

Speak Ericksonian

**MASTERING THE
HYPNOTIC METHODS OF
MILTON ERICKSON**

Dr. Richard K. Nongard
and James Hazlerig, M.A.

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Editorial Note: This book began its life as a series of lectures delivered by Dr. Nongard; the second author's role was primarily to organize and collate Dr. Nongard's wisdom into its current form. For clarity's sake, the "I" in this text is Dr. Nongard's voice. During the lectures, he occasionally credited his colleague James Hazlerig with certain ideas, referring to the second author in the third person. We have maintained that conceit throughout the text, even for passages contributed by the second author.

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Getting Started

Chapter One

Introduction to Ericksonian Hypnotherapy

Who was Milton Erickson?

He was, of course, a psychiatrist who specialized in treating medical conditions utilizing medical hypnosis, and he was also known for his work in family therapy. Unlike earlier thinkers, who viewed the unconscious mind as a dark place filled with mysterious neuroses and crippling complexes, Erickson saw the unconscious mind as being infinitely intelligent, a reservoir of solutions and creativity.

Many of Milton Erickson's ideas about the power of the mind actually came out of his own experiences, having survived polio at age seventeen. The Milton Erickson Foundation website has this to say on the topic:

At age 17, [Milton Erickson] contracted polio and was so severely paralyzed that doctors believed he would die. While recovering in bed, almost entirely lame and unable to speak, he became strongly aware of the significance of nonverbal communication—body language, tone of voice, and the way that these nonverbal expressions often directly contradicted the verbal ones. He also began to have “body memories” of the muscular activity of his own body. By concentrating on these memories, he slowly began to regain control of parts of his body to the point where he was eventually able to talk and use his arms again. His doctor recommended exercising his upper body only, so Milton Erickson planned a 1,000 miles canoe trip to build up the strength to attend college. His adventure was challenging, and although he still

did not have the full use of his legs at the end, he was able to walk with a cane.

Without a doubt, his own personal experiences in using the power of his mind to recover from the tragic medical condition of polio certainly became an experiential base of knowledge for him to develop the techniques of solid clinical hypnotherapy to help a wide variety of medical clients.

The Influence of Milton Erickson

As perhaps the most widely studied hypnotist in the world, Erickson's influence extends far beyond medical hypnosis and family therapy. We can see his influence, particularly in language structure, in the cadence of hypnotherapy, and in the physical proximity of therapist to client, in almost every approach to hypnosis, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and contextual psychology.

In fact, even in Regression Hypnotherapy, which is a definitely non-Ericksonian school of thought, many practitioners nonetheless use the language patterns or the techniques of Milton Erickson. Almost everybody who practices hypnosis today—and I would include stage hypnotists in this, even though Erickson opposed stage hypnosis—have been profoundly influenced by Milton Erickson's work.

The Ericksonian Approach

To really understand Ericksonian hypnotic techniques, it's important to put his approach in context by contrasting it to other hypnotic approaches. Broadly speaking, there are three primary approaches to hypnosis.

The first is the Authoritarian Approach, which is predicated on the hypnotist "doing something to somebody." For example, most stage hypnosis (and most hypnosis portrayed in fiction) presents the illusion of the all-powerful Svengali character controlling another person's will. In truth, that's more theatre or drama or social compliance than anything else. Up until Milton Erickson's time, many hypnotists used primarily an Authoritarian Approach. They might have not been abusive about it, but they simply told the person what to do: "And now, I will count backwards from one to three, and when I do, you will go into trance: One—close your eyes. Two—relax further. Three—drift deep into trance." That is really an Authoritarian Approach: The hypnotist tells somebody what they will do, expecting that response. The Authoritarian Approach some-

times relies on the presupposition that there is something special, almost magical, about the hypnotist that allows him to dominate the will of others.

Whereas the Authoritarian Approach is predicated on the hypnotist doing something to someone, the Standardized Approach is predicated on whether or not the subject is suggestible. The Standardized Approach was developed in the early twentieth century by researchers who were trying to determine how suggestible their research subjects were. In order to eliminate variables that could skew results, inductions and hypnotic language were standardized; indeed, they were often recorded or read verbatim, usually in a monotone by an untrained graduate student reading in a monotone. Even though the Standardized Approach was never meant for therapy, a number of practitioners have tried to apply it in the office, even turning away clients who did not respond to a standardized induction and suggestions. The Standardized Approach, while important for research, has led to the misconception that only some people can benefit from hypnosis, as it is predicated on the subject responding to certain standardized language.

In contrast, Stephen Gilligan calls Ericksonian Hypnosis the “Co-operation Approach” because in an Ericksonian model of hypnosis, the hypnotist and the subject are really considered a community rather than being autonomous from one another. Each changes the other. This is part of the transformational process of hypnotherapy. In the Co-operation Approach, the hypnotist and the client are working together toward a common goal, and the hypnotist is adapting language, techniques, tonality, and many other factors to the individual needs of the client.

The Hallmarks of Ericksonian Hypnosis

- **Context: Clinical Therapy**

In his book *Therapeutic Trances*, Stephen Gilligan actually summarizes the foundation of the Ericksonian Approach this way: “Its context is clinical therapy. Milton Erickson was a physician who healed people.”

Now, I recognize there are a lot of people selling Ericksonian hypnosis courses on the Internet so that you can control women, start your own cult, or dominate the world. Milton Erickson’s focus was on helping people to get better. As a physician, he treated medical illnesses. As a family therapist, he treated relationships and their meaning to the individual. So the context of this

book is clinical therapy: learning Ericksonian techniques so that we can help people to actually get better.

- **Intent: Present Opportunities for Transformational Change**

I love the term “Transformational Change.” It doesn’t simply indicate a change in beliefs, behaviors, outlook, or some other temporary condition. Transformational Change really is about changing the core of who a person is. It’s really about putting the old away and stepping into a new self-identity. Stephen Gilligan summarizes the Ericksonian Approach with the words, “This is an opportunity.”

The first real learning in this book as far as technique goes is to recognize that every time we have a client in our office, we actually have an opportunity that we’re helping them with. And when we recognize that opportunity is what we are helping people to achieve, it really makes the process of working with clients a joy.

I notice a lot of new hypnotists sometimes post on HypnoThoughts.com or my forum at ICBCH.com: “Hey, I’ve never hypnotized anybody before. This is scary. I have my first client coming in.” I think that when we recognize that that first client is an opportunity, it really takes the pressure off. And that is true for the experienced hypnotists as well.

- **Focal Point: Cooperative Relationship**

Gilligan told us the focal point of an Ericksonian Hypnosis process is a cooperative relationship. We are with our client. We’re not doing something *to* them, and we’re not doing something *for* them. This is why it’s so transformational. We’re doing something *with* them. We’re functioning as their coach, an ally.

- **Type of Hypnotic Communication: Flexible, Adaptive to Client**

Ericksonian hypnotic communication, according to Gilligan, is a flexible communication that’s adaptive to the client and the client’s particular needs. Though many have studied, analyzed, and copied Erickson’s methods, it’s often said that Erickson had no single therapy; instead, he invented a new therapy for every client.

- **Task of the Subject: Intimacy with a Safe Interpersonal Context**

What’s the task of the subject (the client) in Ericksonian Hypnosis? It is intimacy to explore within a safe interpersonal context opportunities for trans-

formational change and solutions as they are offered by the hypnotist. In other words, the hypnotist presents opportunities, options for improvement, and it is up to the client to explore possibilities that will initiate that change.

- **Length of Induction: 30-60 Minutes**

Now, back in 2006, I teamed up with John Cerbone to create a set of DVDs called *Speed Trance*. As stage hypnotists, we wanted to show off our skills in rapid and instant induction. However, that is not what Ericksonian hypnosis is about.

Milton Erickson was not known for rapid inductions. In fact, according to Gilligan, the typical length of his induction is thirty to sixty minutes. Some people in the modern era would say, “Oh my goodness, that’s ridiculous. Why not just do a rapid induction and get on with it?” The reason why is because if you’re a good hypnotist, the induction is as important as any other part of the hypnosis session. The induction in Ericksonian Hypnotherapy is not something we get through so that we can get to the good stuff. It actually is the good stuff.

In fact, nine times out of ten, when I engage my clients in the ritual we call hypnosis, I’m actually done with the work of change. Hypnosis becomes merely the ritual to ratify the change which is already taking place.

A lot of people are curious about the idea of Conversational Hypnosis. Milton Erickson’s thirty to sixty minute induction process was not to get somebody to a point of hypnosis; it was about using those conversations, that “pre-talk” as some people refer to it, to present opportunities and choices for transformational change, so the work was often already done.

- **Response to “Resistance”: Therapist Adapts to Client**

According to Gilligan, the best response to a “non-hypnotic response” by the client is for the therapist to adapt the client’s patterns.

I get these questions from new hypnotists all the time: What if the client doesn’t close their eyes? What if the client opens their eyes? What if the client coughs or isn’t in a deep level of trance? Or what if the client moves around or fidgets? Students ask because there’s an expectation that I will be able to teach them how to get the client to stop doing these “non-hypnotic” things.

In Erickson’s approach, the therapist actually has to adapt to the client’s patterns. So an Ericksonian therapist is going to understand how to utilize those activities rather than being frustrated. It’s a matter of going with the client rather than trying to change the client.

- **Major Data of Interest: Client's Internal Experience and Subsequent Behavior Change**

According to Gilligan, the most important information to the Ericksonian hypnotist is the client's internal experience and the subsequent behavior changes that take place. This is a really important distinction.

The Behaviorists ignored internal experience because it could not be measured objectively. Ericksonian approaches recognize that internal experience shapes external behavior.

Sigmund Freud considered the past to be the major data of interest. In Ericksonian Hypnotherapy, it's the current experience that matters. The only experience we have is that which is right now occurring. Freudian therapy is past-tense therapy; Ericksonian therapy is present-tense.

Other Distinctions of Ericksonian Hypnosis

In his book *Therapeutic Trances*, Gilligan summarizes some other differences between an Ericksonian approach and other approaches to hypnosis.

First, in an Ericksonian approach, the uniqueness of each client is celebrated. No two clients are the same. No two processes work with everybody the exact same way, and everybody has unique needs.

The second difference is that Ericksonian Hypnosis is an experiential process of communicating ideas. Really, those who learn Ericksonian Hypnosis are becoming experts at communicating experiential processes with other people. This is one of the reasons I love Ericksonian Hypnosis. It's really about experience.

Third, Gilligan points out that Milton Erickson, in his approach to hypnosis and creating co-operation, believed that each person has within them generative resources. That was certainly true of Milton Erickson when he had polio. Medicine at that point wasn't really able to do much for him. In fact, he was written off as mostly likely not going to be able to survive, much less recover the use of his body. But Milton Erickson looked within himself, within the power of his own mind, to utilize those muscle memories so that he could begin his own process of physical as well as mental and spiritual healing.

Fourth, trance in Ericksonian Hypnosis potentiates resources. The focused concentration or the heightened awareness in a hypnotic state draws our attention to things that we otherwise would miss because of the business of our

experiences outside of the trance state. And trance itself is a useful state. So often I meet new hypnotists who think that it's their words that are important in the process of change. The worry, "What if I get the word wrong or what if I say something wrong?" Really, Milton Erickson's position was that trance itself was far more valuable than the hypnotist's words.

Fifth, Gilligan points out that Ericksonian Hypnosis views trance as a naturalistic state, something that occurs in everyday life. I've often said that the real issue for the hypnotist is not 'How do I hypnotize somebody?' but 'How do I utilize the naturally occurring trance states that we're always in?' I've said we have our parenting trance, our teaching trance, our relaxing or watching TV trance, our paying attention trance, our praying trance, even our golfing trance. Whatever it is that you do in life is a form of trance. The real question is not 'How do I hypnotize somebody?' The real question is 'How do I utilize the naturally occurring trance phenomena that my clients present to me in the office?'

Sixth, Ericksonian Hypnosis also differs from other approaches in that Ericksonian approaches are really oriented to life course alignment rather than to a perspective of error correction. We're not really trying to fix what's wrong. In fact, one of the presuppositions of NLP, which was heavily influenced by Erickson, is that there is no such thing as failure, only feedback. Those words are usually attributed to Gregory Bateson, but really, they are at the foundation to Ericksonian approaches as well. Erickson approached the problem of life course alignment as the task of hypnosis rather than error-correcting a person's life.

Stephen Gilligan sums it up this way: "Erickson focused on achieving the goals of needs of the present self; not in understanding the past." It was Sigmund Freud's idea that we have to go back into the past in order to find some sort of initial sensitizing event so that today will be okay. Milton Erickson really focused on achieving goals and needs of the present self without understanding the past.

Gilligan goes on to say: "According to Erickson, problems are a deviation from the natural biological course of personal evolution. Problems are a secondary aspect of development. Solutions (growth), that's the primary aspect of development, and what we focus on." In other words, Milton Erickson's work really is a solution-oriented approach.

Seventh, Gilligan sees Ericksonian Hypnosis as different from other forms of hypnotherapy in that Erickson recognized that a person's uniqueness could

be appreciated in many different ways. Gilligan actually gives us four different ways:

- the Deep Self
- the Unconscious Mind
- the Conscious Mind
- the Contents of Consciousness

The Deep Mind is the essence of what a person is, their spiritual self—who they are at their deepest, most core level.

Then of course, we can understand and appreciate people at the level of the Unconscious Mind. And the Unconscious Mind of course keeps us alive and protects us. This is the part of the mind at the base of the brain that controls breathing, heart rate, blood flow, digestion, the immune system. This is where the fight or flight response lives. This is the unconscious mind that tells us that we're hungry. It helps keep us alive and really helps protect us.

Now, a lot of people think the Unconscious Mind isn't something that can change, but the Russian psychologist Pavlov--remember Pavlov's dogs?--actually demonstrated that the Unconscious Mind could be changed through Classical Conditioning.

The Conscious Mind is the third element where a person's uniqueness can be appreciated. This is really where the vast reservoir of lifetime of knowledge and experience culminates. Those who are familiar of the work of Carl Jung will really appreciate the idea of the Conscious Mind as the vast reservoir of our lifetime knowledge and experience.

And then of course there are the Contents of Consciousness, the present moment, where the experience is. In the world of contextual psychology, we talk about Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, which is really predicated on focusing on the present moment. In the field of philosophy, we have Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*. Really, Milton Erickson, again, back in the 1950's and 1960's taught us to appreciate people through the Contents of their Consciousness: the present moment, the current experience that they bring to us.

And the eighth way that Ericksonian Hypnosis is different from other approaches is that, unconscious processes are recognized as operating generatively and autonomously. Whereas earlier forms of hypnosis were based on the client doing what the hypnotist ordered or suggested, Ericksonian Hypnosis recognizes that the client's own mind creates the experience and therefore the change.

This recognition allows us to move away from the old model of long-term therapy. In decades past, it was not unusual for a client to see a therapist several times a week for twelve years with little improvement. Erickson's goal—as well as my goal, and that of many good hypnotists—is for his clients to function without him. I know I'm a good hypnotist because my clients don't need to come back to me anymore. The only way that's possible is for me to rely on my clients' generative and autonomous unconscious mind to maintain and expand on the work we do together.

The Utilization Approach

Another term often used to describe Ericksonian Hypnotherapy is the Utilization Approach. One way to summarize this approach is to say that Erickson utilized whatever tools his clients brought with them. Often those tools seemed to be part of the problem, but Erickson utilized them to facilitate a solution.

Erickson accepted clients not where they could be or should be, but where they were. He used their frame as the foundation for therapy; he never devised his own theory of human behavior because, he said, then clients would have to fit into that mold or theory. He wanted to be able to use their frames as their foundation for therapy.

Like Carl Rogers, Milton Erickson thought that it was important not to impose the therapist's values, beliefs, or biases in the process, but to operate from the perspective that our client has brought to our office the resources that they need for change, and that they will tell us what those things are.

Milton Erickson was not a Procrustean. Procrustes was a Greek bandit in mythology, and he stretched out his victims onto a bed. If they were too short for the bed, he would stretch them out so they fit the bed. If they were too tall for the bed, he would cut them down to size. This is, by the way, a story from Greek mythology that Milton Erickson actually told in hypnosis. So when we say that Erickson was not a Procrustean, we mean that he fit the therapy to the client, rather than fitting the client to the therapy.

Milton Erickson used the clients' behavior that they brought to him. This is what is meant by Utilization. For example, in the induction process, the Authoritarian Approach would be to say, "Now, it is time for induction. So go ahead and close your eyes. Breathe in and breathe out and relax the muscles of your body. You are now going into trance." In contrast, Milton Erickson would actually utilize whatever experience was going on. So if somebody was

sitting across from him and talking, and maybe they were just tracing with one of their fingers the fabric on the pocket of their pants, Erickson would say something like this: "I notice that you're brailing the fabric of your slacks." That was one of Milton Erickson's lines. What a brilliant line. And of course back in the fifties and sixties, we didn't have the same resources for the blind that we have now, so Braille was an exciting new technology. When he said that to the client, it really engaged the person, who was probably doing that unconsciously, into the present moment, causing what NLP calls a "Pattern Interrupt." This is just one example of how Milton Erickson utilized whatever the client brought to him.

Another story of Milton Erickson relates that he was working with a patient at an in-patient psychiatric facility who delusional and believed that he was Jesus Christ. The patient dressed in robes and acted like he was Jesus. So Milton Erickson, instead of confronting him and saying you're not Jesus, simply said to him: "So I understand you have an extensive experience in carpentry." And the delusional Jesus answer was, "Yes, I do." Erickson replied, "Great! I need some new bookshelves." Building things became part of that patient's therapy.

Milton Erickson utilized whatever the client brought to him. At one point, Milton Erickson treated an industrialist who had lost all his money and become depressed. The patient described his despair by saying, "There is this tension in my chest." The client would actually move his hands in and out across his chest. Milton Erickson suggested, since the patient brought movement to the therapy sessions, that he actually move his hands up and down, up and down. And Milton Erickson gave him some sandpaper and introduced him to an occupational therapist, who had him go up and down, up and down, sanding wood so that he could actually create wonderful art. And that industrialist, within a short period of time, found a tremendous amount of relief to his symptoms because of the intervention of Milton Erickson.

These stories also point out something else important: While we associate Milton Erickson with hypnosis, Milton Erickson was a psychiatrist. He treated a wide variety of different individuals—some with what we are going to commonly associate with hypnosis, and others without what we commonly associate with hypnosis—but with the same principles of utilization to help those people make significant changes.

Observations of Erickson's Personal Style

The Milton Erickson Foundation owns the copyright to all of Milton Erickson's teaching videos. They are available only for purchase to licensed mental health professionals, which I am, and I have probably seen all of his published videos at one point or another. So, I'm going to point out for you just some of my own observations of Milton Erickson's personal style.

Ernest Rossi, a contemporary and co-author with Milton Erickson, characterized Erickson's approach as "bellybutton to bellybutton communication." In other words, Ericksonian hypnosis involves exchanging the nutrition of interpersonal communication at the deepest levels.

Here are just some of my observations about Erickson's personal style, which you can adapt in your style and your work with clients:

First, Milton Erickson questioned his clients rather than just talking to them. A lot of new hypnotists out there learn the basic process of induction, deepening, direct suggestion, and awakening. They wonder if it is okay to talk to a client in hypnosis. Well, I talk to my clients in hypnosis all the time. I ask them questions all the time. Milton Erickson did as well.

Erickson waited for a response. I know a lot of hypnotists who, when they ask a question and don't get an immediate response, become worried that maybe the client is too deep and didn't hear. Watching Milton Erickson, you really learn how to be patient. Often, that silent client is accessing their own interpersonal resources before they provide a response. And that silence in the hypnosis session often becomes one of the most valuable parts of a hypnosis session.

Erickson, when I watch his videos, leaned in to communicate cooperation. This stance was later codified by Gerard Egan in his famous acronym, SOLER:

- Sit down with your client
- have an Open body posture
- Lean forward
- make Eye contact with them
- Relax

If you have had the opportunity to watch any of Milton Erickson's videos, you'll see that he perfected the SOLER stance.

Erickson in his personal style was slow; he was unrushed, and he attended to his clients in every way. He didn't sell thirty-minute increments of time or fifteen-minute therapy sessions. He worked with a client for whatever amount of time was necessary for that client to get well.

Erickson matched and mirrored in order to gain rapport. As we've learned in various NLP classes, the idea of matching and mirroring is essentially doing what our client is doing physically with their hands and their body movement because it communicates to our client that we're actually attending to them. It becomes almost a dance of who is leading whom.

Erickson's personal style was that of really informal induction. Not too long ago, a client in my office asked me, "When are we going to do the hypnosis?" We'd been there for sixty minutes, so I said, "We've been doing hypnosis since the session began." Informal is the nature of Ericksonian Hypnosis.

