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Dr. Kevin Spencer

In commendation for his unbridled stride towards
excellence and innovation in his field.



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EXCLUSIVE



Dr. Kevin Spencer



Photo by MA2LA

Editor's Note:

Kevin Spencer

Celebrating a Visionary in Magic and Education

Kevin Spencer's story is a testament to the transformative power of passion, resilience, and innovation. As the Visionary Illusionist & Educator of the Year, 2024, Kevin exemplifies how creativity can transcend its traditional boundaries to impact lives in profound ways. From captivating audiences with grand illusions to revolutionizing therapeutic and educational methodologies, his journey is as inspiring as it is impactful.

What makes Kevin's legacy truly remarkable is his ability to see beyond magic as mere entertainment. Through ground-breaking programs like **Magic Therapy™** and **Hocus Focus™**, he has shown how learning magic tricks can improve cognitive, motor, and social skills. These programs have not only transformed classrooms and rehabilitation centers but also ignited hope in individuals navigating personal challenges.

Kevin's work is rooted in a deep empathy shaped by his personal experiences, including overcoming significant setbacks following a life-altering injury. Rather than letting adversity define him, he used it as a springboard to explore the intersection of magic, healthcare, and education. Today, his innovative approaches are recognized worldwide, proving that magic is not just about illusion—it's about inspiring belief, fostering confidence, and enabling growth.

At EliteX, we are proud to spotlight Kevin Spencer's incredible contributions in this edition. His dedication to creating inclusive environments and breaking down barriers in learning and recovery serves as a beacon for educators, healthcare professionals, and artists alike.

As you journey through this feature, we hope you are inspired by Kevin's visionary leadership and commitment to making a difference. Let his story remind us all that with passion, creativity, and purpose, we can turn even the most challenging moments into opportunities to leave a lasting impact.

Here's to Kevin Spencer—a true visionary redefining what's possible through the art of magic.

ELITEX



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*Dr. Kevin
Spencer*

A Magical Journey To Education & Healthcare

(Photo by MA2LA)

Kevin Spencer

Kevin's journey to becoming a renowned magician, educator, and healthcare innovator is as inspiring as his craft. From modest beginnings, performing magic tricks at school, to earning prestigious recognition for his transformative contributions to education and healthcare, Kevin's story demonstrates the power of passion, perseverance, and purpose in shaping extraordinary achievements. Kevin's fascination with magic ignited at the age of five when he saw a magician on television. This spark grew into a lifelong passion after his parents gifted him a magic set at age nine. Through relentless practice and dedication, Kevin honed his skills, performing for friends, family, and at school events. Magic became more than entertainment—it became a powerful tool for connection and joy. Throughout high school and college, Kevin used his talent to fund his education, turning his passion into a thriving career. His journey from childhood wonder to professional acclaim highlights a remarkable blend of creativity, determination, and a deep commitment to making a difference. At EliteX, we are honored to recognize Dr. Kevin Spencer as our Visionary Illusionist & Educator of the Year, 2024, celebrating his innovative approach to merging magic with therapeutic and educational programs that continue to impact lives around the world.

After graduating college, Kevin and his wife, Cindy, chose to turn their passion for magic into a full-time career. They launched a

