

Avani Mehta

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[Unlock Your Mind – A story from Houdini’s Life](#)

Category: [Very Short Stories](#)

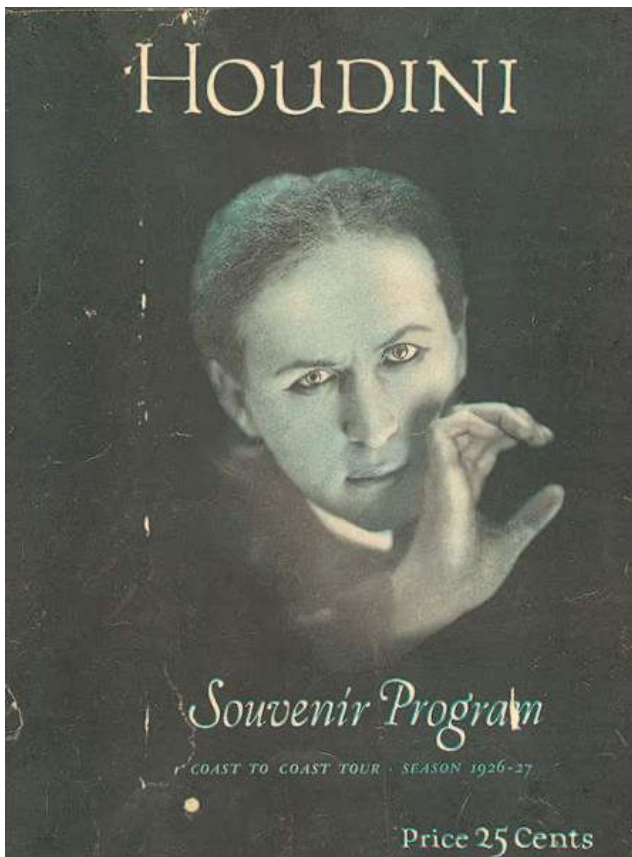


Photo Courtesy [Wikipedia](#)

I’m sure you’ve all heard of the great illusionist of yesteryear – **Harry Houdini**. Houdini was a master magician as well as a fabulous locksmith. Houdini was probably the most famous escape artist in the world. I read an interesting incident from his life this week. I’m not sure if the story I’m about to share with you is part of his legend or part of his history, but it surely is fascinating.

Houdini was very confident in his talents. He claimed that he could escape from any Jail cell in the World in less than an hour, provided he could go into the cell dressed in street clothes. And every time he was given this challenge, he accepted and did just as he promised. He was left alone in a locked cell and in a few short minutes he would miraculously escape.

But one time things didn’t go as Houdini planned...

A small town in the British Isles built a new jail cell and they were proud of it. “Come give us a try,” they said to Houdini, and he agreed.

He walked into the prison cell bristling with confidence. After all, he had done this hundreds of times before. Houdini hid inside his belt a special lock pick he had designed. Once the jail cell was closed, Houdini took off his coat, and set to work with his lock pick. But he discovered that something was unusual about this

particular lock.

For 30 minutes he worked and got nowhere. And his confident expression disappeared.

An hour passed, and still he had not been able to open the door. By now he was bathed in sweat and panting in exasperation, but he still could not pick the lock. He tried all the tricks of his trade but nothing worked.

After two hours and totally exhausted, Houdini literally collapsed against the door. The door swung open and he discovered it it had not been locked in the first place! It was locked only to him in his mind.

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Reader's Comments

[21](#)



1. [Cath Lawson](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 5:46 pm

Hi Avani – That is really interesting. I wonder what made the challenge more difficult for Houdini? Was it just because his own confidence had diminished because the door was more difficult to open than others he'd opened easily?

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2. [Evelyn Lim](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 9:32 pm

Hahahaha...this is such an interesting story! It just shows how our mind can be self limiting. It creates its own locks!

Love it. Submitted for Digg and SU.

Thanks!
Evelyn

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3. [Ari Koinuma](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 9:33 pm

A great story, and really illustrative of what we do to ourselves. I interpret this more as a state of closed mind — not being able to “think outside the box” (pan intended) — rather than that of over-confidence. Or perhaps his over-confidence caused it? I’d think that he has reasons to believe in his ability.

ari

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4. [Marelisa](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 9:58 pm

What an interesting story! I guess it’s saying to drop assumptions and prejudgments and accept each moment as being new and unique, as well as the importance of awareness.

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5. [Sara at On Simplicity](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 10:34 pm

Ha! That’s so cool. Sometimes it’s worth asking what the easiest possible solution would be, and giving it a try. Like Marelisa noted, so many of our actions are colored by assumptions—too many.

Sara at On Simplicity’s last blog post..[Tim Gunn: A Perfect Model for the Fabulously Simple](#)

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6. [Bamboo Forest](#) | July 24th, 2008 at 11:21 pm

I suppose, if we make certain assumptions from the outset – our mind is closed and imprisoned.