EXERCISES

1. Practice discovering the uniqueness of someone in your world—it can be a family member, friends, someone new or even a client who you're working with—with intention. Discover through conversation what is unique about that person. Keep in mind Gilligan's four way to appreciate an individual's uniqueness.

What you're going to be practicing here is how to draw out the internal resources of your client in order to help them make change according to their own frame rather than a frame that you project on to them. Don't just notice something that they do or don't do that others do or don't do. Really on a deeper level, try to engage in a conversation with somebody to determine what sets them apart from other people, what makes them truly unique. This, by the way, is also an exercise in rapport-building.

2. Pay attention to your own problems. What is it you struggle with or don't like about yourself? Rather than trying to figure out why you are like that or why you struggle, focus on identifying three behaviors that could change that problem, even if you don't understand why.

Again, what this is going to do is help you to practice looking at a solution-oriented approach rather than the problem-oriented approach. A problem-oriented approach is what regression and Freudian psychoanalysis are all about. Milton Erickson's idea is that we could change, even if we don't understand why something is or was the way that it was.

3. Look for opportunities to utilize other people's behavior.
Notice in your conversations with people when you can direct them to their experiences through conversational techniques, the way Milton Erickson did when he said, "I notice you're brailing the fabric on the inseam of your pants." In talking to people, see if you can direct them to their experiences. This will help you to begin to practice Ericksonian Hypnosis.

Inductions

Chapter Two

The Secret of Ericksonian Induction

In pop psychology, Milton Erickson is most often associated with two hypnotic inductions:

- the Super-Secret Mystical Handshake Induction
- the Hand Levitation Induction

I often see ads on the Internet using Milton Erickson as a tool for marketing: ‘Learn the secrets of the great psychiatrist, Dr. Milton Erickson. You too will be able to shake anybody’s hand and boom, drop them instantly into deep trance.’ And so, the Milton Erickson Secret Handshake Induction is probably the induction most often associated with Milton Erickson. Of course, it doesn’t work out quite as advertised, and it’s not particularly useful in therapeutic contexts. For that reason, we’re not going to cover it in this book, though if you search YouTube, you can find a video of me teaching how it’s done.

The other induction that is often associated with Milton Erickson is the Hand Levitation Induction. In the *Complete Works of Milton Erickson*, there is an article called “The Transcript of a Hypnotic Trance Induction,” in which Erickson spells out how he did the Hand Levitation Induction. Milton Erickson would often encourage, during the trance process, somebody to raise their hand. And they doing were this, of course, unconsciously. Through suggestion, he would have them eventually touch their face with their hand. At the end of the session, somebody had been holding their hand to their face for twenty, thirty, forty minutes or maybe even longer, so when he reoriented them, they would find the surprise that their hand was up near the face. In fact, Milton Erickson would ask a question: “Do you always keep your hand

up against your face when you're talking?" And people would be bewildered by the presence of this hand on their face and then they could feel the fatigue in their arm, and they would think, "*Wow, I really was hypnotized because wow, my arm is sore and tired. It must've been there a long time.*" This is called a proof or a convincer. I tend to not to do the levitation in my office with clients—I do it in demonstrations with students—but Milton's idea of a proof is something that I definitely use.

My favorite proof with a client is not having their hand stuck to their face, it's actually to use Time Distortion. At the end of every session, I ask my client, "How long did that feel to you?" That's when they realize that what obviously was thirty or forty minutes felt like two or three minutes. Or sometimes they get the reverse. What was probably a short period of time actually felt like it was going on forever; they double that sense of time. So I'll use Time Distortion as a phenomenon or as a proof to demonstrate for my clients, when the session is done, that they were in fact in a trance state.

As I mentioned, in pop psychology and Internet course sales, the Secret Handshake Induction and the Hand Levitation are probably the inductions most often associated with Milton Erickson. But those are really not the primary strategies that Milton Erickson used to induce hypnotic trance.

Ernest Rossi in a short essay that precedes some writings of Milton Erickson on deep hypnosis and induction of hypnotic trance writes this about Milton Erickson: "No longer were rote formulas and verbal commands or incantations needed; a casual conversational approach evoked the subjects' own natural areas of interest was found to be more universally effective in facilitating the inner focus and comfort so characteristic of trance."

What Milton Erickson did most of time to induce trance was this:

He bored them into hypnosis.

I've actually said that Milton Erickson was incredibly boring, and people become offended by that. It's certainly not something that I say because I want to offend Milton Erickson; in fact, it's a compliment. Milton Erickson recognized the value of the mundane, of what was normal in our client's experience at the moment, as a tool that could be used to induce trance.

I use the Progressive Muscle Relaxation Induction on a regular basis with clients to teach them a valuable skill that's non-threatening. There's mountains of evidence that shows the tremendous value of teaching clients a process of

Progressive Muscle Relaxation. And people often criticize Progressive Muscle Relaxation Induction by saying that it's boring.

They are correct. It is boring, and boredom was one of the methods that Milton Erickson recognized was a pathway to deep trance. The fact that it's boring does not mean it's not useful, and it doesn't mean that it's not highly effective. There can be tremendous value in boredom and in using the mundane, that which the majority of us would consider uninteresting.

In addition to boredom, Milton Erickson's primary approach to induction was simply to build rapport. It wasn't about trickery and getting somebody into a state that they don't want to be in. Again, the title of Stephen Gilligan's book is *The Co-operation Principle of Ericksonian Hypnotherapy*, not *How to Trick People into Experiencing Trance States*.

I remember seeing some Internet posts not too long ago about "ambush Hypnosis based on the techniques of Milton Erickson." Those really weren't Milton Erickson's techniques. In fact, the majority of the time he simply built rapport by relating to the mundane and then bored his patients into hypnosis.

In this book, I'm actually teaching you from the textbooks that Milton Erickson wrote. What you are learning here is true Ericksonian hypnotherapy. It is from Milton Erickson. It is not from a hypnotist who learned how to do Ericksonian hypnosis by watching YouTube videos or buying super-secret \$49 trainings on Milton Erickson.

Erickson's Description of Deep Hypnosis

In his writing, Milton Erickson gives us a good description of what the goal is in deep hypnosis. Trance depth is a concept that Milton Erickson subscribes to, but he viewed trance depth differently than Harry Arons or the creators of the Stanford Scale, who really were fairly rigid and believed that you had to get to a certain depth to experience a certain type of phenomena. Milton Erickson valued trance depth as a concept, but he didn't attach the same rigidity to trance depth that some of the prior hypnotists, particularly Harry Arons and some his contemporaries at Stanford University, did.

Here's how Milton Erickson described deep hypnosis. First, he said everybody has a different experience. So the hypnotist can't really use a checklist to determine trance depth. Every experience of deep hypnosis for every participant is going to be really, in Milton Erickson's viewpoint, their own experience, and they may be different than how you experience deep hypnosis. This

is really important because we often understand things through our own frame of reference and our own experience.

Let's take depression, for example. I've been depressed; you've been depressed; we've all been depressed at one point or another. Now, most people when they're depressed probably do some similar things. For example, they might not eat a lot or be hungry, or might not have energy and feel lethargic, and even stay in bed and oversleep. That might be what most people do when they're depressed, but you might actually experience depression differently. Maybe because you're depressed you can't sleep at all and you only sleep two or three hours a night. Maybe because you're only sleeping two or three hours a night when you're depressed, you're using more energy than most and you need those carbs so you're actually chowing down and eating a lot. Different people experience depression differently.

In other words, we might use a label "trance depth" or we might use a label "depression," but we have to recognize that the experience really is different for each participant. What this means is that during the process of hypnosis, we need to be questioning our client, we need to be asking them about their experience, and we need to be talking to them throughout the process of hypnosis, rather than assuming that we know what is going on based on an arbitrary scale of hypnotic behavior.

Milton Erickson also said basically—and I'm paraphrasing here—"It's really hard to describe deep hypnosis. It's a lot easier to just experience it." And I think there's probably a lot of truth in that. It's like Morpheus said to Neo in *The Matrix*, "Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself."

Milton Erickson also described trance depth as "having the bearing and ability of a client to manifest phenomena." This is really important. There are people out there now who teach, for example, "Before you can go and make hypnotic suggestions, you have to have a certain level of trance depth, and you have to have, for example, eye catalepsy, arm catalepsy, and amnesia." Well, Milton Erickson tells us that conventional trance depth really had no bearing on the ability to manifest phenomena. There's some people on a light level of trance who were able to manifest catalepsy, or manifest hypnotic amnesia, or hypnotic anesthesia, or perceptual changes. Likewise, some people in a deep level of trance sometimes have difficulty manifesting various hypnotic phenomena that might be suggested. So while Milton Erickson understood the

importance or the idea of trance depth, he also pointed out that it really had no bearing on the ability to manifest phenomena.

And this is why in my office, I don't really worry about whether or not my client is in a deep level of trance. In fact, I say to almost all of my clients—and this is a great line that you can borrow for your own work:

"It really doesn't matter during this session if you let yourself go into a deep state of trance, no longer listening to the words that I use, but instead only experiencing the process, or if you remain throughout the session on a light level of trance, able to think clearly and focus attention on each and every word that I use. Either way is of course fine because either way will still lead you to the outcome that led you here today."

It really takes a lot of pressure off the hypnotist to recognize that each person is going to have different phenomena and a different experience.

Trance depth as a concept was something that Milton Erickson certainly used to describe hypnosis, but he also recognized that trance depth really had no bearing on the manifestation of phenomena. Because of that, I don't really worry about how deep my clients are; I simply observe that depth and take it at face value as an experience that my client has decided to create rather than one that I feel the need or a pressure to bring them to.

Milton Erickson also noted that in deep hypnosis, there are behavior patterns that operate from the unconscious mind. This is really different than operating from the subconscious mind. Those things that operate from the unconscious mind are really automatic. They are self-protection. They are meeting a person's deepest needs. And when we do have somebody who's in deep trance, we can notice that the behavior and the choices they make are often operating from the unconscious mind.

Milton Erickson also believed that trance is something that is taught. It's a skill that is developed. There are a lot of people out there who brag, "*I can do this in one session or five minutes*" or "*After my super-secret method of super-duper hypnosis in 30 seconds, you'll be rid of your problems.*" They are obsessed with how quickly they can change their clients. Milton Erickson viewed trance as something that is learned. It is something that is taught, a skill to be developed. So I certainly don't mind seeing clients from multiple sessions, because in each session I'm teaching additional skills so that they will be able to employ trance techniques outside my office.

There is also a lot of talk in sort of pop psychology or pop hypnosis about mystical and magical states of depth; the Esdaile State is an example. There are a couple of trademark programs out there being sold by individuals who have been doing hypnosis training for years; the programs emphasize some super-deep state of trance that is supposed to have amazing properties. Milton Erickson actually calls this “Stuporous Trance.” Although he acknowledges the existence of the Stuporous Trance state, Erickson really seems in his writings to reject the value of it in most situations. And the reason why is because he found it less than useful. First of all, it’s hard to get somebody to that state, because the client’s own conscious mind has to reject the idea of the self, and this in turn limits the therapeutic application of any work that would come from that state.

Milton Erickson does seem to point that what he calls as the Stuporous Trance might have some utility with what he describes at the time as the very difficult, neurotic clients. This was a clinical term that’s certainly fallen out of favor, and it really implies those with deep psychiatric difficulties. Now, the vast majority of hypnotists are not licensed mental health professionals, and thus are not treating schizophrenics or what were described at that time as catastrophically neurotic individuals. Milton Erickson, on the other hand, was a psychiatrist. These were his patients, and this was an area where he had a tremendous amount of familiarity. But again, other than specific applications, Milton Erickson seems to find both the utility and the value of those “ultra-deep” states to be far less useful than the Internet sales pitches I see in my email inbox.

Milton Erickson also discussed some of the problems of inducing Deep Trance Hypnosis. He talks about some of the differences between trance induction and trance utilization. Of course trance induction is the process of bringing somebody into trance. Trance utilization is the real task of clinical hypnosis.

Milton Erickson talks about differentiating trance behavior from ordinary conscious behavior. These really are phenomenological things like hallucination, anesthesia, perceptual changes, and memory distortion.

Milton Erickson also insists that the orientation of all hypnotic procedures needs to be about the subject. In other words, everything we should do should be designed to secure cooperation, to adapt to the subject.

Discussing inductions, Milton Erickson also talks about our need to protect the subject. We have a responsibility to care for their psychological needs, for their ego deficits. Their care really is in our hands. Milton Erickson was careful

to mention the need for the competent hypnotist to really be ultimately respectful to the client and to the client's mind.

Milton Erickson also talks about, in trance induction, the utilization of the subject's responsiveness and their spontaneous behavior, so that anything that they do can be used to facilitate trance. So many times hypnotists worry, "*What if somebody yawns or opens their eyes? Or what if somebody has a jerk because they jerk themselves from falling asleep? What if there's a jackhammer going outside?*"

Milton Erickson talked about utilizing all of the subject's responsive and spontaneous behavior as ways to continue to facilitate trance. He viewed everything as acceptable and normal. The process wasn't about what *he* wanted to do in the induction, but rather what *the clients* led him to do. In many ways, he was simply following the client's own trance utilization.

Milton Erickson based each progressive step in a trance induction on the actual accomplishments by the subject. One of the things you would hear from Milton Erickson was a constant reaffirmation that they were doing well. In fact, "*That's right,*" spoken in his characteristic voice, has become almost a cliché of Ericksonian hypnosis. He would always compliment and note the accomplishments of the subject: "*You are doing very well now*" or "*That's right*" or "*Continue.*"

In his Volume I of the *Collected Works of Milton Erickson*, titled *The Nature of Hypnosis and Suggestion*, Erickson offers three techniques for inducing deep trance:

- the Confusion Technique
- the Rehearsal Technique
- the Multiple-Dissociation Technique

In the next three chapters, we will discuss and demonstrate each of these methods. Then, because it is famous, we will devote a chapter to the Hand Levitation Induction.

Chapter Three

The Confusion Induction

The Confusion Induction uses a variety of different methods to induce confusion and subsequently therapeutic trance. The therapeutic purpose of confusion is that it really “breaks a state” as we say in NLP. Our clients come to us caught up, really trapped, in states that are detrimental to them. They come to us with anxiety about the ability to change. They come to us preoccupied about their appearance or their financial situation. Our clients come to us often with very rigid ideas about what is and what isn’t, what should and shouldn’t be done. Our clients come to us with preconceived notions or ideas about how problem resolution should or shouldn’t take place. As a result of these situations, sometimes we can actually encounter resistance to the process of hypnosis using a typical script or approach many hypnotists might have used.

So Milton Erickson would induce confusion, and in that moment of inducing confusion, he would actually be accessing his client’s unconscious mind. You can actually go deep quickly by breaking the existing trance state through confusion. In many ways, our clients are always in trance. They’re in trance 24 hours a day. What we’re doing in hypnotic induction really is, breaking the existing trance states and creating new trance states—what Milton Erickson referred to as Deep Trance.

Now, there are a lot of different things that we can do to facilitate confusion:

- **Cognitive Confusion:** confusion in their thoughts
- **Sensorial Confusion:** “I wonder how hard you can smell the number green.”
- **Relational Confusion:** “It’s almost as though I’m the client and you’re the therapist.”

- **Temporal** vs. Permanence
- **Affective** or Emotional Confusion
- **Spatial Confusion:** mixing up near / far, here / there. “If you pick the hand that’s right, then the other hand is the one that’s left; but if the left hand is the right one to pick, than the right hand is left over.”
- **Behavioral Confusion:** you would do that / you wouldn’t do that.

Demonstration of a Confusion Induction

Ideally, you would listen to this example as a recording in addition to reading it for comprehension:

“As you relax at your desk or in your chair, breathe in and breathe out just like you always do, knowing that you will do well today. Because finding a way to access that part of the mind where deep thought lies and learning takes place is really easy for a person like you, finding a way to access that part of the mind where deep thought lies and learning takes place is easy for a person like you.

You are not one of those people who is unable to think, but rather you’re one who is interested in how the mind works. In fact during this exercise, I bet you are able to be your own hypnotist, entering trance exactly the way that is best for you, which lets me of course simply relax and enjoy this time.

I am sure you feel a sense of satisfaction knowing you possess this skill of bringing yourself into deep trance, rather than sensing dissatisfaction or ambivalence or other things that distract you from that state that we call hypnosis.

Now as you listen to my voice and as you participate in this process, focus on your hands. Focus on your hands. Bring your attention to your hands. And you might find that as you do this, you’re focusing more on the left hand, and that will be the right choice for you. Or you might find that you’re focusing more on the right hand, which of course leaves only one hand left. But either way, notice how they feel. As one enters trance, one often feels various sensations of warmth or even a tingling sensation as one relaxes; but it is not uncommon in this process to notice no change, and to just have the ability to focus attention on the hands.

As you relax, notice how you feel perfectly still. Effortlessly, your breathing has become smooth and rhythmic, your heart rate calm and regular. You can focus on those hands, either the right or the left or both, or even on your feet—perhaps noticing the weight of your shoes on your feet, a sensation I wonder if you've ever truly paid attention to before. Maybe your feet are resting on the floor, or perhaps even on a footrest or on a chair or recliner. Either way, even though they may be supported by a footrest or the floor, it's interesting to note that they are still grounded. And many people notice that that affects the feeling of the weight of their shoes, even creating a sense of weightlessness in them.

As you enter trance, you may or may not notice a number of varied sensations. Or perhaps you will only experience this process rather than noting those things overtly. Anything here of course is okay. This is your time. You are the operator. I am merely following your lead as you go deeper and deeper into a state of hypnosis which you've created. I'll give you another moment or so to enjoy this state that you've created, the state of learning, the state of relaxation, the state of hypnosis. And now in a moment, I'll count from one to three. And when I count to three, open your eyes fully alert, being wide awake, ready for the rest of the day, feeling fantastic from having experientially learned something new. One—focusing on the breath, noticing what the air feels like as you breathe in and breathe out. Two—getting ready to open the eyes, stretching out the muscles that need to be stretched. Three—opening the eyes, feeling fantastic and ready for the rest of your day.”

That is a basic strategy in Confusion Induction based on some of the principles of Milton Erickson. In a later chapter, I'm going to be talking specifically about the language patterns of Milton Erickson. However, I want to begin right now by pointing out that what may be referred to as “power words” or the language patterns of Milton Erickson. This is certainly not an exhaustive study. Later on, I'm going to be sharing with you the specific language patterns in NLP as identified through the words of Milton Erickson. But what I want you to see now are some of the word choices that I made, and these word choices in that induction really are consistent with Milton Erickson's perspective of hypnosis.

NLP studied the language patterns, and far too often the essence of Milton Erickson's work is distilled down into just a collection of “magic” words. What

Milton Erickson was actually doing was not dependent merely on his word choices, but on cooperation and rapport. He was permissive, accepting, and present-focused. He let clients discover from within their own power and resources for each step of the hypnotic process.

Power Words

These are some of the words that I used in that induction that Milton Erickson also used. He used the word ‘You’ vs. ‘I’. He talked about the client rather than the therapist. I’ve heard many hypnotists say, “Now, I want you to close your eyes,” or “I want you to talk a deep breath.” We need to change “I” to “You.” That’s really Lesson Number One in Milton Erickson language patterns.

When Milton Erickson wanted somebody to do something, he would give them permission. He would use the phrase ‘You may’:

- “You may close your eyes now”
- “You may feel more relaxed”
- “You may have found that you have already entered into a deep trance state.”

Milton Erickson used the word *either* a lot. *Either* is a very popular word. Giving somebody a choice takes the power struggle out of making change.

Another word: *Notice*. “Notice this. Notice that.” Erickson would bring his client’s attention to that which was mundane, that which was boring, and use it as a way of inducing deep trance states.

Of course, Milton Erickson would use the words *you may* to give permission, but also he would join that with *or may not* and give clients a choice: “You may or you may not experience this or that.”

The word *creating* is another power word:

- “creating solutions”
- “creating states”
- “creating opportunities”

And then the last phrasing that I use in that script: “I am sure you.”

We’ll discuss more language patterns later, but I wanted to introduce a few now.

EXERCISES

1. You may, before you read the next chapter, actually practice the Confusion Induction script with somebody. It can be a family member; it can be a client, a colleague, or a friend. When you're doing this, adapt the script to the person that you're working with. The purpose of the script is to teach you a technique, but the idea of Ericksonian Hypnosis is to be in rapport with somebody. It almost seems counterintuitive to suggest using a script, but this is why we call it practice. And so you're going to be practicing with somebody.