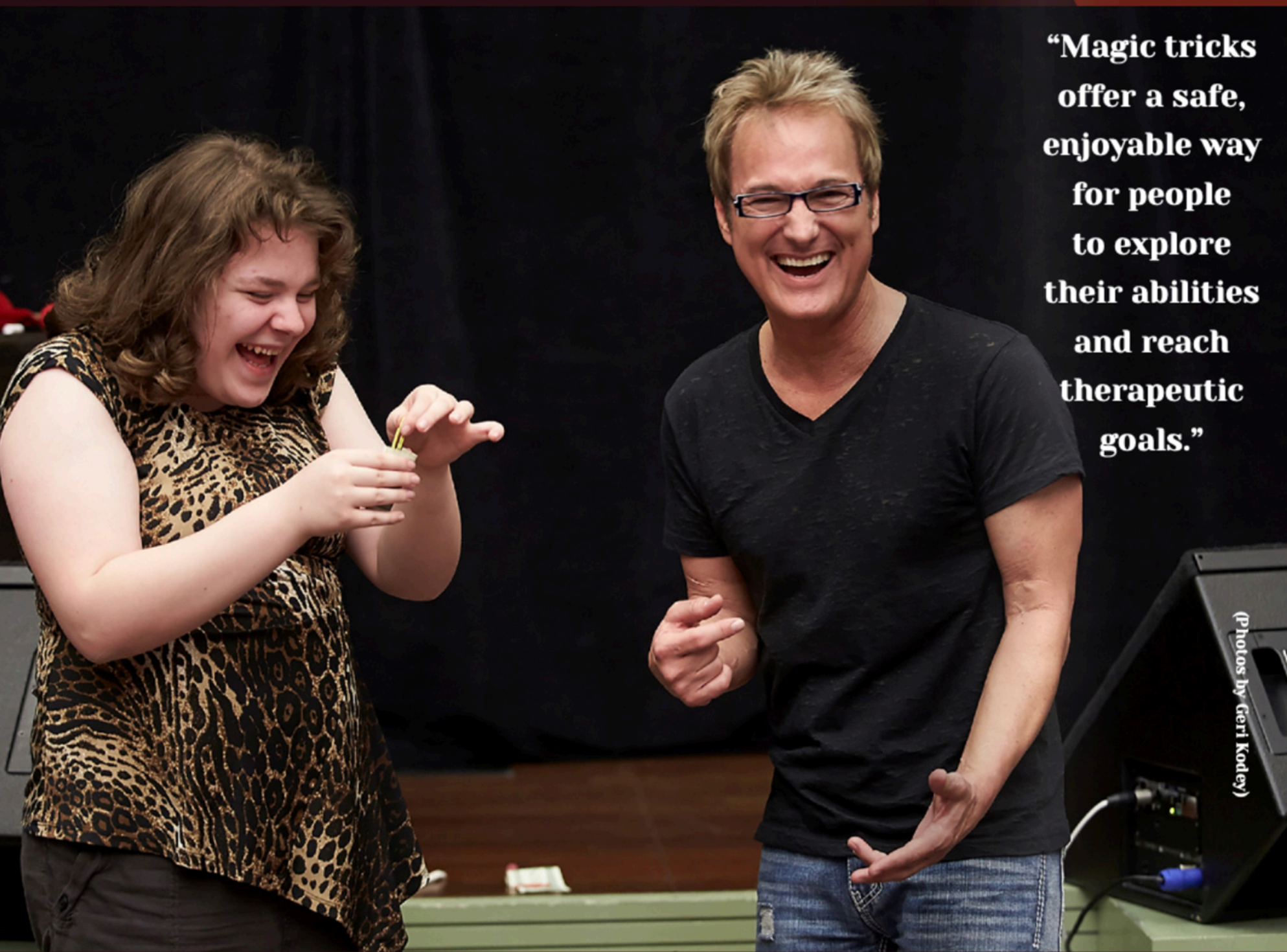
small cabaret-style show tailored for college campuses, where their engaging, interactive performances quickly earned them a loyal following among students. Over more than a decade, they performed at hundreds of campuses nationwide, earning accolades such as Campus Entertainers of the Year, Best Major Production, and Best Variety Artists. The college circuit provided the perfect platform for creativity and growth, allowing Kevin and Cindy to experiment with fresh material, refine grand illusions, and push the boundaries of their art. These experiences laid the foundation for their next venture: Theatre of Illusion. This grand-scale theatrical production introduced their unique brand of magic to the performing arts world, captivating audiences on stages around the globe.

“We are constantly exploring new areas where learning magic tricks can impact the quality of the lives of individuals with disabilities.”

Kevin and Cindy collaborated with some of the most innovative minds in the magic community to keep their performances fresh and captivating. One of their most significant collaborations has been with Jim Steinmeyer, a renowned illusion designer who has created illusions for legendary magicians such as David Copperfield and Doug Henning. Together, they introduced new and original tricks to the stage, including a recreation of Houdini's famous “Walking Through a Brick Wall” illusion—a seamless blend of mystery and theater that left audiences in awe. These



(Photo by Lisa Navlan)



“Magic tricks offer a safe, enjoyable way for people to explore their abilities and reach therapeutic goals.”

collaborations have fueled Kevin's passion for magic, as the introduction of fresh elements enabled him to surprise and inspire his audiences in exciting and unexpected ways.

