"What I liked best about the program is you make the choices not to overeat, not to eat improperly. It's thinking more in the positive, not denying yourself," said Barth, a Sebastian resident. "I had been hypnotized a couple of times and kind of knew what to expect, but I was looking forward to learning more about self-hypnosis and was able to do that. I find I'm using it more for other things, too. It's great for relaxation, motivation."

Helen Gustafson, a 78-year-old resident of Little Hollywood, has osteoporosis and has lost two inches in height and is carrying the same weight on a shorter frame.

"I thought I really needed to work at it (to lose weight)," Gustafson said. "But it was very helpful. Dr. Doner has a wonderful delivery and a voice that would melt an iceberg. You can't help but get the enthusiasm and her humor loosens people up.

"Losing weight is one of the hardest things to do, but I've lost about 5 pounds and I want to get down to 125. Exercise doesn't always do it. I'd say it was money well spent because her nutrition tips and self-hypnosis tips were worth it. You get a feeling you're taking charge of your life and it's very uplifting and gives you confidence."

Bill Widman, though, found other reasons to be satisfied with the sessions.

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"I've been on every diet that's come down the pike since I was 8, and they had one thing in common," said Widman, a 61-year-old Sebastian resident. "I gained all the weight back and then some.

"I'm a skeptical person and I was going into this, but I found I am able to push myself away from the dinner table. Just listening to the CDs, a couple of times a day, I'm able to accomplish what I wanted to. I don't think there's anything magical about it, but it works. I know I've lost weight. I was 350 (pounds) when I started, but I'm not sure how much (I lost). My scale goes only to 330, but I feel like I've lost weight and I feel much better, too.

"What I've found with these group sessions is you get a lot of support from the other people involved and that stays with you. I've learned a lot, about nutrition and overeating. I'd recommend this program to anybody."

So would Jack Williams of Vero Beach.

"It's opened up a whole new world for me," said Williams, 69, who with wife Darlene, also a participant in the sessions, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this year.

Williams, who said he suffered from a very low self-esteem, found the program to be much more than he anticipated.

"Hypnosis is easy," he said. "It only takes a minute and it has worked for me. I had a full week of happiness since our last session, which had never happened in my life. Seriously. I've found this to be a very divining experience. I can't describe how it was before, other than I always had negative thoughts, never trusting anyone. Not anymore. I've been through many experiences in my life but this time I got it.

"I think it's because of the person Dr. Doner is. She's so giving, so excited about what she's doing. She builds trust with every word she speaks. It's not so much about weight loss for me, it's about being a better person. It's been a defining moment in my life and I'm not kidding around. The first two sessions, I wasn't getting it, but the self-hypnosis, I've got it now and I'd been trying to get it for 30, 40 years. It works wonders, it's fantastic. I finally got it."

And, most certainly, Williams must think he got more than his \$99 worth, too.

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