Asking a friend or family member who's not familiar with hypnosis can be awkward, so here's how I've often approached it with my family members: "Hey, I'm learning some new strategies and I need somebody to practice with. So it doesn't matter if you just sit there and listen to me and let me practice or if you allow yourself to go into a deep state of hypnosis. Either way is fine. What's really most important is that I have the opportunity to practice something." And what you'll find is that when you use that Ericksonian language pattern of making a suggestion, giving them the choice and giving them power, they will probably go into deep trance.

2. There are seven power words and phrases that I just covered:
 - You vs. I
 - You may
 - Either
 - Notice
 - You may or may not
 - Creating
 - I am sure you

Before you read the next chapter, begin intentionally in everyday life to use these power words and phrases in your own interpersonal communication. Hypnosis is not your goal. The goal here is for you to practice being hypnotic wherever you are. So in everyday life with your spouse, at a store, in dealing

with your co-worker, begin to intentionally use these phrases in your interactions. What you'll find then is that they become a part of your life. You will become a hypnotic person, and it will be very natural for you to be Ericksonian with your clients.

Chapter Four

The Rehearsal Induction

In Chapter Two, we mentioned that Erickson describes three ways of inducing deep trance:

- the Confusion Technique
- the Rehearsal Technique
- the Multiple-Dissociation Technique

Of course, in Chapter Three, we discussed the Confusion Technique. In this chapter, we're going to examine the Rehearsal Technique, both as an induction and an intervention.

Rehearsal Technique as an Induction

Most hypnotists are taught Rehearsal Technique in the form of Future Pacing, a hypnotic component often employed near the end of a hypnosis session. In the standard format, the hypnotist induces and deepens the trance, gives suggestions, and then future paces, directing the subject to visualize a future time in which he or she is either carrying out the suggestions or enjoying successful results. In a sense, the client is rehearsing being successful. However, Rehearsal Technique and even Future Pacing can be used at any point in the hypnotic process, even as an induction.

In the Rehearsal Technique Induction, we're inducing trance by having a client use their creative capacity to imagine what it would be like to go into hypnosis. During the Rehearsal Technique, the client tests the reaction. Essentially, they practice moving into trance mentally before they actually do so. And by practicing that, by wondering what something would be like, they of

course go into trance. The reason why is that in order to process what it would be like, one has to actually imagine being in that state. In order to imagine being in that state, one has to actually go into that state.

This logic is used in NLP Speed Seduction courses. Some of you may have seen this back in the day when MTV used to focus on pick-up artists. One of their gimmicks actually came from this idea of Milton Erickson; it was a tee-shirt that read: "Stop falling in love with me." And the idea was this: In order for somebody to process that message, they would have to imagine what it would be like to be in love with somebody in order to imagine stopping being in love with somebody. Thus they had to imagine a future in which they had fallen in love. I don't know if it really worked for the pick-up artists like they claimed on the TV show, but this is a Rehearsal Technique. It essentially asked a client to test a reaction, essentially practicing moving into trance—what is falling in love, if not a trance state--mentally before they actually do so. But in order to go through that process, paradoxically they had to go into trance. It's a great technique with a resistant client or with somebody who has previously worked with another hypnotist but did not experience success.

I do meet people in a variety of different hypnotic settings who say, "Well, I tried hypnosis with a hypnotist, it didn't work." For some reason, they're sitting there with me even though and are asking me to hypnotize them, and so of course I will. But when a client I'm working with reports that they didn't experience success in the past, the Rehearsal Technique can be a great tool for dealing with any doubt that may be present. So as an induction strategy, this is really pretty useful.

Rehearsal Technique can also be used as a therapeutic script, after we've done a different induction, to move a client through a perceived set of behaviors that result in the resolution to a problem. This works because ideally by practicing each stage of the process, wondering "what if", the client enters deep trance without all the conscious blocks to the process and is able to mentally rehearse experiencing success, whether that success is going into hypnosis, or whether that success is passing an exam, or whether that success is being smoke-free when they leave your office.

Rehearsal Technique can also be used to induce phenomena, such as amnesia, or really any other hypnotic phenomena. In *The Collected Papers of Milton Erickson*, his writings on the Rehearsal Technique revolve around a medical student whom he hypnotized in front of a medical class to experience amnesia using the Rehearsal Technique. This method often uses repetition to

embed an idea in the subconscious, creating a feeling of success that can be drawn upon later on as a resource state for the client.

Like many hypnotic techniques, the easiest way to understand the Rehearsal Technique is to experience it. Here is an example script showing a simple Rehearsal Technique:

“During this exercise, you don’t need to go into a deep trance state. Instead what you’re going to do is imagine what it might be like to go into trance. And so, imagine—use that creative part of the mind—to imagine what it might be like to go into trance. Everyone experiences trance everyday. It really is something we experience when we’re relaxing between tasks, or when we’re driving on a familiar road where you no longer need to look out the windows and allow yourself to spend time with your thoughts instead. Now, through this exercise, you don’t need to go into trance quickly here. In fact, you don’t even need to go into trance. But imagine as you sit in the chair what it would be like if you were to enter a deep trance, a relaxing, very comfortable trance.

You might find the eyes are more comfortable closed as you imagine this. And take just a moment to imagine what it might feel like to go into trance. How does your body feel? Do your muscles relax? That’s right, they would, wouldn’t they?

Now go ahead and open your eyes. Even if you are not hypnotized, it’s easy to imagine being in that state of trance, isn’t it? I notice you are breathing a little slower and seem more relaxed now than even just a few moments ago. I wonder if you close your eyes down now, if you can imagine what it might be like to go into an even deeper trance. Of course, you don’t have to stop paying attention to my voice; you can continue to remain alert. Just imagine being in deep trance and what it might be like. Feels good, doesn’t it?

Now, I want to make sure that you are fully oriented to the room around you when we are done. And so before you open your eyes, feel the stability of the chair below you, feel the air of the room around you. And with the next breath, breathe in oxygen that goes to every cell of the lungs and in turn goes to every cell of the body, energizing the body, opening the eyes when I count to three, feeling fantastic. One, two, three.”

Even though that was a very brief demonstration of the Rehearsal Technique, you can see how powerful it really is. It's a great tool for beginning the process of guiding the person into a trance state, especially when we're experiencing resistance. Frankly, I think it's one of the more interesting and kind of fun inductions. It essentially lets the person define for themselves what hypnosis is going to be like.

One of the major issues hypnotists who are not successful with a client have is that they have imposed their definition of what hypnosis or a trance state is. And when the client doesn't get to that point that the hypnotist has defined as being hypnosis, there's a dissonance between the two. There's really a power struggle. The client feels like a failure, and the therapist feels like the client hasn't followed or paid attention. We can eliminate all of that with the Rehearsal Technique, because it allows the client to define what hypnosis is to them. Remember back to Chapter One: One of the things that differentiates Ericksonian Hypnosis from other forms of hypnosis is that the client is in charge. The client defines what is useful and what is not. The client really defines what hypnosis is and what hypnosis is not.

Let me go through the script again, word for word, to point out the language patterns used:

"Imagine what it might be like to go into trance. Everyone experiences trance every day, often when relaxing between tasks, or when driving on a familiar road where you no longer look out the windows but allow yourself to spend time with your thoughts."

That's really the pre-talk. It's really the pre-talk because what I've done is I've hypnosis here, overcoming a common objection to hypnosis, and I've begun the process, even in this short little pre-talk, of giving them the authority to experience hypnosis. "Imagine what it might be like to go into trance." Well, who wouldn't want to do that? Who wouldn't want to imagine that?

"Now, you don't need to go into trance quickly here."

This is called an "Embedded Command." The Embedded Command here is: *"Go into trance quickly."*

The theory in hypnosis is that we tend to more efficiently process positive messages than negative messages. And so, even though I phrased this as a negative, the subconscious mind pays attention to the phrase: "Go into trance quickly here." It becomes an Embedded Direct Suggestion. See, we give Erickson credit for being permissive and letting the clients set the agenda, but have no

doubt at another level Milton Erickson knew exactly what the outcome of each session should be. He embedded into his hypnotic suggestions what might be called Embedded Commands or Embedded Direct Suggestions. And so, I've highlighted here where some of these Embedded Commands are:

"Now you don't need to go into trance quickly here. In fact, you do not even need to go into trance."

There's another Embedded Command.

"But imagine as you sit in this chair, what it would be like if you were to enter a deep trance."

"If you were" is a very important phrase and language pattern of Milton Erickson. It activates the imaginative process, or more precisely, the experiential process.

"You might find"

Again, "you" is one of those power words that I defined in the last chapter. And everybody loves to find something. Have you ever found something? It wasn't too long ago I was walking out of a convenience store and I was getting in my car. As I opened up my car door, I noticed that sitting on the pavement was a \$10 bill. I looked around. Nobody else was present. So I put the money in my pocket. I remember thinking to myself it was only ten bucks. But I remember thinking "I found \$10. That was awesome." Everybody loves to find something. So this phrase is really important.

"So you might find the eyes are more comfortable closed as you imagine this and take just a moment to imagine what it might feel like."

"What it might" is a lot like "If you were." It activates the imaginative capacity.

"How would your body feel? Would your muscles relax?"

"Would" is a question word that forces a client to look inside of themselves at their own experiences, which is called a Trans-Derivational Search (TDS). "Would" is one of those TDS words; any question can elicit a TDS. It forces a person to look inside of themselves. This is really important: Anybody who does Hypnotic Copywriting or advertising knows the value of a Trans-Derivational Search at a question.

“Would your muscles relax?”

In order for your clients to find the answer to that question, they have to imagine what it would be like to have relaxed muscles. So they have to look inside of themselves and create the experience.

“That’s right, they would, wouldn’t they?”

“That’s right” is an example of Milton Erickson-style Ego Strengthening. *“Wouldn’t they”* is a question that is really what we call a Tag Question. There’s really only one answer to this question, and that is in the affirmative.

“Now open your eyes”

Asking your clients to open their eyes at this point in this process is an example of Fractionation. I’m assuming most of you who are reading this book have had at least basic hypnosis training, and so are familiar with Fractionation, the deepening method based on the fact that when we reorient a client and then let them close their eyes again, they go into an even deeper level of trance.

“Even if you’re not hypnotized it’s easy to imagine being in this state of trance, isn’t it?”

Yes, another Tag Question. There’s really only one answer, and the answer is, yes. It’s a leading question.

*“I notice you are breathing a little slower and seem more relaxed. I wonder if you **close your eyes down now . . .**”*

There’s another Embedded Command.

*“If you can imagine what it might be like to **go into an even deeper trance**”*

That is another Direct Suggestion Embedded Command.

*“Of course, you don’t have to stop paying attention to my voice, you can continue to remain alert, **just imagine** being in deep trance and what it **might** be like.”*

Now, I’m going to address specific language patterns in more detail later in the book, but I wanted to begin orienting you to specific language choices.

Rehearsal Technique for Intervention

Now, you've seen how we can use Rehearsal Technique as an induction. How can we use Rehearsal Technique as an intervention strategy?

We often get clients who come to us for test anxiety. Sometimes these are public school or college students, but it's not unusual for adults to be very nervous about professional exams that have a lot riding on them. Of course, what these clients have been doing is imagining the test and how hard it will be, how scared they'll be, how poorly they'll do, and how awful the consequences of failure will be. In other words, they've been rehearsing their anxiety and Future Pacing their own failure. The key to helping them is to reverse that process, helping them to rehearse calm clarity and Future Pace their success.

The following script incorporates the thought of Emile Coue, a French pharmacist, hypnotist, and philosopher, who wrote: "What the mind can conceive the body can achieve." Although Milton Erickson did not, to the best of my knowledge, ever reference Emile Coue in his writing, their ideas are easily combined:

"Go ahead and close your eyes. And with your eyes closed, bring yourself to that resource state that you call hypnosis. In the comfort of your chair, bring your mind with each breath, with each exhale, to that resource state that you define as hypnosis.

You can even allow yourself to go deeper into trance, with each number doubling the sensation of relaxation. Three, two, one, zero.

I wonder what it will be like to leave the examination knowing you were able to easily recall all that you have studied. Can you imagine that moment you put the pencil down and find satisfaction in knowing your answers were correct because you paid attention?

Just take a minute and imagine in the chair where you are what it would feel like to know that you paid attention to the whole course, even took some extra notes and that you did your very best. Wonder what it would be like for you to finish the exam, knowing that you were easily able to recall all that you've studied. It feels like a sense of relief, doesn't it, to leave the exam room or your computer having done so well on the test? Now I know you haven't yet taken the test, but you also know how what it will feel like when you are done and ready to receive your certification, your degree, your diploma. And of course, by knowing how it will end, this feeling must give you a great deal of confidence in your ability to succeed.

Now simply note what that feeling feels like, and pay attention to the air in the room around you or the chair below you, to my voice. When you're ready, when I count to three, open the eyes, feeling fantastic, wide awake and ready for the rest of our session today. One, two, three. Opening the eyes, feeling awesome."

My colleague, James Hazlerig, used Future Pacing as an intervention for a friend who was working on a PhD. His friend had commented that she wished she could take power naps, so he created a half-hour hypnosis recording for her. The bulk of the recording was simply a description of a relaxing beach, but one portion of it described her slipping off into a nap and then into a dream—a dream of her graduation day. In the dream, she was reflecting that she had submitted a brilliant dissertation and some portions of it had already been published in top academic journals. Furthermore, she'd already secured her dream job teaching at a great university.

The graduate student listened to that hypnotic recording several times a week for years—any time she needed a break from her studies. On her graduation day, she called my colleague to say that everything he'd included in the dream had come true: She was published and had a great job lined up. So whether you're using Rehearsal Technique for a short-term goal like passing a single test or a long-term goal like transforming your life, it is an elegant and effective method.

EXERCISES

1. Continue to practice the language patterns identified in Chapter Two, as well as the language patterns highlighted in this chapter: Embedded Commands, Indirect Suggestions, and Tag Questions. You can practice these both in your sessions with clients and in your own interpersonal communication with others as well.
2. Take some time to practice imagining what it would be like if you accomplished something really important to you. Set aside five to ten minutes in self-hypnosis or meditation each day to apply this concept to your own life.

Chapter Five

The Multiple-Dissociation Induction

In Chapter Two, we mentioned that Erickson describes three ways of inducing deep trance:

- the Confusion Technique
- the Rehearsal Technique
- the Multiple-Dissociation Technique

Of course, in Chapters Three and Four, we discussed the Confusion and Rehearsal Techniques. In this chapter, we're going to examine the Multiple-Dissociation Technique. Now, Erickson used dissociation in many different ways, but rarely do I ever hear anyone talk about it being used as a technique for induction.

Dissociation is really the practice of stepping outside of oneself, seeing oneself as though through the eyes of another or from a separate "bird's-eye-view." Modern film and photography has given us resources to help us see the world (and ourselves) in this way. The opposite of dissociation is *association*, the practice of viewing the world through one's own eyes and perceptions.

Another way of looking at dissociation is that it involves temporarily splitting off a part of the self for a creative purpose. Some theorists argue that dissociation is the defining quality of hypnosis.

Double- or Multiple-Dissociation Technique involves observing yourself observing yourself. For example, many hypnotists use a visualization that involves going into a movie theater projection booth, looking through the glass to see another version of yourself sitting in the theater and watching yet a third

version of you on the screen. Of course that version of you on the screen could be watching a TV show that has a fourth version of you on it, and so on, forever.

Erickson actually shares a dissociation exercise using the visual imagery of crystal balls. I think everybody likes crystal balls. We all heard about them in fairytales when we were young. They're fascinating, they're interesting, and they're something that people associate with a little bit of mystery. It really is a pretty good metaphor for new vantage points on old situations.

And so, what I'm going to share with you is an example of using dissociation, in the form of the Crystal Ball Technique, as an induction. Of course, the following script is my own version of this technique, but it is very similar to the way that Milton Erickson outlined it.

I work with a lot of people in clinical hypnosis who say they can't be happy. I work with a lot of smokers who say, "It's going to be impossible for me to be happy without a cigarette." I work with depressed clients who say, "It's impossible for me to be happy." I work with people in relation to lost love who say, "Without my partner, I'm never going to be able to be happy." And so, the idea of happiness being impossible is actually pretty common in my office.

Here's a script that actually uses Erickson's idea of dissociation coupled with visual imagery to create a hypnotic induction experience. What's fascinating about this is that it blurs the line between induction and intervention, which is a very Ericksonian thing to do:

"I know that right now you do not feel happy. This exercise is not about making you feel happy, but rather to help you see times in life when you were happy. Over the next few moments, you will have an opportunity to explore a part of the mind that is often hidden to us, but this creative part of the mind is really quite fascinating. I wonder if you were to close your eyes and imagine being in deep trance, if you would be able to also imagine gazing at a crystal ball. I am sure you have seen a crystal ball, like one in a fairytale or even as a decoration in someone's office or home. Go ahead and close the eyes now.

Imagine gazing at that crystal ball and seeing inside of it a time from your memory when you were younger, maybe even going back to before you were a teenager, and within the subconscious mind, find a time when you were happy at this age and imagine being able to stare into the crystal ball and observe you as being happy at that time. It is pretty amazing, isn't it, how easy it is for the subconscious mind to help you create those images inside of the crystal ball? Now imagine a time before you were even a teenager, where at least at some point

you were happy doing something that was fun or being with people that were important, and being able to observe yourself in the crystal ball being happy at that time.

Now imagine another crystal ball, right next to that one, but in this ball imagine seeing yourself at age twenty-five—long after high school and long after college—within a situation or place in life where you experienced happiness. It could be something you were doing or somebody you were with or somewhere where you were. It really doesn't matter. What really matters is that you're using the ability of creativity to see the image of this in that second crystal ball and from your vantage point, you can see both of these crystals next to each other.

Now last year was a different time than now, and even though it was not so far in the distance that it would take effort to find a situation where you were happy last year, you can imagine a third crystal ball next to the other two where you can observe yourself in a situation or place last year where you were happy. It is amazing seeing each of these three crystals next to each other, isn't it? Three times in life when you did experience happiness, at least on some level.

And now imagine floating up out of your body as you sit in the chair, and observe the you that's here right now observing those three crystal balls. Do you notice how you feel here and now watching these crystals? You can even imagine, if you want to take this to another level, another you floating outside of yourself, floating above yourself where you are right here, and looking down at yourself watching these crystals, holding images of when you were happy. And if you've done this, tell the other you what you need to know about the ability of you to experience just the feeling of happiness. It's amazing how we can often form a new vantage point or shift a perceptual position, a state of dissociation. Speak to yourself with encouragement, kindness and acceptance.

And now it is time to reorient to the room. Before you open your eyes, take in a deep breath, let your lungs be filled with oxygen, ready to open the eyes, feeling fantastic having learned experientially a little bit more about dissociation."

E X E R C I S E S

1. Practice the crystal ball technique as self-hypnosis—seeing yourself seeing you in each of three different crystals, feeling a resource state in each that would be beneficial to you. These could be happiness, learning, encouragement, confidence.
2. Practice the crystal ball technique with a friend, family member, colleague, or client.
3. Continue to practice the language patterns identified in previous chapters in your daily life and with your clients.

Chapter Six

The Hand Levitation Induction

Why is the Hand Levitation Induction one of the more famous Milton Erickson inductions?

The reason is actually very simple: Erickson had it transcribed, and Ernest Rossi published it with a commentary. Both appear in the *Complete Collected Works of Milton Erickson, Volume 1*.

Of course, the wording I use is not Milton Erickson's script for copyright reasons. Rather, it shows how I've adapted his techniques, concepts, and language patterns to my own style.

This brings up a question I've received from students:

How can I become like Milton Erickson? How can I become hypnotic?

Your goal is not to become Milton Erickson. Your goal should be to become the best you that you can be. The techniques of Milton Erickson will help you be a hypnotic person and a more effective hypnotist. But it should not be your goal to copy Milton Erickson. It should not be your goal to simply do what Milton Erickson did.

You have to remember what he did occurred in an entirely different time period sixty years ago. His methods can and should be adapted. We should integrate contextual hypnotherapy. We should delete some of the archaic language, like the word "sleep" that Milton Erickson used. We should take his foundation and theory, and build from it something that fits our own personal style and our own work. That's how I think you become an exceptional hypnotist studying Milton Erickson's techniques.

Back in that day when Milton Erickson was publishing things—it was actually a big deal to publish things—certainly not everything that he did or

wrote was published. That hand levitation with Ernest Rossi's commentary was one of those things that was published, and so it was something that was frequently shared and taught in early Ericksonian hypnotherapy courses. In fact, when I studied with Bob Bollet in Germany, the very first class started with zero explanation of hypnosis. It started with Dr. Bollet simply walking to the front of class and putting his hand on his chin and a foot on a chair to rest his foot. He then began a very naturalistic set of observations about us in the class. As we became engaged in what he was saying, he was using Ericksonian language patterns to simply develop rapport with us. Within the next thirty to forty-five minutes, if you were to walk in the room, you would have seen a room full of people listening with their eyes closed, in various stages of raising the hands towards the face.