Kevin and Cindy's dedication and hard work paid off in extraordinary ways. For more than 30 years, they toured internationally, presenting one of the largest theatrical illusion productions in the United States. Their efforts earned them prestigious honors, including being named International Illusionists of the Year in 2009 and recipients of the prestigious Illusionist of the Year awarded The Milbourne Christopher Foundation in 2015. In 2020, Kevin received another notable accolade, being recognized as Agent-Manager of the Year by the North American Performing Arts Managers & Agents (NAPAMA). Despite these remarkable achievements, Kevin's journey took an unexpected and profound turn. Following an accident where his car collided with a tractor-trailer, Kevin sustained a closed brain injury and a lower spinal cord injury. The road to recovery was marked by months of intense rehabilitation and challenges that sometimes tested his resolve. This life-altering experience radically reshaped Kevin's perspective. It fostered a deep empathy for individuals with disabilities and ignited a passion to support others navigating similar struggles, paving the way for his transformative work in therapeutic and educational programs.

Kevin's experience through his rehabilitation journey became the catalyst for Magic Therapy™, an innovative program that uses simple magic tricks as a therapeutic tool. Partnering with occupational therapists, Kevin and Cindy developed techniques that leverage magic to help patients improve cognitive and motor skills. By integrating these engaging activities into therapy sessions, patients not only find the process enjoyable but are also more motivated to achieve their rehabilitation goals. Today, Magic Therapy™ is a widely recognized approach, implemented in thousands of hospitals, clinics, and schools across 20 countries. This creative and impactful method continues to transform traditional therapy, offering patients a unique pathway to recovery and growth.

Backed by research and supported by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), Magic Therapy™ has made significant contributions to rehabilitation, turning it into an enjoyable and rewarding experience for countless individuals. In 2015, Kevin produced the documentary *Powerful Medicine: Simply Magic*, showcasing the transformative impact of magic therapy on two young patients. The film earned 18 international awards, including Best Short Documentary at the Hollywood Short Film Festival,

(Photos by Geri Kodley)

solidifying the program's reputation as a life-changing innovation. Kevin's vision extends beyond healthcare into education. Recognizing the challenges educators face in engaging students with diverse learning needs, he was inspired by the success of Magic Therapy™ to create Hocus Focus™. This groundbreaking educational program uses magic tricks to help students with disabilities develop a wide range of skills and abilities, offering teachers an engaging and effective tool for fostering learning and growth in the classroom.

Hocus Focus™ is designed to enhance students' cognition, motor skills, communication, and social skills through fun, hands-on activities. This arts-themed curriculum allows educators to work with speech language pathologists, psychologists, counselors, and occupational therapists in a collaborative setting to help students achieve specific educational goals. The program's innovative approach earned Kevin the 2022 Silver Anthem Award for "Best Innovation" in Education, Art, and Culture. Each Hocus Focus™ lesson combines magic and learning, creating a unique, interdisciplinary teaching approach that is as enjoyable as it is effective. By teaching students to perform magic tricks, educators can capture their attention, build their confidence, improve memory, and encourage active participation. Kevin believes that magic has the power to break down learning barriers, creating an inclusive environment where students feel empowered and capable.

Today, Kevin is a respected figure in both the education and healthcare sectors, recognized as a 2024 Silver Anthem Award recipient for Nonprofit Leader of the Year in Health. His innovative contributions to education and healthcare have earned him global recognition, including a 2022 finalist nomination for the Zero Project Award, which celebrates advancements for persons with disabilities. Kevin's work as an academic complements his career as a magician and innovator. He holds a teaching role at Harvard Medical Teaching Hospital and Boston Children's

Hospital's "Pediatric Sedation Outside the Operating Room" conference. He's also a research consultant in the University of Alabama's Occupational Therapy Department and UAB's Arts in Medicine program. He is a subject-matter expert for arts integration with special populations for the U.S. Department of State, and an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Education at Carlow University (PA).