It can be wise not to jump to conclusions when seeking solutions.

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7. [Nivas](#) | July 25th, 2008 at 1:09 am

Hahaha...good one avani....
Human mind’s Beliefs is limitless...

Nivas’s last blog post..[Hey! In Life do you ‘.....’ or ‘.....’ pain ?](#)

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8. [Linda Abbit](#) | July 25th, 2008 at 2:36 am

Cool story, Avani! My husband is a comedy entertainer, and his act includes magic. I’ll have to ask him if he’s heard this story before.

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9. [Elio Galluzzi](#) | July 25th, 2008 at 2:35 pm

The story is funny, I love it:) The implications are important. For him the door was locked because he did not rely on any other possibility. These are the tricks our mind likes to play with us. There is always another possibility, another aspect of reality. We have just to find it.

Elio

Elio Galluzzi's last blog post..[Hope, hopefully... I hope](#)

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10. [Laurie | Express Yourself to Success](#) | July 25th, 2008 at 9:54 pm

It's amazing, our self-imposed limitations. I'm glad he managed to get out this way and teach us all a valuable lesson. Great story.

Laurie | Express Yourself to Success's last blog post..[The Unsung Social Skill](#)

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11. [Barbara Swafford](#) | July 26th, 2008 at 4:16 am

Hi Avani,

Ahhhh, the power of our minds. Great story.

Barbara Swafford's last blog post..[Free 'n Easy Friday Finds – Blog Protection](#)

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12. [Shilpan | successsoul.com](#) | July 27th, 2008 at 12:09 am

Avani –

This is very inspirational. It's teaching us a lesson that even great people can be the victim of their own limiting thoughts. The great magician was not an exception in this story.

Shilpan

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13. [paresh](#) | August 3rd, 2008 at 2:17 am

Avani, again great post, keep it up.

paresh's last blog post..[Soniya got Bronze Medal in World school chess competition.](#)

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14.  [Glen Allsopp](#) | August 6th, 2008 at 5:00 pm

Such a cool story Avani, thanks for sharing. Although I'm surprised he hadn't noticed it was open as he must have been pushing to test if he had unlocked it?

Anyways, thanks again!

Cheers,
Glen

Glen Allsopp's last blog post..[Beginner's Guide to Meditation](#)

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15.  [niyati](#) | August 17th, 2008 at 1:47 am

really nice n helps toknw hw jus wid a mental blockage towards sumthin people fail to accomplish the task!! nice one!! really lookin forward to more n more articles!! til thn al da best!!

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16.  [Tom Volkar / Delightful Work](#) | September 19th, 2008 at 7:19 am

This is a good story. I hadn't heard it before. Earl Nightingale used to tell a similar one about a guy who got locked in a freezer railroad car and froze to death. Yet in the morning when they discovered his body they found that the refrigeration wasn't set to freeze and he could have easily survived if his mind hadn't believed he was freezing.

Tom Volkar / Delightful Work's last blog post..[Finding Your Business Sweet Spot](#)

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17.  [ru4real?](#) | November 24th, 2008 at 8:10 am

Very good insight! It is so true, isn't it, that we often have preconceived ideas that are not based on reality. I think it is a good habit to ask ourselves WHY we believe something, and if we don't know the answer, it's time to do a little research.

ru4real?'s last blog post..[7 Super Helpful Bible Study Tools](#)

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18.  [Page Sec1](#) | September 3rd, 2009 at 8:13 am

what an amazing story !

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19. [Tyler Prete](#) | March 25th, 2010 at 11:13 am

I like the story for its message, but I'd be willing to bet a lot that this is more legend than fact.

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20. [les @ do magic tricks](#) | January 24th, 2011 at 4:35 am

Thanks for the great post about Harry Houdini. This book sounds pretty interesting and I think I will be picking it up. I'm looking forward to reading a lot more of your site in the future.

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1. [On Simplicity » Blog Archive » Weekly Links: Dog Hair Edition](#) says:
[July 31, 2008 at 5:00 am](#)

[...] Avani Mehta reminds us that the solutions to some of life's most challenging problems can be right in front of us. Of course, she finds an interesting way to get us there, with a story about Harry Houdini. [...]

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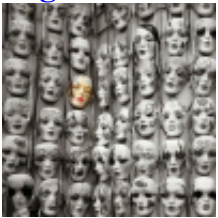


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[I Am The Power](#)



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I am going on ...

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[Leap & Fly ...](#)



So leap in, jump in ... go achieve your dream. And have faith that you will figure things out along the way. Have faith that when you jump, wings will appear. And where there are no wings, you will be their creator. But wings you will have. And so as long as you don't let go of your dream ... you will reach there.

[Grid Focus](#) by Derek Punsalan [5thirtyone.com](#)