He actually began his class with hand levitation, providing zero explanation of what it was and why he was doing it. He did this because one of the most effective ways to teach hypnosis is simply to lead hypnosis.

Now, why do a hand levitation? The truth is I don't do this with the vast majority of my clients. In fact, there are only usually a few clients a year that I actually do a hand levitation with. Nonetheless, the hand levitation makes a great convincer. It becomes a great experiential process. It demonstrates hypnotic amnesia. Our clients are often unaware, at the end of the session that their hand has been rising throughout the session. It becomes the great convincer Milton Erickson used because at the end of the session his clients would wonder why their hand was next to their face. I'm convinced that Milton Erickson sometimes did things that were humorous simply to entertain himself. There's absolutely nothing wrong in enjoying your work.

The hand levitation is experiential. It draws the client into the process of induction, and it teaches specific skills that are useful to the client for accessing the subconscious mind.

This is an example of the language I use for a Hand Levitation Induction:

"I think you will find the next couple of minutes actually enjoyable. That is my hope. I'm not going to ask you to do anything that would make you uncomfortable, or anything difficult. This is really a learning process. In learning hypnosis, one of the things that you are able to do is learn the difference between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. In learning and experiencing hypnosis, a lot of people experience not only a tremendous amount of relaxation or peace, but they also find

that sometimes they can access parts of the mind that we didn't know existed before they learned hypnosis.

What I am going to ask you to do is really pretty simple: Follow the directions that I give and simply allow yourself to learn from this experience. Our goal here is really to integrate our conscious and our subconscious thinking. It really doesn't matter if you hear all of the words that I use or if you only hear some of the words. What really matters most is that you allow yourself to learn from this experience in any way that would be beneficial for your mind to benefit. Why don't you start out by simply taking a deep breath and making the decision to relax? You'll probably find it more comfortable to close the eyes now. And if your hands are crossed, you'll probably find it easier to do this if you simply set your hands on the armrest of the chair or on your knees or thighs. Lots of times people find it easier to relax if they simply set their hands on their legs.

You can look at your two hands. As you look at those two hands, you may see some similarities or perhaps you may begin to notice some differences between them. In a moment I am going to ask your mind, your conscious mind may hear the words that I'm using, but the subconscious mind will actually make the choice to choose between the two hands. You may choose the left hand. Perhaps you will find that is actually the right choice for you. Or you might choose the right hand. The other hand will be the only one, of course, that is left. You may or may not understand why you made the choice that you made from the conscious mind, but the subconscious mind will understand the differences between those two hands. In your mind, whether it is your conscious mind, it can hear the words that I'm using, or the subconscious mind, with experiences and feelings that you experienced. I wonder if you can make the choice between which of those two hands will become the hand that is light as a feather ... and which hand will be heavier than the other. There really isn't a right or wrong answer here. It's really dependent on your own experiences, your own choices, and the feelings that you have. As you look at those two hands, your subconscious mind knows which of those two hands ... is lighter than the other.

Your conscious mind may be aware of the choice at this point that your subconscious mind has made. Or perhaps it's not, and that's fine. You can perhaps begin at this point to feel the lightness in one of those hands. That lightness can extend to the fingertip and even to

the nails of the hand that your subconscious mind has selected ... Now lightness perhaps extends all the way to the forearm and even into the elbow. As you breathe each breath, allow the relaxation experience to become twice as deep. The hand that your subconscious mind has identified as being the hand that is lighter than the other hand allows you to experience the feeling of lightness in that hand, and that feeling of lightness in that hand may cause at first a simple awareness of the difference between those two hands—maybe a twitch of a finger or a tingling in your skin as your breath becomes more shallow and your heart rate slows.

The subconscious mind is being spoken to. It understands intuitively the feeling of lightness. It's almost as if a balloon has been tied around the wrist. As that hand begins to move gently, that balloon causes that hand to rise. The conscious mind may wonder how this occurs, but the subconscious mind is able to experience its own reality. And as that balloon begins to lift the hand, slowly but higher, let it lift slowly higher and higher into the air, and even moving up towards your face. The other hand is of course heavy, but the hand your subconscious mind has chosen experiences a feeling of lightness, rising, as if on its own. Higher and higher. And let the hand lift all the way toward the face, maybe even resting on your cheekbone or on the forehead. The experiences we create with the subconscious mind are experiences that we are able to learn from and use in any way we would like to. The subconscious mind is able to make a choice of where you would like to rest that hand—on the cheekbone, forehead, or even gently back on the lap. The hand can rise and the hand can fall just as the subconscious mind is able to note the difference between the left and the right hand, and you've had a chance to experience that right here and now. So I'm going to ask you to give yourself a moment to completely and freely experience a moment of tranquility, a moment perhaps more peaceful than any other experience you've identified.

Your subconscious mind is able to do this because your subconscious mind and the conscious mind can work together. In your mind, take a moment to simply create a that resource state of learning, a feeling of peace, of serenity, and to simply enjoy the next minute or two of deep trance before we open the eyes and reorient to the room. One of the learnings of this session is, at any time throughout the day, if you experience difficulty or tension or stress, you can bring yourself back

to this point where you are right now that you've created of calm, of learning, of serenity.

And so when I count to three, open the eyes, feeling fantastic and ready for the rest of the day. One. Two—taking in a breath. Three—feeling energy from that, opening the eyes feeling fantastic.”

At the end of such a process, depending on what your client decided, their hand may be on their face, it may be in the air, or it may be back resting on their knee or the armrest of the chair. Any of these outcomes is acceptable. At this point with the client though, we can go into a suggestive script or an awakening or really anything that we would like to do.

Of course, this example is even a bit abbreviated. Depending on the client, I may take a lot more time than this script indicates.

EXERCISES

1. Find videos demonstrating the arm or hand levitation on the Internet. Listen carefully for hypnotic language.
2. Practice the Hand Levitation Induction with a friend, family member, colleague, or client. Be sure to adapt the text to your volunteer and take as long as you need.

***Speaking
Ericksonian***

Chapter Seven

A Few Words about Covert Hypnosis

Anyone who has searched for hypnosis resources on the Internet has come across ads for courses that claim to teach “Covert Hypnosis.” Some of these courses even call it “Black Ops Covert Hypnosis,” as though it were a magical form of secret hypnosis used by the KGB to create hypno-slaves and multiple-personality assassins worthy of a Jason Bourne movie. Often these ads will claim to teach secrets that originated with Milton Erickson, usually right before urging the reader to buy now “before the government takes down the site!”

So what is Covert Hypnosis?

Covert Hypnosis is something that is often misunderstood. Covert Hypnosis is the same thing as Conversational Hypnosis.

In the world of hypnosis, there is a lot of semantic confusion and a lot of semantic debate. People think hypnosis is this or that, or meditation is this or that. There are people like me who say meditation and hypnosis are the same thing. There are other people who say they are two heads of the same coin. Other people say they’re completely different. The reality is a lot of these are really just semantic games.

Covert Hypnosis sounds so much more exciting than “learning how to use hypnotic principles in your daily conversations with people because it’s an efficient and effective way to communicate.” People who pay way too much for Covert Hypnosis courses often labor under the belief that hypnotized people are helpless victims who carry out the commands of an all-powerful hypnotist, and they believe that if they can hypnotize their boss, a store clerk, or that pretty co-worker without the “victim’s” knowledge, they’ll have absolute power

over others. In the real world, of course, we know that hypnosis, covert, conversational, or otherwise, doesn't work that way.

The most basic tenet of Covert Hypnosis is to recognize that all people are always in trance all of the time.

Covert Hypnosis (i.e. effective communication) involves knowing how to direct people who are in trance to:

- identify their deepest needs
- develop a strategy for attaining their desires
- take action towards reaching a goal

Covert Hypnosis is really just about knowing how to use language to produce responses. That's what the language patterns of Milton Erickson are really all about.

Covert Hypnosis is about knowing how to create emotional responses congruent with desired outcomes. Covert Hypnosis is really all about knowing most what it is that the client wants to know.

Covert Hypnosis is about knowing the most effective ways to communicate with people, to cause them to look inside of themselves rather than outside of themselves to look for an answer.

Covert Hypnosis is really about using hypnosis to help people without calling it *hypnosis*.

Examples of Covert Hypnosis

Imagine you are shopping for a car. You go for a demo ride in that car and on the way to the car lot, the salesman says, "Imagine driving this new car to work in the morning!" or something like "Don't you just love that new car smell?" He anchors positive feelings to that car. He asks you a number of questions to get you in the habit of saying yes. And so then he asks you the closing question: "If I should get the numbers correct today, would you like to take it home and drive it work in the morning?" Being in the habit of saying yes, you are more likely to buy the car on the spot.

In dating, a savvy guy doesn't use a pick-up line. Instead, he says to a girl he's interested in, "You have a remarkable energy about you! Do you practice yoga or some kind of spiritual discipline?" That's much better than a typical line in dating: "Hey, does your arm hurt? I figured you hurt it when you fell out

of heaven.” The smart guy will then go on to ask questions about her spiritual discipline—which builds rapport, because everyone likes to talk about themselves. In the course of the conversation, he’ll ask questions that elicit various positive states—comfort, fascination, excitement—and he’ll anchor those states to himself. Once he has enough rapport, he’ll elicit states of arousal, again anchoring them to himself. This is Covert Hypnosis, but it’s a far cry from the stereotypical image of the hypnotist enslaving a hapless female with his evil gaze or magic pocket-watch. It’s really just effective communication, based on making someone else feel good.

A parent can use Covert Hypnosis: “Tonight for dinner, would you like broccoli or carrots?” It’s a fake alternative. Either way the kids are still getting vegetables. A parent might say, “Would you like to go to bed now, or in five minutes?” or “Would you like to brush your teeth before you put your toys away, or after?”

A coach might use this technique by saying, “I’m going to teach you a strategy for increasing creativity. Close your eyes for a minute and relax. You can listen to each word or let your mind drift and only listen with your subconscious mind, that mind you use when you’re in the zone.” The coach is actually inducing a formal trance induction without ever calling it “hypnosis.”

Methods of Covert Hypnosis

Probably the most well-known technique is a Pattern Interrupt followed by a redirecting trance. The Pattern Interrupt really is anything that breaks our concentration and brings us into a new state of awareness. That’s all it is. Maybe it’s an interruption from a kid while you’re busy working. It can occur during a movie that we’re watching where there’s dramatic silence, then suddenly something scary happens. Anything that redirects our current trance into a new state of awareness. This is what the “world famous” Milton Erickson Handshake was all about. We all have a standard ritual of shaking hands with somebody. When someone reaches out to shake hands with us, we automatically reach back, as if on autopilot. Milton Erickson would shake someone’s hand and immediately extend their hand up towards their face. That’s not something they expected to happen. And as soon as they do that, he would begin redirecting their attention to whatever it is that is important to him. Richard Bandler, of course, perfected this in his demonstrations. If you just go to YouTube and type in “handshake induction,” you’re going to get a zillion YouTube videos showing

how effective a Pattern Interrupt during a simple handshake can truly be. Why during a handshake? Because this is where we least expect something different to happen. We know what the process is usually going to entail.

Covert Hypnosis evokes emotional states and attachments. Covert Hypnosis uses the language patterns of Milton Erickson. Covert Hypnosis uses being an authority as a basis for giving direct suggestion. Having a PhD, being the author of a book, wearing a white lab coat, appearing on television—all of these produce the illusion of authority, and people are more likely to do what an authority figure tells them to do.

Covert Hypnosis uses ambiguous language. This, of course, promotes agreement. And it also uses social power of the group, recognizing that people don't like to stand out from the group—but they do like to have leadership within the group.

Covert Hypnosis is about building rapport, negating feelings of isolation. Many people, especially on social media, have a feeling of isolation and a feeling of not really connecting with people and being with rapport with somebody. Even the basic principles of matching and mirroring, using the same type of non-verbal communication—our hands, our arms, our breath—that our clients use can effectively build rapport and communicate to someone on a very personal level. The message is usually “This person is interested in me.”

Covert Hypnosis—healthy covert hypnosis—is about partnering with people. Anytime you partner with somebody, whoever has the most flexibility is the person who has the most power.

Covert Hypnosis is about recognizing internal strengths of a person. People love to be flattered and appreciated so long as it is done sincerely.

Covert Hypnosis is not magical or mystical. It is simply the process of effective communication—and that's what Ericksonian hypnosis is all about.

Chapter Eight

The Milton Model

What is the Milton Model?

As discussed earlier, the Internet is rife with Conversational (or even Covert) Hypnosis training programs that make outrageous claims: “*Get anybody to do whatever you want using these fantastic language techniques and language patterns handed down in secret by Milton H. Erickson to his most trusted students!*”

Of course, those claims are greatly exaggerated, but Milton Erickson did pioneer a form of hypnosis that uses particular language patterns rather than relying exclusively on formal inductions. Because this form of hypnosis seems more like a conversation than a formal trance process, these techniques are often called Conversational Hypnosis. Because people don’t always recognize what’s going on in these language patterns, it’s sometimes called Covert Hypnosis.

When Richard Bandler and John Grinder, the founders of NLP, studied Erickson and analyzed his use of language, the name they gave to these techniques was the “Milton Model.” Essentially, the Milton Model consists of language patterns that focus a person’s point of attention and create an internal experience or internal dialogue that lets them tap in to their unconscious resources.

The purpose of the Milton Model language patterns is to invite a person to respond. This invitation can call for an internal or experiential response, a verbal response, or even a behavioral response.

The Milton Model is associated with using artfully vague language patterns to avoid unconscious objections or the imposition of therapist's bias into the process.

These are the core foundations of persuasion techniques, whether we're talking about sales or whether we're talking about romance and seduction. It's certainly one of the core aspects of effective communication during the manipulative process of therapy.

The Ethics of Manipulation

By the way, did I, as a licensed therapist, just call therapy *manipulative*?

Certainly therapy has elements of persuasion and manipulation. When used by the ethical therapist, persuasion and manipulation are part of helping a client ultimately achieve their goals.

Therapy is a form of manipulation. Really, so are most human interactions. And this is why, of course, therapist ethics are important. Manipulation can be powerfully helpful or harmful, depending on the operator and also the ego-strength of the client.

I'm going to deviate here for a minute and answer the question: "When using the techniques or the language patterns of the Milton Model, can we really get anybody in Covert or Conversational Hypnosis to do anything we want?"

The reality is, there are seven billion on the planet earth, and some of them have what I would call a greater "ego strength" than others, and some people have a very weak sense of self-identity. They really don't know where they stop and somebody else begins. In psychotherapy or psychiatry, this might even have the diagnosis of Borderline Personality. It is quite possible for an unethical authority figure to take advantage of these people, with or without hypnosis of any form.

The world is full of people who have used persuasion to manipulate people into doing things that they otherwise would not have done. I mean, you can look at history and see examples like Adolph Hitler. You can look at examples from crime like Patty Hearst. You can look at other criminal examples. There was the Washington, DC, shooter case a few years ago, in which an older man (an authority figure) manipulated a teenaged boy to lie in the back of his car and shoot people with a sniper rifle. The world is filled with examples of one person manipulating another person.

It is my belief that with or without studying Milton Erickson, the extreme personality who is an abusive individual has the capacity to take advantage of what might be called in pop psychology, “weaker-willed people” or those with lesser ego strength. When I hear stories like that that are attributed to the power of hypnosis, it really isn’t the power of hypnosis—although hypnotic methods may be employed—it really attests to the skill of the truly abusive or maybe even evil person for choosing the right victim to perpetrate their evil deeds on.

I thought I would go ahead and address that because anytime you talk about language patterns and Covert or Conversational Hypnosis, those sorts of things come up. But this is not really a book about manipulating people to do things against their will. The purpose of this book is to bring therapists to help other people experience success. And so that is how we are going to use the information in this book.

The Art of Being Vague

Let me share with you a generalization about the Milton Model. Most Milton Model patterns are designed to avoid specificity because the more specific we are, the more likely there is to be opposition from the client’s subconscious mind rather than the development of rapport. Let me give you an example using visual imagery:

“Imagine a heavenly flight of stairs. The stairs are tall and narrow. Imagine standing up the top of these stairs. They are majestic stairs and covered with red carpet. Your hand is holding onto a polished brass rail. You make your step from the top stair to the next stair, and down to the next stair. With each step allow yourself to become more relaxed, stepping into that red carpet feeling your feet step into the deep red carpeting, but safely holding onto that descent down to the sixth stair, and the fifth stair, and the fourth stair. All the way down now. Three, two, one. Stepping off the stairs into a heavenly feather bed.”

Now, that was very specific. I called the stairs “tall and narrow.” I called them “majestic.” I told you there was a “polished brass rail,” I told you there was a “red carpet.” But chances are, some of you as you were going through that brief process said to yourself, “Wait a minute, my stairs don’t have red carpet.”

Some of you probably have thin carpet instead of thick carpet. When I said thick carpet, you had to change the carpet on your staircase. Some of you as I counted up the specific number of stairs you were on said, “*Wait a minute, I’m still up higher; I have to try to catch up.*” You see, because I was specific, there were all kinds of conscious suggestions that were probably interrupting your process.

Let me give you an example of how you can use what is often referred to as a Staircase Deepener, using different language choices that make it completely different for the client’s experience:

“Close your eyes. Breathe in and breathe out. As you descend into an even deep state of trance, imagine an elevator, an escalator, or even a staircase. Imagine that you’re at the top; you’re heading towards the bottom where there is comfort and relaxation. As I count backwards from ten to one, descend down each step, descend down each floor, down to a point or a state, a resource state we call hypnosis. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero. Perfect. Completely relaxed.”

Notice I didn’t specify it had to be staircase or what the stairs looked like. It could be an elevator, escalator, or a staircase. Instead of giving them colors, what floor they were on, instead of telling them the details of what I think they should be visualizing, I let the readers bring their own visualization to the process.

Let me give you another example. I generally avoid the use of the word *hypnosis* or *trance*; I typically, in my own personal style, prefer to call it a *resource state*. I certainly don’t use the word *sleep* during my sessions, but Milton Erickson did. We must remember that word definitions and usages of words change over time. So, Milton Erickson used the word *sleep* or the phrase *deep sleep*. Those are not words that I use in my hypnosis sessions at all, not because it’s wrong to do so but because there are better words. *Resource state* is what I usually say because I teach my client that’s what hypnosis is all about.

Let me give you a couple of examples here:

“As you go deeper into trance, achieving hypnosis easily . . .”

vs.

“You should set aside the day, focusing on your experience here in my office, as you access that resource state which is going to be most helpful to you today.”

In the first example, I was very specific. They must go into hypnosis. They must go into trance. In the second example, I was much more ambiguous: “Let yourself access that resource state which you would find most helpful today.” Everybody can find that. So the art of vagueness is really one of the hallmarks of Ericksonian Hypnotherapy.

Key Concepts of the Milton Model

How do we go about using artfully vague communication and suggestion with our clients? There are many key concepts to understand and principles to practice. As you read these ideas, I encourage you to come up with your own examples, even to take time to write them down.

For reference, here is a list of the key concepts in the order we will discuss them:

- Nominalizations
- Unspecified Nouns and Verbs
- Unspecified Referential Indices
- Presupposition with Adjectives and Adverbs
- Presupposition by Comparisons using As
- Mind Reading
- Linkages
- Lost Performatives
- Modal Operators
- Presuppositions
- Embedded Suggestions
- Negative Commands
- Double Meaning Words

Nominalizations

Concept number one in the Milton Model is the idea of nominalization. In NLP we refer to nominalizations as “any noun you can’t put into a wheelbarrow.” For example, I could put my little brother into a wheelbarrow. I could put a dog / refrigerator/ TV remote control into a wheelbarrow. But when we take a verb and turn it into a noun, more specifically when we make a noun out of

something intangible, we can't really put it into a wheelbarrow. Let me give you some examples.

*“During this training course, these **learnings** you have acquired are useful in almost every situation in life.”*

The word “learnings” is a nominalization. It is a verb that’s been turned into a noun. “Learning” becomes “learnings.” “Learnings” isn’t a tangible. It is a nominalization. You can’t put “learnings” into a wheelbarrow.

*“The **joys** you can count are present in many ways.”*

“Joy” (an emotion) becomes “joys” (a plural noun). Again, you can’t put “joys” into a wheelbarrow; they are intangible.