“Teach Like a Magician’ uses each letter of ‘magician’ to represent practices that create a strong learning environment.”

Kevin travels the globe, sharing his expertise at conferences and universities, where he highlights the therapeutic and educational benefits of magic tricks. His sensory-inclusive performances make him a pioneer in creating accessible arts experiences for underserved communities, offering individuals with diverse abilities the opportunity to enjoy the wonder of magic in a supportive environment. Kevin's innovative approach to blending magic with therapy and education reflects his deep belief in the transformative power of art. Through programs like Magic Therapy™ and Hocus Focus™, he has positively impacted thousands of lives—from patients on their recovery journeys in hospitals to students developing skills in classrooms. By capturing attention, boosting confidence, and fostering engagement, Kevin has redefined what magic can achieve, proving it to be a powerful tool for growth and change.

Through his innovative programs, Kevin's journey has evolved from performing large-scale illusions on stages around the world to making a real, lasting impact in people's lives. His passion for magic—shaped by his own trials and triumphs—continues to inspire educators, healthcare professionals, and audiences worldwide. Kevin Spencer exemplifies how magic goes



(Photos by Geri Kodey)

beyond entertainment. By harnessing its power to bring joy, healing, and hope, he has redefined what magic can achieve, touching the lives of those who need it most and leaving a legacy of meaningful change.

Kevin Spencer's journey through the world of magic has been marked by extraordinary moments that have shaped both his career and his approach to life and education. As touring artists, he and his wife have performed in countless cities across the United States and mesmerized audiences internationally in Asia and Europe. Each performance brings its own unique experiences, but some moments stand out more than others. One of the most humbling highlights of Kevin's career is stepping onto stages in other countries, performing for sold-out audiences, and witnessing firsthand how the art of illusion transcends cultural and language barriers. This profound experience reinforced

his belief that magic is a universal language—a powerful medium that connects people from diverse backgrounds, uniting them through wonder and shared moments of joy.

Kevin's career took a pivotal turn during a transformative experience that shifted his focus from theatrical performances to a deeper purpose. While performing in South Florida, he was invited to share his expertise in magic therapy with a regional hospital system's rehabilitation team. This opportunity led to a life-changing encounter with a young boy diagnosed with autism. During a therapy session, Kevin introduced the boy to simple magic tricks, guiding him step by step through the process of learning each one. To Kevin's surprise, the boy became fully engaged, asking insightful questions about how to hold the props and perform each move—curiosity and involvement

his father had never witnessed before. After practicing the tricks, the boy walked away beaming with pride, and his father, watching from behind, tearfully shared that he had never seen his son so motivated to speak and engage with anyone.

This moment was a revelation for Kevin, sparking the realization that magic could be a powerful tool for engaging children, particularly those with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Motivated by this insight, Kevin returned to school, earning a Master's in Education followed by a Ph.D. in Special Education, dedicating himself to the integration of magic into therapeutic and educational practices. This journey was the impetus to create Hocus Focus™, a groundbreaking program designed to help students with autism, learning disabilities, and other challenges develop essential skills through the learning and

performance of simple magic tricks. The program focuses on tasks that improve fine motor skills, communication, and critical thinking—allowing students to learn in a fun, engaging way while unlocking their creative potential.

Kevin's approach to magic extends beyond performance; he firmly believes in the crucial role of creativity in education. Citing Pablo Picasso's famous quote, "Every child is an artist," Kevin emphasizes that the real challenge lies in nurturing this creativity as children grow. For Kevin, creativity is essential for the 21st century, fostering vital skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and resilience—attributes that are increasingly valuable in today's world. However, Kevin observes that many education systems prioritize subjects like math and language, often placing the arts in a secondary position. He believes

this hierarchical structure stifles creativity and limits children's ability to explore and develop their natural talents especially those with special education needs.

