



Dr. Kevin Spencer
Artist | Speaker | Author | Scholar

Evidence-Based. Wonder-Driven. Human-Centered.

Kevin Spencer, Ph.D., is an award-winning performing artist, author, educator, and researcher whose groundbreaking career spans theatrical performance, special education, and therapeutic intervention. For over 35 years, Spencer and his wife, Cindy, captivated audiences worldwide with one of the largest and most acclaimed theatrical illusion productions in the United States. Their exceptional contributions to the art of magic earned them numerous accolades, including *International Illusionist of the Year* in 2009, six *Performing Arts Entertainer of the Year* awards, and the prestigious 2015 *International Illusionists of the Year* award from the Milbourne Christopher Foundation for their significant contributions to the field.

At the peak of his performance success, Dr. Spencer made a profound career transition, shifting from grand theatrical stages to classrooms, hospitals, and community centers worldwide. Today, he is recognized as the leading international authority on the educational and therapeutic applications of magic-based interventions. His innovative work focuses on using carefully designed magic tricks to empower individuals with autism spectrum disorder, developmental disabilities, intellectual challenges, emotional regulation difficulties, and trauma backgrounds. This unique methodology, known as Magic Therapy®, represents a paradigm shift in how performing arts can serve therapeutic and educational goals while maintaining artistic excellence and entertainment value.

Dr. Spencer's academic credentials reflect his commitment to evidence-based practice. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, a Master's in Arts and Interdisciplinary Academic Education, and a Ph.D. in Education with proficiency in Special Education. He also maintains professional certifications in Neuropsychology, Neuroscience, Autism Studies, Neurodiversity Mental Health, First Responder Treatment, and Trauma Support Specialist. This rigorous academic foundation enables him to bridge the gap between artistic practice and clinical application, ensuring that his interventions meet both therapeutic standards and performance-quality expectations.

His research has significantly advanced understanding of how magic-based interventions affect cognitive, motor, and psychosocial development. Dr. Spencer's work has been published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals, including the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* (AJOT), *Health Psychology Research*, and the *Journal of Learning Through the Arts* (JLTA). His innovative approaches have garnered attention from major media outlets, with features in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), The Washington Post, Taipei Times, and Chicago Tribune. He has appeared on prominent television programs, including the *CBS Early Show*, *Fox & Friends*, and international broadcasts such as *CNN Türk* and *Saba Tümer* in Türkiye, bringing visibility to therapeutic applications of performing arts.



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Recognition for Dr. Spencer's pioneering work continues to grow within both artistic and healthcare communities. He was called "The Kid Whisperer" in the publication *Inside Autism* (2013), acknowledging his unique ability to connect with and motivate children who struggle with conventional therapeutic approaches. His recent honors include being named the 2026 *Alternative Educator of the Year* by the UK's Corporate LiveWire, the 2024 *Visionary Educator of the Year* by ELITEX Magazine, and receiving the 2025 *Gold Anthem Award* and 2025 *Most Innovative and Inclusive Arts Award* for his work in sensory inclusivity in the performing arts. He also received the 2024 Silver Anthem Award for *Nonprofit Leader of the Year* in Health. His therapeutic program, Magic Therapy, won the 2023 Gold Anthem Award for *Best Innovation in Health*, and his educational program, Hocus Focus, received the 2022 Silver Anthem Award for *Best Innovation in Education, Arts, and Culture*. Spencer also earned the Gold Anthem Award for *Leader of the Year*. He was a 2022 finalist for the *Zero Project Award*, an international distinction that celebrates pioneering initiatives benefiting persons with disabilities and promoting implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Dr. Spencer holds several prestigious academic and advisory positions that reflect his expertise at the intersection of medicine, education, and performing arts. He participates in the Pediatric Sedation Outside the Operating Room conference, sponsored by Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital, where he trains medical professionals in patient engagement and therapeutic alliance-building. He serves as an Associate Professor by Special Appointment in the School of Health Professions, Department of Occupational Therapy, at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), and as a Research Consultant with UAB's Arts in Medicine program, integrating creative interventions into healthcare settings. Additionally, Dr. Spencer is part of the Speakers Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, serving as a subject matter expert on arts integration for special populations and bringing his expertise to international cultural diplomacy initiatives. He maintains approval as a Continuing Education Provider for the American Occupational Therapy Association, ensuring his training programs meet professional standards for licensed therapists.