But why would you want to use nominalization? The reason why is that, oddly enough, it makes an intangible into something concrete. It makes an intangible obtainable. I hear people say all the time, “I just can’t learn.” But when I tell them to metaphorically “hold on to these learnings,” that’s something they can do. So a goal becomes attainable when we use a nominalization.

Similarly, a nominalization can change the relationship with something. For example, “owning joy” is probably more powerful than “feeling joy.” “How many joys do you have today?” What a great question to ask a client. Joys have become something that they possess, and that changes the relationship. It’s not something they hope for or long for. It’s something that’s very real today.

It’s important to recognize when our clients may have nominalized in unhealthy or unhelpful ways. For example, many of our clients say they “have depression” instead of saying they “are depressed.”

One of the things that we can do in hypnosis is we can un-nominalize their nominalizations. We can take away ownership. For instance, we can change “having depression” to “being depressed.” We can also change a relationship with a nominalization. For example, rather than “being anxious,” we might say that a client “feels some anxiety,” the way one might feel a draft. Either approach can lessen the sense of ownership and provides distance between our client and the issue.

Unspecified Nouns and Verbs

The next key concept is unspecified nouns and verbs. What these actually do is they force the listener to “fill in the blanks” with ideas from their subconscious mind. The interesting thing is that the natural state of people is that we’re probably a little self-absorbed, a little bit narcissistic, and so they often fill in the blank with themselves. This is very powerful because if I say in a hypnosis session, “People find it easy to go into trance.” I have not specified which people, or how they’re going to do that. And so, what’s the subconscious mind’s response to these unspecified nouns, “Who are the people?” The subconscious response is, “Wow! I am a people! And if I’m a people, then I find it easy to go into trance!”

We take action on whatever we believe. For example, you believe that if you pay your electric bill, you will continue to have power. So you pay it. If a client believes “People find it easy to go into deep trance” and the subconscious mind believes they are a people, what will they do? Well, they will actually go into trance.

I use this often in my suggestions as well as my inductions. In my office I have recliners, and I will often say to my clients, “People find that when they sit on a hypnotic chair that it’s easy to go into a deep trance state quickly.” They recognize that they are people and they are sitting in a chair, and so the response to that indirect suggestion is to go into trance deeply and quickly. I use this approach all the time in my Suggestive Therapy:

“Many people have found that by learning self-hypnosis and practicing the techniques that I’ve shared with you they find it easy to lose weight, quit smoking, stop chasing cars, or whatever it is that brought them to my office.”

Unspecified nouns and verbs really are a powerful linguistic tool that you can use in your hypnosis sessions.

Unspecified Referential Indices

The third category is unspecified referential indices. They are actually nouns that do not refer to anything with a capital letter. For example, "Richard" vs. "person". Richard has a capital R; person doesn't. They refer to something non-specific. "This is so beneficial, isn't it?" What is *this*? *This* is whatever the client attaches meaning to. It could be the session, the process, this time, these words, whatever. And when we couple *this* with a suggestion that this is beneficial, the subconscious minds come to agreement. So I could use this sentence in my induction:

"As you continue to breathe in and breathe out, it's so beneficial, isn't it? Feeling good, taking a moment out of your busy day to set aside stress and deeply relax here in my office."

In my pre-talk, I often use unspecified referential indices. For example, I might say as I lean over the desk, "This is one of the greatest things you have done." What have they done? The subconscious mind will find meaning, and the subconscious mind will say, "I did it!"

If I have a client in a deep trance state and I'm offering suggestions, I could say, "Everybody finds something of value in this experience." *Who is everybody? I'm a body, so I must be everybody.* *What is 'something'? What is 'experience'?* Milton Erickson's idea was that our subconscious mind is infinitely wise. What these patterns do is engage the mind with what Erickson found were internal resources and internal dialogues for problem-solving.

Presupposition with Adjectives and Adverbs

The fourth pattern in the Milton Model is adjectives and adverbs that presuppose. This approach tends to gain agreement from the subconscious mind. They get "buy-in" and the acceptance of our pre-suppositions that are made in the therapeutic process. For example I could say, "*People are pleasantly surprised by the incredible capacity to change.*" *Pleasantly* modifies the word *surprised*. *Incredible* describes the word *capacity*. I could say to the client, "As you relax, you will find a **pleasant** surprise in your ability to **easily** recall all the information in this book."

To make this book truly useful to you and for you to become hypnotic, which is ultimately the goal of this book, pay attention to the adjectives and adverbs that you're using in your daily conversations with people. Become es-

sentially a more colorful speaker by adding these adjectives and adverbs that presuppose the meaning you want.

Presupposition by Comparisons using As

The fifth language pattern is a comparison with the word *as*. *As* is a two-letter word but extremely powerful. *As* increases connection and reduces conscious opposition. Sometimes in hypnosis you're going to hear about "bypassing the critical faculty." How do we bypass the critical faculty? We do that by reducing opposition. The word *as* is a very effective way for structuring a direct suggestion within an indirect suggestion. So it lets my clients subconsciously feel that they are the one who has a choice and they're in control.

Let me give you some examples of comparison with the word *as*:

"Just as you can relax here, you can relax and access this state anywhere—at home, at work, or even in traffic in your car."

I use that a lot as a post-hypnotic suggestion with my client. At the end of my session I'll often say to them:

"And just as you were able to reach a deep resource state here in my office, if at any time anywhere over the next day or two or three, you have a need to access this deep state of relaxation or confidence that you've created here, you'll be able to do it just as you were able to accomplish this in my office; you will be able to accomplish this everywhere."

Another example of using *as*:

"If anyone is as easily able to relax as you are, they will find it easy to experience deep trance at just about any time."

Or here's another one:

"Just as you can create confidence here, you can create confidence anywhere, even in front of a group where you are speaking."

Mind Reading

Now, despite how we're portrayed in movies, hypnotists are not psychics, but our clients sometimes feel as though we can read their minds. Really, it's just projecting what the client needs to know through a language pattern that predicts the future or predicts my knowledge of their state.

So here are some examples:

"As you continue to relax in that chair, I know you are learning as you experience something new today."

That's mind reading. How do I know that? I don't really know it. The only way I could know it is if I were a mind reader. But I'm projecting what I want them to do and learn as they experience something new today,

Here is another example:

"You may wonder if it is ok to have thought while you practice hypnosis. It is of course normal for the mind to wander: after all that is what minds do, they wander and think. But instead of following those thoughts, just let them exist without judgment and without following them, returning your attention to the breath."

By the way, that sentence is really one that would be identified from the field of Contextual Psychology, and you can find that even in Contextual Psychology, we can use Ericksonian language patterns to enhance our effectiveness.

Here's another example of mind reading sentence:

"You are curious to discover how relaxed you can become."

Now, how do you use that sentence? Well, I might use it in a pre-talk before we ever get to the hypnotic chair. I might say to my client who's sitting at the desk:

"I know that you've been looking at the hypnotic chairs. Don't worry, in a few minutes we're going to move over there for our session, and I know that you're curious to discover how relaxed you really can become."

When I activate their curiosity, now they want to accomplish that, and so it makes trance induction even easier.

Linkages

Linkages presuppose a link between two things, even when linking them truly is completely arbitrary, a mental exercise, what may be called a “relational frame” by contextual psychologists. Students of Steven Hayes and those who have taken my courses in Contextual Hypnotherapy recognize Relational Frame Theory. Linkages suggest the mental process for creating those frames. In Ericksonian hypnosis we are still creating these frames to facilitate change.

In addition to using Linkages to create new relational frames, the therapist should also be aware of the Linkages that clients have created that might actually need to be “unhypnotized” from their subconscious mind. So what we are doing here really is two things: We are learning these language patterns so that we can create arbitrary relational frames (relationships between two things are really probably are completely unrelated) while at the same time, we’re looking for the arbitrary relational frames that our clients have created because part of our work can actually be unhypnotizing.

Relational frames are important to understand because they are what separate humans from the other animal species. The reasons why humans are at the top to the food chain rather than giraffes ruling the world is that humans have the ability to create arbitrary relational frames.

Engage in this exercise to understand relational frames:

Think of something, anything that is a noun. It can be car, a microphone, a cup, anything you want to. It doesn’t matter—any person, place, or thing. Think of an object, something you can hold in a wheelbarrow. Actually write that down on a piece of paper or type it out on that notepad note to yourself. That’s Object Number One.

Now that you thought of one thing, think of another thing—another noun, another something. Again, it can be a DVD, a computer, a TV, a bug. It doesn’t really matter what it is, just think of anything. That’s Object Number Two. So now you have two unrelated things listed on your piece of paper.

But humans have the ability to create relationships that are really completely arbitrary even when no relationships actually exist. And so, I have three questions for you to answer regarding these two objects:

1. How is Object Number One like Object Number Two?

Think about that for a moment. You can write down your answer. I picked a cup and a TV remote control. How are they like each other? Both sit on a desk. It’s really completely arbitrary, but our minds have the ability to create this re-

lationship frame and see how two things that really are random are related to one another least in our own minds.

2. How is Object Number One better than Object Number Two?

Maybe a little more difficult than the first question, but your mind has ability to come up with an answer, even though that answer truly is arbitrary. And so think about how the first one is a better than the second one. My answer is the cup is better than the remote control because I can drink from it, and water is necessary for life. That's really completely arbitrary, but in my own mind I've created this relationship—just like you did with your two objects.

3. How is Object Number One the parent of Object Number Two?

This may take a little more creativity, but our minds have the ability to create relationships that are arbitrary and abstract. In my own mind, I came up with something really completely arbitrary, but I was still able to answer the question. A cup holds ice. A remote control is made out of plastic. In order to mold it, plastic must be cooled with ice. Therefore, the cup gives birth to the remote control. It is the parent of the remote control.

No matter how arbitrary, we're still able to come up with some way to answer the question. This is really important though, because the question is absurd. Not all things can be the parent of all things, and yet we're always able to answer the question. That is an adaptable evolutionary trait in our psychology that put us up the top of the food chain. It shows our cognitive abilities that even exceed smart animals like elephant and dolphins. They cannot create relational frames; we can.

Although Milton Erickson did not call this Relational Frame Theory, he certainly understood the concept and employed Linkages to imply new relational frames.

Erickson used three types of linkages:

- Conjunctions: *And, But*
- Connections in Time: *As, When, During, While*
- Cause and Effect: *Makes, Causes, Forces, Because, Requires*

Linkage using Conjunctions

Remember that old Schoolhouse Rock song? “*Conjunction junction, what’s your function?*” Conjunctions are words that connect; that is, they imply a relational frame.

English has seven coordinating conjunctions, but we’re going to focus on the words *and* and *but*. Here are some examples:

*“You are deeply relaxed **and** that means you are able to easily set aside anything known or unknown that has kept you from success. You can release those things now **and** move into this new chapter of life.”*

That next example is actually adapted from a line that my colleague John Cerbone uses frequently. It actuates the creative capacity of the subconscious mind to have somebody release that which is either known or unknown keeping them from success. But when we combine that with conjunctions, we create linkages; we create relational frames that are truly beneficial to our clients.

“You are deeply relaxed. I can see that your breath is smooth and rhythmic, and that means you are able to easily set aside anything known or unknown.”

You see, those two things “being deeply relaxed” and “being able to set aside anything known or unknown” are like the cup and the remote control—not actually related. But because I used a conjunction I forced a relationship.

“You can release these things now and move into this new chapter of life.”

“Releasing things” and “moving into the new chapter of life” are totally unrelated until I use that conjunction.

Presupposition is at the heart of using Linkages. They imply or presuppose the connection we want the client to adopt.

Linkage using Connections in Time

Words that presuppose a time-based relationship between two actions include the following:

- As
- When
- During
- While (or Whilst in British English)

Here are some examples:

“As you relax, you can feel any stress melting from your muscles.”

So “feeling stress melting from my muscles” is linked to the present with word *as*.

“When you breathe in, it is as if you are breathing in energy, confidence, and power.”

I use that often with my clients who need to feel unstoppable confidence in any situation.

“During this time, you will feel relaxed to know that your time has been well spent learning something new that will serve you, not just during this transition in life, but in every aspect of life.”

Note the connection between what’s happening now and what will happen in the future.

Linkage using Cause and Effect

Implying a cause/effect relationship is a powerful way to create a beneficial relational frame. These are several of the words that can presuppose such a relationship:

- Makes
- Causes
- Forces
- Because
- Requires

Here are some examples:

“Because you’ve come here today and set aside time to learn something new, we know that you will be successful at weight release / smoking cessation / fear of flying / fill in the blank.”

This is a great one to use during a pre-talk or during a session.

“You have lost ten pounds in the past four weeks and this makes achieving your goal even easier over the next few weeks. Your devotion to this requires you to be successful, and this makes it even easier to stop smoking without discomfort.”

Lost Performatives

Lost Performatives are words or phrases that indicate the performance of an action without stating who performed the action. Again, the subconscious mind attaches meaning internally, so when a therapist uses a Lost Performativ, the client tends to think it's about them.

These words are often used in Lost Performatives:

- Important
- Essential
- Good
- Necessary
- Right
- Promise

Here are some examples:

“The great promise you will experience because you came here today.”

What promise? your client wonders. *Was does the promise entail? I must have made a promise to myself or maybe somebody made a promise to me.*

This sentence also involves Mind Reading, by the way, plus a causative conjunction, so that's actually a fairly complex suggestion.

“It is important to learn language patterns.”

Important, why? Why is this important? Important to whom? This statement forces the subconscious mind to create a connection and meaning out of these words.

"It is good that you came to my office and its benefit is multi-faceted."

What is good? What is the benefit? That's not specified. It's lost because it's not attached to anything. Your clients will attach it to themselves: *Therefore, I am good, and I am going to benefit. Boy, that makes me feel hopeful.*

Modal Operators

Language patterns that direct the subject's experience to a certain direction are known as Modal Operators.

"It is great that you are able to learn so easily, applying what you have done here today to new experiences over the next day or two."

"It is great" is the modal operator. That what's pushing your client forward.

"This foundation is one that you can build from and quickly achieve your goals."

Whether I teach a pain control client Progressive Muscle Relaxation or I teach Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction to a client who may be quitting smoking and worried about withdrawal, this is a great suggestion.

Presuppositions

Presuppositions are a powerful tool in persuasion; in certain ways, they underlie most of the other language patterns. Presuppositions gain agreement from the subject by implying that an idea is true rather than putting it up for discussion.

Presuppositions about Time

Words used to presuppose relationships about time include the following:

- Before
- After
- During
- Continue

- Yet
- Already
- Begin
- Stop
- Start
- Still
- While
- Since
- As
- When

Here are some examples:

*“You **begin** each session with increased ease at going into deep hypnosis.”*

*“As you **continue** to breathe, you will **start** to notice it is easy to experience only each moment measured by each breath.”*

Ordinal Presuppositions

These presuppositions give a client the appearance of choice, but really they create a faked alternative (also known as a false dilemma or double bind) since an outcome is actually presumed.

So may I ask a client a question this question:

“Do you want to give up smoking now or do you want to have a last cigarette before we begin the session?”

It has the appearance of choice—“Do you want to give up smoking now or have the last cigarette?”—but the outcome is the same: quit smoking.

The word *or* is another presupposition. Or provides a choice which, by the way, is again often faked. Let’s say your client has a fear of flying. You might ask:

“Would you prefer to be able to fly in a hypnotic sleep or simply fly without fear but remain awake?”

It doesn’t matter what their choice is, they’re going to get on the airplane and see grandma, which is what they couldn’t do before the therapy session.

When doing demonstrations, one of my colleagues will ask volunteers whether they want to go into hypnosis slow or fast. While the question helps him pick which induction to use, it also presupposes that the volunteer will go into trance.

So *or* implies two choices, but both choices ultimately have the same outcome.

Presuppositions of Awareness

A third type of presupposition involves awareness:

"Are you aware that you have already become a non-smoker, simply by coming here today?"

I use this one with my clients all the time. It brings their awareness to something. Because my clients are tied up with the question of whether or not they are aware—and let's face it, no one wants to admit to being clueless—they accept the idea that they have already become non-smokers.

During my sessions with my smoking cessation clients, it is my belief that when they sit in the chair and close their eyes, they've already become a non-smoker. They've committed to that by calling me, by taking the time off work, by driving to my office, by paying me, by having their last cigarette either before the session or before we go on to the formal hypnotic trance. By the time we finally get to the hypnotic furniture, my client is actually a non-smoker. So I use that question all the time.

"And as you relax, become aware that the issue here today is not 'how do I quit smoking?' In fact, you've already become a non-smoker simply by coming here today."

I might even draw their awareness to that by adding to it.

"Become aware of what it feels like to be a nonsmoker, to breathe in your first breaths of fresh air."

Presuppositions can be powerful tools for change during pre-talk, trance induction, suggestion, and even after the formal trance work.

Embedded Suggestions

Throughout the scripts that I have included and any of Milton Erickson's writings, you can find many Embedded Suggestions. As pointed out earlier, this was one of Milton Erickson's favorite strategies. Here are some ways to embed a suggestion:

*"I don't know if **you will** go into trance quickly today or if it will take you a little bit of time."*

Your Embedded Suggestions here is: "You will go into trance."

Another way is to simply use the word *now*. That is an Embedded Suggestions related to action at this moment, so we could say:

*"Well, **now**.... There will come a point when it is just more comfortable to close the eyes."*

The implied suggestion is that now is the time to close the eyes.

A Word about Analog Marking

This concept, sometimes called "Analog Striking," comes from Neuro-Linguistic Programming. It builds on the idea of embedded suggestion. The idea is that by saying certain words in a certain tone, or making the same gesture when you say each word, you can string together an embedded suggestion even if the words are separated by some distance in your statement.

I really don't put much stock in Analog Marking, but it's a popular concept in the seduction community, which has borrowed a lot of ideas from NLP and therefore from Ericksonian Hypnosis, so I want to address it here.

Here's the kind of example seductionists will often use:

*"The rock band **KISS** owns a football team in LA. It makes **me** wonder if I should start being a football fan **now**."*

Of course, the embedded command here is "kiss me now."

Yes, I know this is an absurd example—yet those claiming the validity of Analog Marking try to make it sound like a reasonable thing. There are probably 101 more effective ways to get the suggestion acted upon, and there is no evidence that I am aware of showing its utility in producing a response or an action. Sure, you can find stories of the power of Analog Striking in the "super-secret mystical Ericksonian training courses" that are often sold online.

But the reality is, those are anecdotal and probably made up by the people who are selling the course. Unfortunately, those looking for a magic formula to help them score with women will buy into this nonsense.

So I do use Embedded Suggestion. It's logical that the embedded suggestion would be understood by the subconscious mind. It is completely illogical to me that there's any real value in Analog Striking.

Negative Commands

Negative Commands, as we are discussing them here, mean suggestions that use logical negation, that is, the use of the word *not* to reverse the meaning of the sentence.

This is a topic that is somewhat controversial and confuses many students of hypnosis. So let's spell this out clearly:

First, by "negative command," we don't mean a suggestion that is harmful, toxic, or damaging. For instance, "You will always be a failure," while dripping with negativity, does not use logical negation.

Second, while the subconscious mind *can* process negation, it does not seem to do so consistently. Sadly, many hypnosis courses miss this subtle nuance, instead teaching an absolute idea that is nonsense: the idea that the subconscious can NEVER process negative.

Nonetheless, because the subconscious has trouble with negation, there is a way we can exploit that weakness to embed suggestions.

To *not* think of something actually requires that you *do* think of something in order to rule out thinking about it. For example, as you are reading this, do not think of a pink elephant. Whatever you're doing right now, do not think of a pink elephant. And of course, what are you thinking of? You're thinking of a pink elephant. The reason why—this is really paradoxical therapy at its finest—is that you have to process the negative into a positive in order to understand it. And so, negative commands can actually be effective.

Milton Erickson is famous for using this one:

"You will not want to go into trance too quickly, enjoying the process of going deeper."

That's really a pretty complex sentence. It has an embedded command ("go into trance"). It also employs reverse psychology: Anytime somebody tells me what I shouldn't do, I always want to do it. If you tell a child, "Don't touch the stove; you will burn yourself," there's a great chance the child will get burned.

Every little kid burns himself because we have to think about touching the stove in order to think about *not* touching the stove.

Here's another example of a negative command:

"It is important that you don't buy that now, but rather, wait until you know that buying it is the right choice for you."

A salesman may use this in a hypnotic language pattern. It tells somebody not to buy something but at the same time tells them to buy. In order for them to process not buying it, they have to create a mental construct of them buying it now in order to refuse to do it.

In the seduction courses, they actually used to sell tee-shirts that say: "Stop falling in love with me." The idea was that somebody who read the tee-shirt had to actually think of falling in love with somebody in order to understand what *not* falling in love with somebody was. And of course once a thought is created, that thought is the germination for all reality.