Kevin advocates for an educational approach that celebrates diversity and creativity, encouraging students to engage in hands-on learning through activities that spark curiosity. He believes that when students are given the freedom to make mistakes and learn through playful exploration, they not only retain information more effectively but also develop essential life skills. This approach aligns with research showing that enjoyable activities enhance brain development, improve memory, and boost social skills. For Kevin, magic serves as an ideal tool for this type of learning. Simple tricks allow students to practice resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving while having fun—offering a refreshing contrast to the fear of failure often present in traditional classroom environments. Kevin firmly believes that every child has the potential to be creative, and magic can be an effective way to unlock that potential. By creating an environment where students feel comfortable experimenting and making mistakes, educators can nurture a love of learning and help students build confidence. This philosophy is at the heart of Hocus Focus™, a program designed to encourage critical thinking and a sense of self-efficacy. As students master and share magic tricks, each accomplishment becomes a small victory that reinforces their belief in their ability to succeed, even in the face of challenges.

“The difficult must become habit. Habit becomes beautiful. Beautiful becomes magic.”

Reflecting on his journey, Kevin Spencer continues to see magic not just as a form of entertainment, but as a tool for positive change. Whether he's performing on stage or working with students, he finds joy in creating

moments of wonder and connection. His story is a testament to the transformative power of creativity, both in his own life and in the lives of those he reaches through his work. By merging his passion for magic with his commitment to education, Kevin is helping a new generation of students discover their strengths and explore their potential—one magic trick at a time.

Through his performances and educational programs, Kevin has shown that magic is not only about mystery, but also about inspiring others to believe in the impossible. In every audience member's gasp of amazement and every student's proud smile after learning a trick, Kevin sees the impact of his work, reminding him why he chose this path. For him, magic is a lifelong journey of learning, connecting, and empowering others, and he's excited to continue sharing his passion for years to come.

Spencer believe his journey is more than just a career—it's a calling. Through his innovative approaches, he is transforming both education and healthcare by harnessing the power of magic and illusion. His groundbreaking programs, Hocus Focus™ and Magic Therapy™, are creating new opportunities for individuals with disabilities to learn, grow, and thrive. These programs are designed with flexibility in mind, allowing therapists and educators to customize each lesson or performance to meet the unique needs of their learners. This personalized approach not only supports academic development but also fosters emotional resilience, social skills, and confidence. Spencer understands that every learner is unique, with distinct strengths, challenges, and learning styles. In response, he has crafted his programs to be adaptable. Each magic trick can be adjusted in complexity, giving educators and therapists the flexibility to simplify or increase difficulty as needed. This ensures that every student can progress at their own pace, building self-confidence as they master each step along the way.



Magic, as Spencer explains, isn't only about tricks—it's about building skills. Tricks within his programs are designed to develop a wide range of abilities, from fine motor skills to problem-solving and vocabulary. For instance, in his recent collaboration with QuaverEd, Spencer developed ten instructional videos that use magic tricks to teach social-emotional learning concepts to students. These videos cover topics like resilience, growth mindset, perspective-taking, and handling criticism. By engaging students in such hands-on activities, he helps them learn skills that go beyond academics, helping them better understand and manage their emotions, collaborate with others, and build positive relationships.

Magic tricks aren't just entertainment—they're powerful tools for teaching complex concepts in a simple and engaging way. Spencer recalls how one of his favorite tricks, "The Linking Paper Clips," can be used and adapted in exciting ways by both patients in rehabilitation and students in the classroom. By linking two paper clips in a surprising way, individuals not only improve their motor skills but also engage in problem-solving, visual motor integration, collaboration, and critical thinking. This trick also introduces physics concepts like friction, motion, and energy, making it a versatile tool for both younger and more advanced learners. The trick, which can be adapted for various levels, helps students develop their vocabulary and writing skills as they narrate a story that matches the sequence of the trick. For older students, the trick can be dissected to reveal multiple physics vocabulary words and formulas. This approach of embedding academic content within a magic trick creates a memorable and meaningful learning experience that traditional classroom methods often fail to achieve.

"Magic tricks enhance social-emotional skills, helping children manage emotions and build relationships."

