

**BUSINESS**

This former IBMer turned to hypnotism and found a new career

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Many people fantasize about leaving the corporate world, but few take the needed steps to turn those dreams into reality.

Then there's Mike Williams.

He had a good job in finance at IBM, Williams says, but "was pushing 30 years." And while he liked his career, the corporate world in general was a grind. "Everything is about how much they can run you how many hours a week," he says.

Companies used to emphasize a "work-life balance," but the emphasis now is "work-life integration," he says. That means "your work is integrated in your life," Williams explains. "Essentially they are one and the same, and at some point it's going to become indistinguishable.

Your whole lot in life is going to be work; don't expect anything beyond that."

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Ready for something beyond that existence, Williams read "Memories of the Afterlife" by Michael Newton and then pursued a past-life experience for himself. He decided to turn that interest in hypnosis into a second career and became a past-life hypnotist.

Williams, now 59, founded Imagine Hypnotics in 2010 in Fuquay-Varina while he was still working at IBM. He says he would "sign off at 6 o'clock at night and my clients would come in at 7 o'clock. I did that for four years in preparation for retiring."

Now, Williams uses hypnosis to help people overcome bad habits like nail biting and smoking and to deal with self-confidence issues.

One client, Les Short, says Williams helped him stay off the path to alcohol addiction. Short said his drinking was causing anxiety for him and his wife. Initially he was skeptical that Williams could help. "I was brought up with a fairly good logic, scientific-based background," he says. But now he's a believer.

Williams, he says, put him in a trance to help him "see" his life 10 years in the future if he kept up his habit and if he didn't. "It's a pretty grim prospect if you're struggling with alcohol," Short says of the scenario where he kept drinking.

The hypnosis worked "fantastically well," he says.

"I've lost 45 pounds, I walk 20-plus miles a week, and I exercise and eat much healthier. I feel much happier about my life, and Mike's helped me a lot," Short says.

Still, it might not work for everyone.

“Some people don’t trust it,” Short says. “If it works for you, then it’s fine. Some people aren’t very susceptible to going under the influence.”

Williams also performs past-life regressions in which clients, he says, experience memories of a previous life.

When a client comes in for a past life, he sits down in a recliner, and Williams darkens the room. He talks them through early childhood memories. Then they go “back to the womb,” Williams says. “Some clients will get a ton of stuff in the womb; some clients won’t get anything.” After that, the client will begin to experience a past life.

The past life that a client experiences, Williams says, is chosen for them by the divine. “They wanna be able to help you to better navigate your current life,” he says. A client who has a hard life may come in and discover a past life in the Crusades in which he was captured. The client can learn to persevere through current difficulties. He says some clients have gone back into the mid-20th century, to the B.C. era and to Ancient Egypt.

Williams recognizes that many people do not believe that the people really go back to past lives. But even if it’s not true, Williams says, and it’s just an experience your mind has created – that in itself is amazing.

His old life of making spread sheets and participating in conference calls can’t compare to his new job, Williams says.

“When you’re working for a corporation, you’re investing in the corporation,” he says. But “when you have your own business, you are investing in yourself. It’s even better when you’re helping other people.

“I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

THINKING ABOUT A CAREER CHANGE?

Before you make the big move, take these steps.

1. Make a list of things you’re good at or that interest you.
2. Figure out the educational requirements, potential for advancement and earnings for each, and make sure you understand exactly what the job entails.