A colleague of mine once observed an organization that chanted at each of its meetings:

*"We're building a group with no gossip, no back-stabbing,
and no in-fighting—no kidding!"*

The organization collapsed within a year, due to gossip, back-stabbing, and in-fighting.

As you can see these negative commands can include embedded suggestions, and negative commands can actually be employed quite effectively in almost all forms of hypnosis.

Double Meaning Words

Words that sound alike but have different meanings are called homonyms; using these words to embed suggestions is often called phonological ambiguity.

Some common homonyms in English include:

- your / you're
- too / two / to
- hear / here

Many words and phrases can have double meanings in English:

- down
- back
- mind now
- your unconscious / you're unconscious

Here is an example:

*“As you focus **your unconscious** [pause] **mind now** how you relax more.”*

The subconscious suggestion here is “you’re unconscious”—as in experiencing trance. “Mind now” becomes an embedded command to pay attention.

EXERCISES

1. Take out a pen and paper and list out the various categories of language patterns in this chapter. I have given you examples of each pattern; now it is your turn to practice. Write down your own sentences using the patterns. Those who actually take the time to do this will find it easy to master speaking Ericksonian.
2. In your everyday communication, begin practicing the patterns from this chapter with intention; actually use them during the day and in normal conversation. Notice the response you get from other people when you do this. Ask yourself some questions:
 - When I use these patterns, do I find it easier to converse on a deeper level?
 - Am I getting a different response to my communication from my spouse, kid, boss, neighbor, customer than usual?
3. Hypnotize everything! Hypnotize the objects in the world around you. Talk to yourself in your own head. As you stick the car key in the ignition, say to the key, “It’s easy to turn the engine on, isn’t it?” Or you can say to the car as you’re accelerating from the stop sign, “Now you can go quickly to the cruising speed or slowly to that speed that’s best for you.” Really look for opportunities to practice these patterns (even in your own mind), hypnotizing everything and everything in your way throughout the day. Practice is what will make the most value to you.

I remember, years ago when I learned Ericksonian hypnosis, literally hypnotizing my car when I was driving and hypnotizing my covers at the end of the day:

“Covers, you can cover me wholly and let me sleep like I’m in a cocoon. Or you can cover me half, allowing me to feel the coolness of the evening air.”

4. If you are a news watcher, start paying attention to how politicians use these language patterns. It is amazing how many speech writers have taken Ericksonian hypnosis training.
5. Write a short hypnosis script—either a short induction or a suggestive therapy script. Pay attention to your ability to use these language patterns.

Chapter Nine

Specialized Suggestions

While the key elements of the Milton Model outline the “grammar” of Ericksonian language, the Specialized Suggestions presented in this chapter may be thought of as idioms you will need to master in order to speak Ericksonian.

Tag Questions

A Tag Question is a yes-no interrogative at the end of a sentence, designed to elicit agreement. It's a question that's rhetorical; it doesn't demand a verbal answer. But it creates an internal answer that is affirmative and in agreement with the suggestion that's made. According to Milton Erickson, "Tag Questions displace resistance to the end of a sentence."

Some examples of Tag Questions include:

- *"You will find it easy to increase activity each day now, won't you?"*
- *"Going into trance is comfortable, isn't it?"*
- *"People find it enjoyable to fly on a plane, don't they?"*

The More _____, the More _____

This is a tool for stacking suggestions, which is a great resource if you're trying to overcome resistance with your client. This uses two suggestions, each preceded by “the more.”

Here are some examples:

- *"The more you relax, the more you drift into trance."*
- *"The more you relax, the more you focus on your breath, the more you find this time to be useful and valuable to you."*

- "*The more you lose weight, the more easily you can continue to shed pounds.*"
- "*The more you practice these patterns, the more effective you will be as a hypnotist.*"
- "*The deeper you go, the better you feel; and the better you feel, the deeper you go.*"

Oxymorons

Oxymorons are word combinations that cancel or contradict each other, such as "bittersweet."

What's the value of oxymoron in hypnosis? They disarm the critical factor. They cause confusion.

Here are some examples of oxymoron that Milton Erickson employed in his work:

- "*And as we continue, you may find that throughout the session, you may be in deep trance or at various times more alert and awake listening to each and every word. If you find yourself emerging from trance, act naturally and continue to focus.*"
- "*And as we near the end of our session, you'll find that you are almost ready to open the eyes.*"

Almost ready? It's either almost or ready, and so that phrase is an oxymoron.

One of my favorites, and this is the one that Milton Erickson used, is "Amateur Expert":

*"You've done so well in this session. It is as if you are your own **amateur expert**, able to make a decision right here and right now that you know will be correct."*

Somatic Language

Another tool that we can borrow from Milton Erickson in structuring our suggestions is Somatic Language. These are language patterns or choices that reference the body in a metaphorical way. Perhaps the simplest metaphor to construct is a metaphor created out of somatic language:

*"And so as a result of this session, you will be able to **face** the day with confidence. In fact, you have just **scratched** the surface of your ability during today's session. And because of this, you can **rise up** to **face** the challenges, with a new skill and even a new outlook."*

Somatic language is a simple way to begin using metaphor in hypnotherapy.

Accessing Questions

Accessing Questions encourage the client to respond at an experiential level, rather than only verbal way. They focus the client on a particular aspect of their experience. And the question, the way it's phrased, suggests a specific response.

For example:

"Can you recall how very soothing and relaxing it is to lie in the warm sun and feel it warming your skin?"

This, by the way, is a great approach whether or not visualization is important with a client. For example, let's say you want to use a visualization of the water or the beach; you find out by asking a question like this whether or not that's an appropriate visualization for the client.

Ambiguous Suggestion

Milton Erickson certainly was an expert at ambiguous suggestions. This is about using ambiguity in suggestion to encourage the client's own projections. Ambiguity can surround the desired action, or it can surround the meaning of the suggestion. For example, the statement: "One can be quite iron-willed and hardheaded in such matters" leaves open to interpretation whether the hypnotist is phrasing perseverance or criticizing stubbornness.

Apposition of Opposites

This approach creates distinct polarities of client experience. For example, you could use this in a confusion induction or even as part of a confusional script during suggestive therapy to deepen trance.

For example:

"As your left hand becomes pleasantly cold and numb, you'll notice your right hand becomes comfortably warm and responsive."

These create two poles, two polar opposites.

Apposition of Opposites increases awareness of differences, enhances belief, and reinforces positive responses in the hypnotic process.

Implied Directives

Implied Directives are exactly what they sound like: directives that are implied than overt. They encourage a response in an indirect way. The first part of the suggestive structure is the indirect suggestion to do something for which the second half then directly suggests a response.

Here's an example of that formula:

"You'll experience your hand lifting in just a moment. You'll notice that it feels very, very light."

"You'll experience your hand lifting in just a moment." That's indirect.
"You'll notice that it feels very, very light." That's direct.

Implied Directives are a way to engage the subconscious mind to gain agreement and to inform clients of the process they are about to experience.

Covering All Possibilities

Covering All Possibilities in a suggestion enhances responsiveness by encouraging any or all possible responses to your suggestion. The mistake that a lot of new hypnotists make is in defining success only when the client responds in the way we thought that they would. I try to be as ambiguous as possible, covering all possibilities, defining any response as useful and any response as cooperative.

Here is an example:

"You might find yourself recalling an important memory, perhaps one from quite early in life, perhaps a memory that's very recent, or perhaps one from somewhere in between a long time ago or very recent times."

If I tell a client to recall a memory from when they were five years old, and then they can't, the client starts to feel like a failure. Or if I tell a client to do one thing when they'd rather do another, they'll often feel railroaded into a certain experience—and no one likes to be ordered to do something. Instead, I offer a number of ways to respond, letting my client choose which response they prefer.

Even when it comes to relaxation, I tend to cover all possibilities. Rarely do I say to my clients, "And as you relax, you will feel relaxation this way." Instead what I say to my clients is this: "As you relax and drift into trance, you might notice that the muscles feel very heavy or perhaps even light, or perhaps you feel no change at all, simply knowing that having set this time aside, this time that is valuable to you." Well, there are three different outcomes. It really covers all possibilities. When I cover all possibilities, I guarantee a 100% success rate in my suggestions.

Interspersal of Suggestions

The Interspersal of Suggestions is the frequent repetition of keywords or phrases with an ongoing flow of suggestions. It is used to deepen the hypnotic experience, to facilitate the experience of specific hypnotic phenomena, to really seed and implant ideas for future reference, or to reiterate an important point.

Here's an example of Suggestion Interspersal for deepening:

"A deep thinker, that is, one who thinks deeply, can evolve a deeper understanding of the complexities of suggestion or perhaps even a deeper understanding of himself or herself in getting depth of knowledge about suggestion."

Paradoxical Suggestions

Paradoxical suggestions are what seem to be at first glance incompatible or even contradictory components contained within the same overall suggestion. This approach aids in bypassing the critical faculty.

Here's an example of a Paradoxical Suggestion:

"During the session, you can take all the time in the world, in the next minute or so, to complete your inner work of integrating your new understanding."

That's a great paradox. You can "take all the time in world" during the next "minute or two."

Here is a Paradoxical Suggestion to use with a weight loss client:

"As you eat whatever you want to this week, you will choose portions that are smaller than your previous choices and healthier than what you used to choose."

You could even add, "This is right, isn't it?" to create agreement to that Paradoxical Suggestion. This is by far one of my favorite techniques, and if you were ever to observe me in my office, something you would see me using on a regular basis.

Puns

Puns are a great way to deliver suggestions. They use humor to reframe, and this is valuable for engaging the client while establishing a friendly and warm emotional environment associated to hypnosis. In my office with my clients, I try to have a little bit of fun with them. I make a joke every now and then. I'm not always serious. Clients are usually a little bit nervous; humor is a way of dealing with that tension, and it can provide a great way to structure suggestions.

Here's an example:

"Some people like to do hypnosis with a slow and rhythmic style of delivering suggestions, even pacing suggestions to the rhythm of the client's breathing. But you know and I know that the Rhythm Method is not very reliable."

That's actually pretty humorous and an example of how we might use a pun or something similar to a pun, something with a double meaning to sort of break the ice.

Truisms

Truisms are really "common sense" observations that appear to be so obviously true and self-evident that it is virtually undeniable. They're generally used to build an acceptance of the suggestion that follows it, as the person evolves an agreeable and receptive mindset.

Here's an example:

"Every person is unique, we all know that, which is why you can experience deep hypnosis in your own unique way."

Bind of Comparable Alternatives

The Bind of Comparable Alternatives really is a classic double-bind or fake alternative. It creates a forced choice, where both choices are favorable or, in the case of hypnosis, where both choices result in the goal being accomplished.

For example, this is how you would use a double-bind during the induction or even during the pre-talk:

"You enjoy a deep satisfying hypnotic experience when you're sitting in this chair or in that chair. It doesn't matter if I choose this chair or that chair, either way I'm going to get a deep hypnotic experience."

For a fear of flying:

"Would you rather fly to Texas this week, or would you prefer next week for your first flight to Texas?"

It doesn't matter if they choose this week or after the weekend. They've made the choice to take that flight. They make a choice, and either way they're still making the choice to take that flight.

As a deepener:

"It really doesn't matter whether you choose a light trance today, or if a medium trance is more appropriate, or if you go into a deep trance now."

It is important to develop rapport with a client so that they will accept all the parameters of double-bind.

Confusional Suggestions

Confusional Suggestions are suggestions that deliberately are constructed to disorient and confuse the client. This builds responsiveness, overloads an overly intellectual demeanor, and facilitate dissociation.

Advanced Confusional Suggestions are not linear or logical. They generate uncertainty, sometimes even anxiety, rather than comfort or clarity. So they require greater concentration on the part of the clinician to see where the process is going. They are valuable in interrupting ongoing patterns of thought and perception, paving the way for new possibilities,

Here is an example:

"You can think you consciously understand the point of each suggestion, but your unconscious likes clarity too. So if you consciously organize around conscious understandings that you unconsciously believe or consciously work for you, you're unconsciously structuring the conscious and unconscious patterns for knowing consciously and at an unconscious level that you can overload someone's ability to comprehend and then, you can just consider using Confusional Suggestions when they seem like the sensible thing to do with the clients you work with."

E X E R C I S E S

1. Read or re-read the scripts in previous chapters and in the appendices. Identify the specialized suggestions discussed in this chapter.
2. Go back through this chapter and write three of your own examples for each type of specialized suggestion.
3. Create scripts using the specialized suggestions discussed in this chapter and then practice them with a volunteer.

Being
Hypnotic

Chapter Ten

Building Rapport

Rapport is really all about entering the world of another person. Ernest Rossi called hypnotherapy the ultimate in advanced, accurate empathy. He called it, using a metaphor here, “bellybutton to bellybutton communication.”

One reason for Erickson’s success was that creating rapport came naturally to him. It was easy for him to enter the world of another. Think about this for a second. Most people really are uninterested in things outside of themselves. The habitual state of most people is pretty narcissistic; it takes great effort to enter someone else’s world and think the way they would. But for us to be effective with our clients, we actually have to become a part of their world. This is one of the reasons why the seduction community has really embraced Ericksonian techniques. I’m not endorsing it; I’m just pointing out that fact that the foundation of effective changework is rapport.

The foundation of creating intimacy is rapport.

Even though many people have become so self-centered that they find it hard to step outside of themselves, it turns out our brains are wired to facilitate rapport. According to Danny Goleman, who’s done a tremendous amount of research on the area of Social Intelligence, our brains are actually wired to connect to other people. When we are in a conversation with somebody and when they’re in our personal space or we’re in their personal space, our brain chemistry actually changes. When we are in rapport with someone else, the same parts of our brains are activated; this phenomenon is referred to as “Mirror Neurons.”

When people are in rapport with other people, it actually feels good. It brings us pleasure. Think about the last time you met somebody new and you just clicked. You hit it off. You were in rapport with them; they were in

rapport with you. It was a dance of communication. Maybe this was in regards to business or a religious conversation or a romantic conversation. Whatever it may have been, people feel good when they have rapport with other people. This, by the way, is a powerful opportunity for anchoring. We can anchor our clients being in our presence to feeling good by establishing rapport.

Rapport is the start of influence. It is the foundation of trust. And rapport really is unconscious communication. It is more than having non-verbal communication—it's truly unconscious communication.

Rapport is important to anyone in sales. Have you ever been out shopping for an appliance or a car, maybe even shopping for a church and talking to the pastors, and you just didn't feel like you can trust someone you met? Chances are you were not in rapport with that person. Because you weren't in rapport with that person, you probably chose not to buy at that time but to move on instead. Rapport is the foundation of trust. It clears the way for the sale to be made.

Now, in the field of therapy, we don't often view our job as a form of sales, yet to a large extent, it is. If our clients don't trust us, if they're not in rapport with us, they won't buy the solutions that we have to offer them.

So how do you build rapport with an individual? What can you do to enter the world of another person? There are lots of different techniques. Some of these Richard Bandler identified in Neuro-Linguistic Programming because of his study of Milton Erickson. The first on my list is something discussed in the first chapter, offered by Jay Lazarus—SOLER. Assuming a SOLER stance communicates an openness to exchange. A study done in 1970 at the University of Pennsylvania and replicated many times found that 93% of our communication transpires non-verbally and unconsciously. The acronym SOLER provides a great frame for us to step into to begin communicating with openness.

The next way to build rapport with individuals is by expressing interest in them. It's not about my experience, but about your experience. This is really important. A lot of hypnotists think their clients care about their credentials, where they got training, and what all those letters after their name mean. I've always said jokingly that I actually have as many degrees as a rectal thermometer. My clients don't ask me about my education, certification, or licensure. My clients are actually concerned with themselves. They're really not concerned with me. Even the rare client who asks about my training really just wants to be reassured that I didn't get my degree from a cereal box.

Imagine how it would go if when I first meet my client, I say to them, “Wow, I’m really glad that you’re here. I’m Richard Nongard. I’m a highly qualified hypnotist. I’ve been studying hypnotherapy academically and experientially for almost thirty years now. I have Master’s Degree in Counseling Psychology, and I have a doctorate in Transformational Leadership, both from accredited schools. I’m really an awesome guy. I’m president of the International Certification Board for Clinical Hypnotherapists. I have a Facebook group with thousands of members. We have an annual convention every year. And I’ve won a lot of awards for different hypnosis training programs.”

Now, all of that may be true, but you were probably bored reading it—and you decided to read my book. Think how much more boring that must be to a client who really doesn’t relate to any of that sort of stuff and has come to my office to fix *their* problem.

The temptation that we all fall into is to try to assure our clients that they made the right choice by telling them about why we’re such awesome hypnotists. But that doesn’t build rapport. My clients really don’t care about those things.

The way to build rapport is to let go of that natural inclination to talk about ourselves and to ask other people about their experiences.

As soon my client comes through the door, I stand up, walk over, shake their hand, and say, “I’m Richard, and I’m really glad that you’re here today,” and I smile at them. And then I wait for them to say something. I’ve gotten all kinds of responses here to simply a friendly affirmation as to their presence here in my office. And then I will direct them to a chair: “Please let’s take a seat.” By the way, it’s not “You take a seat”; it’s “Let’s take a seat.” Then, I go sit behind my desk, and I ask them about them. The result is my clients love me. They come back. They refer their friends and family, mostly because I spend my time talking about them in therapy rather than about me.

In the past, some therapists have been taught to avoid self-disclosure. Milton Erickson certainly used self-disclosure and told his clients stories about his life and his family. But I think it needs to be used judiciously. When I was in graduate school, I had a professor who was teaching us Rogerian Psychotherapy. He came in on the first day of class, and he wrote two things on the board: “Expose” and then he drew a line and wrote “Impose.” He said it is okay to have your own values, beliefs, and biases. He said the idea in therapy is to “expose those without imposing those.”

Next he went to the other blackboard and wrote: "Your goal at the end of the course is to be able to read anything without raising an eyebrow." Our goal for the course—a graduate level course—was be able to hear anything without raising an eyebrow? Yes. This is a non-judgmental frame. This is a frame that communicates acceptance. My clients tell me all kinds of embarrassing things, all kinds of things that they'd probably never share with anybody else. Rapport is about communicating that openness to them in a non-verbal manner. It's about communicating that non-judgmentalness. It's about communicating to them that they're in a safe place.

My clients tell me all kinds of things about themselves and their experience. They come in and say, "I'm wrestling with this subject because I'm HIV positive and victimized from child abuse." My clients come in and tell me all kinds of things that are embarrassing, tragic, and uncomfortable to discuss with somebody, especially somebody they don't know. My job is to communicate, "I am here attending with you."

We preserve rapport by avoiding areas where we're prone to disagreement. Unless my clients bring up the subject of religion or politics, my clients have absolutely no idea what political affiliation I hold or what religious belief I hold. As a matter of fact, even when they do introduce this, I always ask them about their religion and their politics, their experiences, because really the session is about them; it's not about me. It may be tempting to say, "I too voted for Bush / Obama / a third party candidate." It's tempting, because we believe that embracing their frame of reference will make them embrace us. But they really don't care about our frame of reference. We are a paid temporary professional in their life. What they care about ultimately is themselves.

My colleague James Hazlerig relates that he once had a client who practiced a vastly different religion from his. The client's goal was to feel more connected to the Divine. While working with him, James quoted from the client's scriptures and utilized the client's beliefs and spiritual experiences to achieve the client's goal. Never once did James point out that he didn't share his client's religion.

Building rapport is about creating shared experiences. This is why Ericksonian hypnotherapy is so powerful. It focuses on their auditory experiences, their internal dialogues. If focuses on their visualization, their ability to creative. It focuses on their kinesthetic awarenesses, the experiences that they have. And good hypnotherapy creates new experiences and builds on these things as a way of establishing rapport with clients.

There are other things that we can do to facilitate rapport. Matching a client's posture and mirroring their actions can help build rapport. If they come in and they slouch in the chair, instead of you taking a formal posture, relax in your chair also. We can match their frame of reference. If your client talks with their hands, feel free to talk with your hand as well. If they're talking quickly, it's okay to talk quickly. If they're talking slowly, feel free to talk slowly. Even their position in the chair can be something to match.

Now, the one caveat is that you must use matching and mirroring subtly and elegantly. We don't want to be mimicking our clients. This strategy will backfire if a person perceives us as mocking them.

Rapport in Public Speaking and Group Hypnosis

One of the big questions for the hypnotist is how can I build rapport in groups? Here are some strategies to do just that:

Identify the group leader. Just sit back and listen and observe. Watch each participant. It's amazing how group leaders emerge naturally. Match, mirror, and pace that leader. And then, pull into the group, lean into the group, and become a part of that group. Put yourself in a state like those who are in the group. In social setting and situations, it's always interesting to see that person sitting on the end, not really connecting to the rest of the group, sitting with rigid posture looking nervous while the rest of the group is all relaxed and casual and close around one corner of the table. It may feel uncomfortable at first to do what everyone else is doing, but it increases rapport with the group, creating a like state with them. This is where "you fake it 'til you make it" actually works.