For those interested in following in his footsteps, Spencer's advice is simple: get in touch and start experimenting with creativity. His programs are available to anyone who wishes to integrate magic into education and therapy. By sharing his resources and supporting those curious about this approach, Spencer hopes to inspire a new generation of educators and therapists who will bring magic into classrooms and healthcare settings worldwide. He also encourages educators to think creatively and push the boundaries of traditional teaching. By using magic as a teaching tool, educators can engage students in ways that make learning enjoyable and impactful. Spencer's work demonstrates that when learning is fun, students are more likely to be engaged and retain information.

The integration of magic into education and healthcare is not just a trend—it's a growing field supported by research. Spencer has collaborated with academic and medical researchers worldwide to validate the impact of magic on learning and therapy. Since 2018, he has co-published numerous studies demonstrating how magic tricks can serve as active therapeutic interventions, supporting physical, cognitive, and social skills development. One of Spencer's popular professional development programs, *Teach Like a Magician*, emphasizes how educators can create an engaging and supportive environment for students. In this program, he uses "magician" as an acronym for research-based practices essential for effective teaching. Educators learn not only the tricks but also how to apply these practices to foster an environment where students feel motivated and excited to learn.

Spencer's work takes him around the world, where he has the privilege of seeing firsthand how his programs transform lives. From the joy on children's faces as they master a new trick to the gratitude expressed by therapists witnessing tangible progress in their clients, these moments fuel Spencer's passion and dedication to his work. He spends the majority of his time working directly with children, adolescents, and adults with

disabilities. The pride they feel in learning a magic trick they can perform for others speaks volumes about the success of his programs. Witnessing this kind of progress motivates him to continue innovating, researching, and sharing his work with as many people as possible. The impact of learning and performing magic tricks is undeniable: it boosts self-esteem, fosters resilience, and encourages individuals to keep learning and growing long after the therapy session or classroom experience has ended.

A key influence on Spencer's early career was Doug Henning, a magician who believed in the power of combining magic and theater to create art. Henning's philosophy, "Magic + Theatre = Art," inspired Kevin and his wife to create their theatrical production of grand illusion. But Henning also taught Spencer the value of breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps—a method Spencer now incorporates into his programs for individuals with disabilities. Henning's guiding principle, "The difficult must become habit. Habit becomes beautiful. Beautiful becomes magic," shapes Spencer's approach to teaching new skills. Whether it's learning a magic trick or mastering a life skill, Spencer believes that each task can be mastered through repetition, refinement, and practice. This philosophy reflects Spencer's mission to use magic to help individuals overcome obstacles, develop new abilities, and ultimately experience success in a way that feels truly magical.

Spencer's future plans are both ambitious and exciting. Spencer is currently exploring potential collaborations in The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore, where educators and healthcare professionals—many of whom are amateur magicians—are eager to integrate magic into their therapeutic work. Beyond expanding geographically, Spencer is actively researching new ways magic can support improving the lives of people with disabilities and histories of trauma. He is investigating its potential as a pediatric sedation technique and as a tool for

reducing anxiety in dental patients. These emerging applications highlight the growing impact of magic in healthcare, and Spencer believes its potential is just beginning to be realized.

Spencer is also completing a book titled *Teach Like a Magician*, a resource for educators who want to use magic in their classrooms. This book will provide tools, tips, and strategies for incorporating magic-based activities that engage students, enhance learning, and make classrooms more enjoyable spaces for growth.

"Each trick in Hocus Focus™ and Magic Therapy™ programs can be scaled to fit each student's strengths."

Dr. Kevin Spencer's work demonstrates the power of magic not just as entertainment, but as a transformative tool in both education and healthcare. His programs bring joy, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment to individuals facing physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges. Through his innovative approach, Spencer shows that learning doesn't have to be rigid—it can be flexible, engaging, and, above all, magical. Spencer's journey is a testament to how a single idea—using magic to inspire learning and growth—can change lives. As he continues to expand his work globally, he's introducing the joy of magic to new audiences, helping individuals build confidence and achieve mastery in areas they never thought possible. His commitment to blending magic with education and therapy is opening new doors for students and patients around the world, paving the way for a future where magic and learning are seamlessly integrated, creating boundless opportunities for growth and discovery.


Dr. Kevin Spencer
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