The American Occupational Therapy Association has formally recognized Dr. Spencer's Magic Therapy® approach as an evidence-based intervention. This distinction requires rigorous peer review, measurable outcomes, and replicable protocols. This approval enables occupational therapists nationwide to incorporate magic-based activities into treatment plans with insurance reimbursement eligibility, significantly expanding access to these innovative interventions.



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As a prolific author, Dr. Spencer has published multiple books that make his methodology accessible to diverse audiences. His 2024-2025 publications include professional guides for educators and therapists, children's literature that introduces therapeutic concepts through engaging narratives, and comprehensive implementation manuals. His children's book, *The Fantastic Four Magic Club*, ranked #1 on Amazon in its category for over three weeks, demonstrating broad appeal beyond professional audiences. His academic text, *A Practical Guide to Sensory Inclusivity in the Performing Arts*, has become essential reading for artists, agents, managers, arts administrators, theater managers, and performance venues seeking to welcome neurodivergent audiences. In 2025, Routledge published his educational methodology book, *Teach Like a Magician*, bringing his approach into mainstream pedagogy discussions. In 2026, Routledge published *Using Magic Tricks in Occupational Therapy: Performance, Play, and Purpose*.

Dr. Spencer maintains extensive partnerships with major American performing arts institutions, serving as artist-in-residence and consultant to venues including The Smith Center for the Performing Arts in Las Vegas, Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville, The Lensic Performing Arts Center in Santa Fe, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, and Flint Institute of Music in Michigan. These long-term relationships, some spanning over a decade, demonstrate sustained institutional commitment to his sensory-inclusive performance model and Magic Therapy® training programs.

His humanitarian work extends his mission globally. Through *Project Clean Water Africa*, Dr. Spencer leads clean-water initiatives across Uganda, demonstrating how his methodology can support community development and improve healthcare access in under-resourced international settings. This work reflects his commitment to applying his expertise where need is greatest, not merely where resources are most abundant.

Dr. Spencer's impact reaches thousands of individuals annually through multiple delivery channels. He provides sensory-inclusive performances designed to welcome audiences with autism, sensory processing differences, and other disabilities, creating theatrical experiences where stimming, vocal expression, movement, and sensory breaks are normalized rather than stigmatized. He conducts professional development training for special educators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, Child Life Specialists, and performing arts professionals, building capacity for magic-based interventions across disciplines and institutions. He delivers keynote addresses and academic lectures at conferences, universities, and medical centers worldwide, advancing theoretical understanding of how



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performing arts can serve therapeutic goals. He consults with school districts, healthcare systems, and cultural institutions seeking to implement evidence-based arts integration programs.

His work has directly impacted curriculum development in graduate programs, training the next generation of occupational therapists, physical therapists, and special educators. Students in these programs learn to view magic tricks not as entertainment but as carefully designed activities that simultaneously address motor planning, bilateral coordination, executive function, social cognition, and intrinsic motivation—capabilities that translate across therapeutic contexts.

As both scholar and artist, Dr. Spencer embodies the principle that rigorous research and joyful artistic expression are complementary, not competing, values. His performances delight audiences while his research quantifies impact. His academic publications advance theory, while his training workshops provide practical tools for implementation. His institutional partnerships build sustainable programs while his direct service creates immediate transformation for individuals who discover capabilities they didn't know they possessed.

Dr. Spencer's vision continues to expand the boundaries of what performing arts can accomplish in the service of human development, community inclusion, and therapeutic intervention. His work demonstrates that accessibility enhances, rather than compromises, artistic quality; that evidence-based practice can coexist with wonder and delight; and that magic—both literal and metaphorical—remains one of humanity's most powerful tools for connection, growth, and transformation.

Through decades of dedicated work, Dr. Kevin Spencer has established an enduring legacy: proving that when we design cultural experiences to welcome everyone, we create something more powerful than accommodation. We create belonging. And in that belonging, extraordinary things become possible.