Create a shared experience. That can be accomplished linguistically through some very simple language patterns. One of those language patterns that's probably highly effective for this is to ask this question: "Have you ever had this experience?" or "Has this ever happened to you?" or "Tell me about a time when you...." Those are all language pattern that ask for an answer beyond simply yes or no. But ask a person to share about them rather than share about us.

Make eye contact with individuals within the group, mirroring the individual and asking him questions. Asking questions is probably one of the greatest strategies in achieving rapport with an individual or with a group. Whenever I have a group for which I'm doing corporate smoking cessation, I start out

by asking them a lot of questions instead of coming in a saying, “I’m Richard Nongard. I’m a really skilled hypnotist and I’ve done this with lots of people before. Let me tell you about my experience and my education.”

What I do is I come in almost as if I have no agenda—although I clearly do—and I will say, “Hi, my name is Richard. I’m a hypnotist. I’m really glad to be here. Have any of you met a hypnotist before?” That was not about me; it’s about them. Usually when I ask that question, one or two people will say, “Well, actually I have. I quit smoking once before with hypnosis” or “My sister lost weight with a hypnotist” or something of that sort. Sometimes they’ll say, “I went to a stage hypnosis show, and I was up on stage.” By the way, if they were kept on stage at a hypnosis show, I know they’re going to be a great subject for me to do some convincers and demonstrations with.

EXERCISES

1. Watch the news on television. While doing that, practice matching and mirroring the people on the news. Match and mirror their movement, their body position, their vocal pace, and their intonation.
2. Go to a restaurant, mall, or public park and watch people engaged in conversation. Without hearing what the people are saying, look for signs of rapport, connection, and engagement.
3. Next time you are in a great conversation, take note of how it feels. Notice you and the other person unconsciously matching and mirroring each other.

Chapter Eleven

The Process of Ericksonian Hypnotherapy

I want to start this chapter with an old joke:

“Did you hear about the Ericksonian stage hypnotist?”

“You never know when the show starts or ends!”

It may seem strange to actually wait until this late in the book for a description of the process of Ericksonian hypnotherapy, but in some ways it's very Ericksonian to do that.

When I first did training with Bob Bollet in Germany, he just began with an arm levitation with zero explanation. The process in Ericksonian hypnotherapy is much less dependent on a specific order or specific tasks being carried through than some other forms of therapy. The idea of Ericksonian hypnotherapy really is predicated on what it is that our client needs at this time.

A Different Time

Erickson worked in a way that is actually different from the way that we work today: his time was different, his role was different, and his clients were different.

To begin with, Erickson worked out of his house. This was in a large part because of his physical limitations, especially in his later life when he was confined to a wheelchair. This was long before the Americans with Disabilities Act existed. As a result, people were brought to his house, and they knew that they were seeing a medical doctor. He wasn't representing himself as a hypnotist, although he was a hypnotist; he was representing himself as a psychiatrist.

This brought about an entirely different relationship between Erickson and his patients than the one we have with our clients.

Even though Erickson had the authority of medicine behind him, patients sent to him or seeking him out knew something of his reputation. They knew he was somebody “special.” They knew that he had often succeeded in bizarre and mysterious ways that other doctors didn’t really understand. Thus, they came to him with the belief that he could help.

During that time in Phoenix, Erickson was above all else a teacher. Frequently, during his sessions, he had observers and medical students present. His home was open not only to those who needed his help, but to those who wanted to learn his methods.

He spoke to his clients at length, something almost no psychiatrist do today, and something that many hypnotists seem reluctant to do. Far too many hypnotists now pride themselves on how short their sessions are, how fast their results, rather than paying careful attention to what their clients truly need.

Erickson wasn’t terribly worried about how to hypnotize people, because he recognized that trance is a naturally occurring state. He believed that really we had multiple trance states that always existed at various times and that the real challenge for him is how to utilize these trance states. As a result, for some clients he had a formal induction (“close your eyes, now you’re going deep in the hypnosis”). Others simply found themselves in deep trance during his conversation with them.

People often wonder how it’s possible that Erickson’s patients went into deep trance without any direction from him. I do a lot of training for other licensed mental health professionals, and it’s always amazing to me how many of them are really excited to come to my training to learn how to do hypnosis. They have been social workers, marriage and family therapists, or professional counselors for ten or twenty years. It is always amusing to me that they are excited about learning hypnosis because if they are a halfway decent therapist, they have been doing hypnosis for the last ten or twenty years—but they just didn’t know it.

In fact, most of the therapists who come to my class discover that they’ve already been doing hypnotherapy. They just did not know how to structure or utilize those trance states. When a client comes in to the therapist’s office—and therapists usually have their offices set up like an informal living room, to foster comfort--and set aside the problems of the day and have a focused conversation with a therapist of any time, they are engaging in hypnotic processes.

So Milton Erickson spoke to people in conversation in therapy. Even if there wasn't a formal induction, people found themselves in deep trance, just like they do in every therapist's office. The difference is the Erickson knew how to utilize and direct these naturally occurring trances. This is why the pre-talk is not something that we try to get through to get to the good part of hypnosis. Pre-talk is conversational hypnosis. It is a hypnotic process.

Though his language patterns are often studied, Erickson also used many non-verbal strategies to induce trance: his tone of voice, his pitch, touch (or the lack thereof), and how he leaned in.

Milton Erickson's main goal was to make a person feel welcome and at ease. I, of course, never had the chance to meet Milton Erickson. He died about the same time that I was entering high school, but I wish that I had had that opportunity. It's very apparent to me that he had concern for his patients' well-being. He generally enjoyed being a physician and helping people to heal, just like he had used these same techniques of self-hypnosis to heal from his polio. His main goal was not to hypnotize a person; it was to make them feel welcome and at ease, to develop rapport, which equals engagement. And engagement always results in trance.

People spend a lot of money on Internet courses to learn "the secrets" of Milton Erickson. Here's the secret, if there is one: All you have to do is engage people. When we have rapport and engagement, we always have trance.

Sometimes Milton Erickson did what looked like a formal process of hypnosis: induction, deepener, suggestive therapy, awakening. Other times, his processes looked much less structured.

One of my favorite things to do is simply to read his case studies. He wrote many of his case studies in great detail, paying attention to the dialogue between him and the clients, and it is really a great way to see how Milton Erickson conducted these sessions.

His goal was never to achieve a specific state. He was not using, for example, the Harry Arons Depth Rule. For readers not familiar with Harry Arons, in the 1940s he wrote a very popular book on hypnosis, and he actually had a ruler in it with the inches marked off to indicate various levels of trance depth corresponding to the related hypnotic phenomena. Harry Arons believed that in certain states we experienced certain results and certain phenomenological outcomes. That wasn't what Milton Erickson believed. He wasn't ever trying to achieve a specific state. Rather, his goal was to discover which internal resources of the client were going to be most beneficial to

them. For some clients, it was deep trance; for others, light trance; and yet others, no discernible trance at all.

So that is how Milton Erickson structured his sessions—it was free-form and quite variable. However, since many newer hypnotists need a structure, I'm going to share how I structure my sessions. Then I'm going to share with you how Bill O'Hanlon, who wrote a book called *A Guide to Trance Land*, structures his sessions, which synthesize Ericksonian hypnosis and a solution-oriented approach.

The Nongard Approach

How do I structure my sessions?

When my clients call me for hypnosis, they have a perception of what hypnosis is going to be, probably based on Hollywood.

Now, chances are, they don't buy into hypnosis as it was portrayed by Bela Lugosi in the Dracula movies. They know I'm not going to say, "*Look deep into my eye, deep into my eye*," in a Transylvanian accent. But we know they've seen Hollywood movies where somebody goes to see a hypnotist, like *Office Space* or something like that, and they expect a professional office. They expect me to look like an accountant or lawyer or any other professional, and they also expect that at some point I'm going to have them close their eyes, they're going to relax in a recliner, and then I'm probably going to count down backwards from ten and they are going into trance. This is really different than the way Milton Erickson's clients presented. They didn't know what to expect, and they thought they were seeing a medical doctor. My clients make an appointment with a hypnotist, and they have a perception of what that's going to be. So I have an entirely different frame than Milton Erickson did.

This is really important—because my clients have a perception about what they're going to be buying from me (a hypnosis session), I tend to do formal trance processes with every one of my clients. This does not mean that I don't do conversational and informal hypnosis. In fact, I do quite a bit of it. But it is my belief that by the time my client gets to the recliner and closes their eyes, that all we're engaged in is a ritual to ratify the change which has already taken place through conversational, Ericksonian hypnosis during the pre-talk.

I meet my clients at my desk, and I conduct an interview with them. This is where hypnosis begins. (It often actually begins on the phone with them.)

Some of you might call this a pre-talk, but I really view this as my chance to create rapport and change before any formal process.

For example, I have a basket in my office, and it's filled up with cigarettes, lighters, cans of Copenhagen, Skoal, and other tobacco products. Those are all cigarettes and tobacco products that my clients have turned in, if you will. So I ask all of my smoking cessation clients a simple question during my pre-talk, after we've done the paper work, and that question is: "Have you had your last cigarette?" Some of them say will say, "Yes, I did. Before I came in I smoked my last cigarette" or "Last night I smoked my last cigarette." That's my favorite response. Those folk always do well. Sometimes they look at me with panic and say, "I'm not sure." And I then say, "Do you have cigarettes in your purse, or in your car, or in your pocket?" and they almost always say yes. And I will say to them, "Well, then you haven't had your last cigarette."

And so then I give them the instruction to go outside, out to their car to get their cigarettes, to get their lighters, and the other instruments of smoking. And I tell them have their last cigarette if they would like to, and then to bring all of that in. When they come in, sitting on my desk is this basket—and I don't have to tell them what to do—they immediately come in and put their cigarettes and lighters in the basket. I take the basket, I pick it up, and I put it on the bookshelf behind my desk. I haven't said anything here during this process, Obviously, the suggestion is this: "You are now no longer a smoker." That's a very powerful place for my clients to be, and it's before they ever sit in the chair and close their eyes. So now when they sit in the chair I can say to them: "As you sit in the chair as a *non-smoker...*" because in the present at that moment, they are a non-smoker, and I address them as a "non-smoker" from that point forward.

Now, giving my clients that task is very much in keeping with how Erickson worked with his patients. He often asked them to do things, knowing that they would learn valuable lessons from these actions. With my smoking cessation clients, that ritual is often enough, so the work is done before I even begin the formal hypnosis process.

By the way, I do elicit trance in my pre-talk, before any formal process, as I'll often teach them a basic strategy in mindfulness meditation. I will say to my client, "Before we go over to the 'hypnotic furniture,' I want to share with you a process. This is going to be your homework assignment, and it's an exercise to help you focus on the present moment through mindfulness." And I'll take them through a two-minute process of mindfulness meditation before I ever

get to the hypnotic furniture. Now we have a state, a resource state they've already achieved. I've essentially pre-hypnotized them, if you want to call it that. And I can anchor it during my session with them.

Before I ever get to the hypnotic furniture, I've already given a pedometer to my weight loss clients. Actually now that's a little bit different—I used to give a pedometer to all of my clients. Now, I actually help them download the app onto their smart phone. I do have a few clients who don't have a smart phone, so I still have a few pedometers left that I give out.

I always move my clients from the front desk to the hypnotic furniture. My clients use headphones, playing background music so I'm engaged in really a more formal process than Milton Erickson typically used, but at the same time, the foundation of his techniques are present. And what I want you to see, as I describe these vast differences between my work and Milton Erickson's work, is you can really structure hypnosis using Ericksonian principles in a number of different ways.

I do a formal induction, but I almost always start with my clients' primary representational system. If they are auditory, I use auditory suggestion. If they are kinesthetic, I use kinesthetic suggestion. If they are visual, I use visual suggestion. I don't do this in every session, but at my first session I try to be very consistent with their primary representational system. In successive sessions, I might decide they need to learn another way of learning things, so I will actually teach them, for example, kinesthetic inductions when they are not very kinesthetic.

I believe that induction teaches a skill. It's as valuable as any other process. So the induction is not something I rush through or try to get over. Now, I'm an expert in a rapid induction. Maybe you've seen my videos of stage hypnosis on the Las Vegas Strip where I used many rapid inductions with volunteers. In 2006, I produced the *Speed Trance* DVD series with John Cerbone. Nonetheless, I don't use rapid inductions very often in my office, because I don't believe the induction is something we get through to get good stuff. In clinical hypnosis, the induction *is* the good stuff!

I usually do a deepener, but one I can use again as a transitional deepener. I tend to like the number count and the reason why is, my clients have seen it on TV. They expect that the hypnotist counts backwards. So when I start counting backwards, my client's subconscious mind says, '*Oh my gosh, hypnotists really do count backwards! I saw this on TV.*' And so, the subconscious mind says, '*He's counting backwards, so I must be going into trance,*' and they do.

I do storytelling, parable, metaphor, and indirect suggestion usually after my deepener. Then during my suggestive therapy, I teach and practice mindfulness skills, the ideas of contextual psychology. I do that with every one of my clients. These are not incompatible with Ericksonian hypnotherapy. They can easily be combined *with* Ericksonian hypnotherapy. The reality is that we can use the body of knowledge that great teachers gave to us, but we can build on it and use modern methods in conjunction with older methods.

In my practice I always focus on creating resource states and giving my clients ownership of them. I use this line almost all the time with my clients:

"This is not a state which I've created, but rather, one that you've created here in my office by simply following this process. As a result, this is a state that you own, that you can actually take with you when you leave here today, and you can access at any time and any place that you need to use the state of relaxation, learning, or confidence."

I use anchoring to create anchors to the states. (I'll cover anchoring in more detail in a later chapter.) I use direct suggestion, and Milton Erickson did too. He just cloaked it in indirect language and post-hypnotic suggestions. I do an awakening, a reorientation; and I usually evaluate this process in context of time distortion with my clients.

All of these steps that I use in my basic process of hypnosis are predicated on the foundation of Ericksonian language patterns and really the Rogerian unconditional positive regard for the person for who's coming to my office.

The O'Hanlon Approach

Bill O'Hanlon has written a great little book called *A Guide to Trance Land: A Practical Handbook of Ericksonian and Solution-Oriented Hypnosis*. O'Hanlon gives a one-page description of his process of Ericksonian hypnotherapy and context of solution-oriented treatment.

O'Hanlon outlines eleven steps:

1. Assess the complaint and identify the goals. Through conversational hypnosis, seed change and create expectancy for change.

By the way, learning expectancy techniques can be real helpful in this phase of O'Hanlon's model. Even though I don't do the Dave Elman induction, Dave Elman's ideas of expectancy are very useful at this stage.

2. Determine that the complaint is an automatic or subconscious process.

If the complaint is not an automatic process, O'Hanlon recommends that you pursue non-hypnotic interventions. In this case, for most us it would mean a referral to a physician or other caregiver.

3. Introduce the notion of inner work and hypnosis.
Reassure and reframe if necessary.

The reassurance and reframing involves establishing to the client that this is their time, their process, that they have an ability within them to experience success. I'm not going to be doing anything *to* them; I'm going to be doing something *with* them during the session. That's a really important reframe for a lot of clients. They come in with their Hollywood impressions, and they think because I'm a hypnotist that I'm going to be doing something *to* them. Really what I want to do is do something *with* them.

4. Introduce an inner focus, evoke resources, get responses, and help the person rearrange his or her experiential reality. Offer a series of possibilities or choices that our clients can make and notice which one the person responds to.

Of course, Step 4 is when you use your Ericksonian language patterns—sensorial language, fake alternatives, double-binds. This is really conversational hypnosis at its best.

5. Link evoked resources and alterations to the future and to an appropriate context for manifesting those solutions and resources.

This is Time Distortion or Future Pacing. In this stage, the client mentally rehearses success.

6. Complete the inner work or hypnosis (if you're using a formal process).

7. Discuss the experience as much or as little as the client wants. Normalize and reassure if needed. Continue seeding changes and creating expectancy of change.

My clients often like talking about their hypnosis session, so we do. I normalize and reassure the things that need it. Sometimes my client will say, “Well, I’m not sure that was helpful because I could hear every word.” And I recognize that I must have missed something during my pre-talk or that they missed something, and I’ll assure them that it’s perfectly okay, that by being able to pay attention to each and every word that I used, they did the right thing.

The other day I had a client who shed tears during the Future Pacing, as she was seeing her children grown up, happy, and successful. She asked afterward if it was normal to cry in hypnosis; I told her that some clients do cry if they are having a meaningful and powerful experience. Notice how that suggests that her experience was powerful and therefore effective.

Hypnotists who subscribe to the idea that you have to get people into a deep trance for suggestions to be effective often miss the fact that clients who have just emerged from a formal process are still highly suggestible. Right after your clients have opened their eyes and re-oriented is an excellent time to reinforce suggestions, continuing to seed change and foster expectancy of success with conversational hypnosis.

8. At the next contact, gather as much information on the post-session response and results as possible; then utilize those results.

This is a wonderful synthesis of Ericksonian and solution-focused approaches. Find out what worked best and expand on it.

9. Induce the inner state. Continue to understand the responses that helped, offering new possibilities if necessary.

10. Repeat steps 7 through 9 as often as necessary until you and the client are certain the work is complete.

I usually see my clients typically for about three sessions, but it’s really all about how many sessions your client needs to attain lasting results.

11. At the end of the session, arrange for follow-up schedule visits.

O'Hanlon mentions postcards, letters, phone calls, emails, and other methods of maintaining contact with clients.

Let me just talk about that for a moment. I do not contact my clients after they leave my office, unless they have a desire to contact me. I know that this is different from what other people do. You can do it anyway you want to. I consider myself a resource for my clients. I am here for my clients. I'm available for my clients. If my clients would like to follow-up with me, I am more than happy to have them do so. If they choose not follow-up with me, I am perfectly okay with that as well. It is their life. I am their resource; I am not their mother.

In this chapter, I've shared Milton Erickson's structure along with how I structure my sessions and how Bill O'Hanlon structures his. Of course, O'Hanlon and I both have adapted Erickson's methods to suit our personal styles and the needs of our clients. What this means is that you can create your own structure. You can take what's useful and helpful to you, and apply it within the context of your own personality with the types of client that you see.

EXERCISES

1. Write out your own structure for how to interact with clients.
Feel free to borrow liberally from me, from O'Hanlon, from Erickson, and from other hypnotists and therapists who have inspired you.
2. Enter your own imaginative resource state and future pace, seeing yourself incorporating these ideas into your own work.

Chapter Twelve

Metaphor, Parable, and Story

The Ericksonian community is probably known as much for the use of therapeutic metaphor and story as for any other technique; therefore, let me begin with a story from Leo Tolstoy:

A bishop and several pilgrims are traveling on a fishing boat from Archangel to the Solovétsk Monastery. During the voyage, the bishop engages the fishermen in conversation after overhearing them discuss a remote island nearby their course where three old hermits live a Spartan existence focused on seeking "salvation for their souls." Several of the fisherman claim to have seen them once.

The bishop then informs the captain that he wishes to visit the island. The captain attempts to dissuade him by saying, "The old men are not worth your pains. I have heard say that they are foolish old fellows, who understand nothing, and never speak a word." But the bishop insists, and the Captain steers the ship toward the island, and the bishop subsequently sets off in a rowboat to visit where he is met ashore by the three hermits.

The bishop informs the hermits that he has heard of them and of their seeking salvation. He inquires how they are seeking salvation and serving God, but the hermits say they do not know how, only that they pray, simply: "Three are ye, three are we, have mercy upon us." Subsequently, the bishop acknowledges that they have a little knowledge but are ignorant of the true meaning of the doctrine and how properly to pray. He tells them that he will teach them "not a way of my own, but the way in which God in the Holy Scriptures

has commanded all men to pray to Him" and proceeds to explain the doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity. He attempts to teach them the Lord's Prayer, the "Our Father", but the simple hermits blunder and cannot remember the words—which compels the bishop to repeat the lesson late into the night. After he becomes satisfied that they have memorized the prayer, the Bishop departs from the island, leaving the hermits with the firm instruction to pray as he had taught them. The bishop then returns by the rowboat to the fisherman's vessel anchored offshore to continue the voyage.

While on board, the captain notices that their vessel is being followed—at first thinking a boat was behind them but soon realizing that the three hermits had been running across the surface of the water "as though it were dry land." The hermits catch up to the vessel as the captain stops the boat, and inform the bishop:

"We have forgotten your teaching, servant of God. As long as we kept repeating it we remembered, but when we stopped saying it for a time, a word dropped out, and now it has all gone to pieces. We can remember nothing of it. Teach us again."

The bishop is humbled and replies to the hermits: "Your own prayer will reach the Lord, men of God. It is not for me to teach you. Pray for us sinners." After which the hermits turn around and walk back to their island.

I often use this classic story of *The Three Hermits* by Leo Tolstoy for a number of reasons: First, there's a tremendous story here. Second, there are both overt and subtle messages in this tale.

However, the main reason I use stories is that storytelling catches a person's attention. It engages a person in a process. It bypasses the critical faculty and the conscious mind, engaging the subconscious ability to imagine and create. Stories, metaphors, and parables were used by Milton Erickson as a way of teaching his clients what it is that they need to know in order to make the significant changes that they came to his office for—and you can use them in exactly the same manner.

Anatomy of a Therapeutic Tale

Since storytelling is an art form all on its own, I've asked my colleague, master storyteller and hypnosis practitioner, James Hazlerig, to share some definitions.

Story: *an account of imaginary or real people and events; usually told for entertainment, but can be told for news and other reasons as well.*

There are certain elements in every story:

Protagonist: *main character. This is the hero the audience usually identifies with.*

Antagonist: *the villain, the person or thing who works against the protagonist's goals.*

Conflict: *the challenge the protagonist must overcome. There are three kinds of conflict:*

- hero vs. villain—also called person vs. something the same size, or man vs. man
- hero vs. nature or society—also called person vs. something bigger, or man vs. nature
- hero vs. self—also called person vs. something inside; internal conflict; or man vs. self

Some stories include two or three forms of conflict.

Resolution: *the conflict is settled in one way or another.*

Change: *Every story is about change, which makes storytelling a great therapeutic tool. If there is no change in a story, then there is no story. Sometimes the change occurs to the characters in the story; other times the change occurs in the listener's perception and thinking.*

Our clients relate to storytelling in therapy because, like the characters, they are also embarking on a process of change.

Theme/Moral: *the message of a story. Sometimes this is explicit, like in Aesop's Fables, which always state a moral at the end, but more often the message is implicit.*

Metaphor: *a comparison or analogy stated as equivalence.*

Many stories use metaphors. In the classic children's tale, The Little Engine that Could, the hill the engine is trying to climb is a metaphor for any task or struggle.

Parable: *a story or short narrative designed to reveal allegorically some religious principle, moral lesson, psychological reality, or general truth. Anybody who studies any religion is familiar with parables, whether they come from Jesus or the Buddha.*

Trance: *a state in which internal perception has become more important than external perception; or in which a limited aspect of external perception has become so important as to preclude the rest of external perception.*

It's important to recognize that anyone reading, listening to, or watching a story is very likely to enter a trance.

Therapy: *an activity or interaction intended to bring about rehabilitation or social adjustment or change. This can be trancework, hypnotherapy, or traditional talk therapy as well. The importance of defining therapy as being about change and storytelling as being about change is that it truly illustrates why the connection between the two is so very natural.*

Why Tell a Story or Metaphor in Therapy?

- **Stories shift the filters of perception.**

Stories help us look at issues from a new angle, providing insight that may have been missing.

- **Stories convey unconscious meaning.**

For instance, the story of The Three Hermits changes our perceptions and conveys a message regarding prayer. The bishop is supposed to be a holy man, yet he realizes that faith is more important than form. The story also conveys a message about education versus practical experience. It gives an example of someone who is willing to learn something new, even though he is supposed to be an authority.

- **Stories bypass conscious resistance.**

When you read, hear, or watch a story, you stop analyzing whether or not it could be true. “Once upon a time ...” may be the most effective trance induction ever devised. In order for a story to be enjoyable, the audience must suspend disbelief; in other words, the audience intentionally disables the critical faculty.

- **Stories can conceal confrontation.**

As a therapist, I sometimes have to confront my clients to correct their misconceptions and limiting beliefs. If I were to say to my client, “Hey, you have that wrong. What you believe is simply not true,” then I would be in a power struggle with my client. On the other hand, I can say to my client, “I’d like to share a story with you. This is a story from Leo Tolstoy” or “This is one of Milton Erickson’s stories.” Then I could go on and tell the story, letting it confront the client indirectly rather than creating a power struggle in therapy.

- **Stories create and break relational frames.**

We covered relational frames in a different chapter. Like Ericksonian Therapy, ACT Therapy is known for its use of metaphor to change perceptual frameworks.

Planting the Seeds of Change

A metaphor is like a seed.

By the way, that is a simile about a metaphor.

A metaphor plants an idea in our unconscious mind. The idea germinates in the subconscious mind, and it bears fruit by becoming an action in our conscious mind.

Here are some of my favorite examples of metaphor:

- ***Life is a journey; Purposes are destinations; means are routes; difficulties are obstacles; counselors are guides; achievements are landmarks in our lives; and choices are crossroads that we face.***
- ***A lifetime is a day; death is sleep.***
- ***A lifetime is a year; death is winter.***
- ***Life is a struggle; dying is losing a contest against an adversary.***
- ***Life is a precious possession; death is a loss***
- ***Time is a thief.***

Milton Erickson's Use of Stories

Erickson told personal stories, many drawn from his own life. He told one about his grandmother that I use with my weight loss clients. Of course, I adapt the story to each client, but here is one way I might tell it:

"You can close your eyes right here, right now, and listen to this story. When I was a kid, I used to help my grandmother with her garden. I always enjoyed watching my grandmother tend to her plants, which she did almost everyday, and she loved to grow tomatoes. As a little boy I remember I would lie there on the earth next to my grandmother who was working on the garden and she would plant the seeds, and each day I would go out and I would see the seeds germinate. And of course as the weeks went by the plants would begin to grow leaves and vines and the little yellow flowers of a tomato plant. Soon those little flowers would give way to a smaller green bulb and eventually to big bright red tomatoes by the end of the summer.

My grandmother, she would often prepare dinner, and before dinner she would slice those delicious perfect tomatoes, and she would serve them on a plate as an appetizer before our meal. It really was one of my favorite times as a kid and one of my favorite memories as an adult.

I used to sit there and think about the tomatoes. You know they never spoke to my grandmother; they never said thank you to my grandma. They never talked to her at all. They never said, “How much nutrition from the soil should we absorb?” They never said to my grandmother, “How much rain from the sky should we drink?” Yet each summer those tomatoes, as well as the other vegetables in my grandmother’s garden, listened to themselves and became exactly the way they were supposed to be, intuitively knowing how much water from the sky to drink and how much nutrition from the soil to absorb.”

Of course the implied lesson here is we probably don’t even need a diet plan; we simply need to listen to our bodies. By the way, this story can be adapted to so many other clients, ranging from eating disorder clients to pain control clients—really, anybody who needs to learn to listen to their bodies.

Milton Erickson sometimes told bizarre stories. There was a story he told to other doctors in his training about treating a farting Catholic patient.

In the *Collected Works of Milton Erickson*, there’s a case study he shares about a Catholic student. She actually has flatulence during class; she becomes humiliated and embarrassed, leaves the class, drops out of school, and never returns. She’s now isolated. She’s so embarrassed and humiliated, unable to handle that. So becomes essentially agoraphobic. She writes to Milton Erickson and says, “Will you see me? I need help.” And Milton Erickson says yes. She writes back and says—of course this was long before emails—“Yes, I do want to see you, but it has to be scheduled late at night, and nobody else can be there.” He agrees to that, and she shows up.

As they talk about this humiliating and embarrassing experience, she just continues to hold on to this old idea that she is too ashamed to do anything, and so Milton Erickson says to her: “You’re not really a very good Catholic, are you?” She becomes almost offended by being accused of not being a very good Catholic because she certainly was—in fact, that was probably all she had left at this point. And so, he says to her, “Here’s what I mean,” as he grabs his medical textbooks. He flips over to the anatomy section and shows the sphincter and the anus and the lower intestines, and how it all works. Then he says, “You

don't believe in the Lord, do you?" And she answers, "But yes, I do." And he says, "This sphincter is a device which holds gas, solid, and liquid. Gravity goes down and yet there's never any problem with this setup. Only God could make that work, and so, you should celebrate the Lord."

This is a great example of using a person's frame of reference, even though it may be entirely different from our own frame of reference, to help them make changes.

Erickson says to her, "You must celebrate the goodness of the Lord. Feel free to go back to your house, and every time you have flatulence, feel free to praise God for the amazing abilities of the body and his perfect knowledge and wisdom."

This is an example of one of those bizarre interventions and stories of Milton Erickson. Of course, in addition to performing this bizarre intervention, Erickson told the story to various clients, students, and colleagues so that they could learn from it as well.

It's important to recognize, too, that stories don't have to come from classic literature or Greek myth. They don't have to come from your childhood. They don't have to be high art—sometimes the story of a farting Catholic is what your client needs.

Milton Erickson told stories to deepen trance. One of the best deepeners is to simply say to your clients: "Let me share with you a story." As soon as you even say that, you are going to deepen trance.

Milton Erickson shared wisdom in his stories. He told stories and metaphors to confront people. And he used stories, metaphors and parables as the mechanism for suggestive therapy. Stories provide a wonderful framework in which to include embedded suggestions.

The Role of the Storyteller in Culture

Looking at the role of storytelling and the storyteller in culture informs us of some additional ways of storytelling can be used in therapy.

Dating back to prehistory, storytelling has always been an act of magical creation. In our subconscious mind, it is the germinator of creative solutions. Storytelling is a way we transmit cultural wisdom and identity from one person to another. The story of the Alamo, despite some problems with historical authenticity, tells Texans how they are expected to behave—to never give up, to be brave in the face of adversity, even to sacrifice themselves for a cause. In the

office, storytelling is a way for me to transmit my wisdom as a therapist who has probably worked with other people with the same type of problem that my client has.

Stories have a pervasive cultural and intergenerational life. This is great because when we share a story with our client in therapy, chances are pretty good that they're going to share that story with somebody else later on. So what we're really doing is we're not only helping the person who's in front of us, but we're probably helping others.

Storytelling in the History of Therapy

Milton Erickson, though famous for storytelling, was not the first one to use stories therapeutically.

Preachers and pastoral counselors have used stories for centuries. Remember, psychology has only been the queen of the social sciences for the last hundred years. For the previous thousand years, theology was the queen of the social sciences, and a result, much of our storytelling in therapeutic work does come in the context of religious belief.

Carl Jung was another therapist who at that time with Sigmund Freud was an expert storyteller and understood the mystical power of the story. And anybody who studies Ericksonian therapy should probably study a little bit of Jungian therapy as well. Jung believed that the stories of mythology were representations of our psychological landscape; thus, stories have a central role in Jungian psychology.

Twelve-Step Programs are of course predicated on the stories of recovered alcoholics. The “Big Blue Book of Alcoholics Anonymous” dedicates 164 pages at the beginning in Section 1 to the Twelve Steps. There are another 300 plus pages that follow that, completely made up of stories.

What is the Therapeutic Value of a Story?

A story causes us to identify with something. We become the story that we're hearing. When I tell you the story about my grandmother, you're trying to identify whether you're me, or my grandmother, perhaps a tomato. If I tell you a story about three hermits, the bishop, and the fisherman captain, you're trying to figure if you're the best supporting actor or the fisherman captain or if you're the bishop or if you're one of those hermits. So, every time we hear a story, we try to see who it is, subconsciously, that we are in that story.

In fact, it could be argued that our identity is simply a story we tell ourselves. By telling ourselves a new story, we can change our identity. There was a wonderful example of this in the movie Galaxy Quest. When a character says something like, “I’m going to die because I’m the extra, the guy who always dies in stories like this,” one of the other characters asks, “Have you ever considered that maybe you’re the plucky comic relief? That guy never dies.”

Stories help us relate to other people. They help us to see outside of our own narcissistic tendencies to how we impact and interact with the world around us.

Stories are a way to help us to adopt moral changes and moral beliefs. Perhaps I like the Leo Tolstoy story because it really stresses that what is sacred is not what is traditional but what is heartfelt. And when we understand that concept, there can be a tremendous amount of freedom from some of the dogma and religious biases that shouldn’t keep people from experiencing spiritual satisfaction in life.

Stories provide vicarious experiences. You know the hottest selling book right now seems to be that *Fifty Shades of Grey* book. Well, I guarantee those reading the *Fifty Shades of Grey* book are not having nearly as much fun as the characters in those books. Why are they so popular? They’re popular because story provides vicarious experiences and allows us to feel a whole range of human ideas and experiences.

Cautions in Therapeutic Storytelling

There are some cautions to consider in therapeutic storytelling.

One, if you’re going to tell a story, be sure to be familiar with the story; make sure you know it. In fact, in some ways have it committed to memory.

Now, a lot of people ask me “What if I don’t have the story memorized?” Let me share with you a quick tip on how to use written stories in your therapy sessions. I think that it’s perfectly okay for hypnotists to use scripts as long as they do it well. I can’t possibly remember everything that I need to tell every single client whom I see during the day. So, if I read part of the script or if I’m going to share a story from a book or poem or something like that, I’m going to say to my client:

“And as you continue to relax, I’m going to share with you a few things from my notes. You might even hear me read from a book or from a story. And the reason why, of course, is I want to make sure that I cover everything that’s important to you today.”

As soon as you tell your clients in trance that you're going to be reading from a book or from your notes and the reason why is because you want to make sure that everything you cover that's important to them today, they are appreciative of your diligence. And so then I can open up the book, even if the book makes noise. I can actually hold the book in my hand, and I can literally read if I want to.

If you are going to read a script or a story or a book, make sure it's one that you have read before and make sure that it's one that you can read flawlessly, with the right intonation, pacing, and inflection. I have some story books in my office that I use with clients, and they are completely marked up. There are yellow stickies in there, and they're highlighted. The stories that I share are stories that I'm very familiar with.

Of course, if you can tell a story without looking at notes, so much the better.

Second, we need to make sure that our story is not so esoteric that it's inappropriate for the abstract reasoning skills of our clients.

I used to work with psychiatrist, and on his medical charts, when we would have a client who probably wasn't the smartest client of all, he would typically write in regards to his cognitive abilities: "Client is of average, dull intelligence." I remember sort of smirking at that, thinking it was a polite but humorous way of phrasing that.

If I have a client who is of "average, dull intelligence," maybe I'm going to share with them a story from my own personal experiences because dull and average people seem to be able to relate to those. I'm probably not going to be sharing abstract reasoning or Leo Tolstoy or the parables of Buddha.

Mind you, I love the parables of Buddha. Most of you know that I do a fair amount of mindfulness based stress reduction and training in mindfulness meditation. The parables of Buddha, I think, are particularly fascinating, but they are sometimes a little on the esoteric side. I think that the abstract reasoning skills from a client of average, dull intelligence probably couldn't handle some of those things.

Third, it's very important in storytelling not to break rapport. Choose your tales carefully. Tell a story a client can relate to and consider the source. For instance, some Christian clients will not want to hear a story from mythology or Buddhism, while an Atheist client may be offended if I use one of Christ's parables.

Finally, don't get the details wrong in the story. There's nothing worse than going forward with a story and then realizing you're not telling it right and having to go back. It's kind of like, "Let me tell you a joke. Why did the chicken cross the road? Wait a minute, he didn't cross the road. Hold on. Let me start over again." Or you tell the punch line first in a knock-knock joke. "Knock-knock." "Who's there?" "Aren't you glad—Oh, I'm sorry. I'm not supposed to do that." So, we want to make sure that we're really familiar with these things and don't get the details wrong.

Where to Find Therapeutic Stories

As a therapist, where do you find stories? Well, in *The Collected Works of Milton Erickson*, there are plenty of metaphors and stories that Milton Erickson told. Those are stories that you can actually read to your clients. *Clinical Applications of Hypnosis* by George Gafner is an excellent book full of great stories. So one place to look is in the works of your predecessors.

But you don't have to go to hypnosis textbooks to find good stories. Sources for good stories are all around you:

- myth
- folktales
- movies
- drama
- fables
- parables
- TV shows
- history
- the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books
- the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

You know, one of my favorite stories of all time is from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. This story has probably helped more people avoid relapse than any other story in the Big Book of AA. It's about Jim the car salesman. Jim the car salesman used to own a car dealership but because of his drinking, he lost his own dealership. And now that he's sober, he gets a job as a salesman at the very dealership he used to own. This is a story about his relapse.

Jim believes one day that he can probably find a prospect for an automobile sale out in the country, and so he drives a demo car out into the country. I know a lot of car salesman who think a lot like Jim. And so he's out in the country when he gets hungry. He stops at a tavern because he's going to eat a sandwich, and out there he believes, "Well, hey, I'm way out here in the middle of nowhere; no one's going to know I was having a drink, and if I only have one, it won't be a problem. In fact, if I have a sandwich and a glass of milk that will coat my stomach, and I won't have any ill effects." So he orders a sandwich, a milk, and a whiskey. He downs the sandwich, the milk, and the whiskey. That worked out so well that decides to have another sandwich, another milk, and another whiskey. And that works out so well that he decides to have another. But he's already eaten two sandwiches, so he just has milk to coat the stomach so he can have some whiskey. But of course, milk and whiskey are a lousy combination. So by the time it comes to a fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh shot, he skips the milk and just has the whiskey—finding himself of course exactly back where he started in the sobriety process.

Many people have heard the story of Jim and recognize their own cognitive errors. The things they believe to be true that are not true—that's what a cognitive error is. This story has lots of applications, even to clients who are not alcoholics. Really, any client struggling to do the same thing over and over again expecting different results can benefit from the story of Jim the car salesman.

A story doesn't have to be true, doesn't have to be told perfectly—I did not tell you the farting Catholic story the way Milton Erickson wrote it in the book.

Stories and metaphors can come from your clients. They can be metaphorical suggestions that they give us. My colleague James Hazlerig was working with a middle-aged man who was quitting smoking. The man complained of his younger brother who kept trying to tell him how to run the business the two had inherited from their father. "My brother's suggestions are so stupid. It's like he has the brain of a twelve-year-old, not a grown man." My colleague said, "Isn't it great how you can so easily ignore your brother's terrible ideas and rely on your own adult wisdom instead?" The client agreed that was true. "And didn't you start smoking when you were twelve, at about the mental age of your stupid brother?" The client said yes. "So you already know how to ignore dumb ideas that a twelve-year-old kid thinks are smart, because you know better now, don't you?" In that way, the client realized that he already had the resources he needed to quit smoking.

We can even share jokes or poetry with our clients. Far too many therapists think we have to be serious all the time. Humor is an amazing tool for helping our clients.

Seven Steps to Good Storytelling

Make Eye Contact

In formal trance, you're probably not going to worry too much about eye contact, because the eyes are probably closed. But I tell stories as part of my pre-talk and as informal suggestion all the time. In fact, sometimes when I'm done with the session, I'll recognize there are some additional suggestions I might like to make, so I might choose to tell them a story at the end of my session.

Eye contact should not be like a threatening dog, where it is unrelenting. But when we make eye contact to really appropriately communicate this is for you. It's one more way of facilitating a bellybutton to bellybutton communication.

Of course, if you're using hypnotic storytelling with a group, you want to make eye contact with different members of the audience, not lingering too long on any one person, but also not leaving anyone out.

Use your Voice as an Instrument

Vary your rhythm, cadence, and tonality to evoke emotional states and convey information. Think about punctuation, and don't over look the value of dramatic silence.

Enjoy and Collect Stories

To be a good storyteller and metaphor user, enjoy and collect stories. One easy way to find a story in a hurry is go to Google and type in "inspiration story for _____" whatever problem your client is facing, and you'll find some inspirational stories.

Understand Story Structure

Think about what the conflict is in a story and how it is resolved.

Also, look out for the Law of Three. Many traditional stories are based around three things, whether it's the three little pigs, the three bears in Goldilocks' story, or the blonde, brunette, and redhead walking into a bar at the start of a joke.

People accept three things as a pattern. If you tell a story, there will usually be two examples to establish a pattern, followed by a third who breaks the pattern and resolves the problem.

Show, Don't Tell

Use sensory descriptions. That's what makes a good story; it involves all of our auditory kinesthetic and visual experiences, even our gustatory and olfactory. Paint pictures with your words.

Assign Meaning with your Stories

Meanings might be implicit or explicit.

When my colleague James Hazlerig talks to inmates at the county jail, he reminds them of a story that comes from a TV series called *The Walking Dead*. Now, that show takes place in a post-apocalyptic world in which people are constantly on the move to forage for food and escape from zombies. One of the characters is pregnant, so the group has to find a safe place for her to bring something new into the world. They end up fortifying a prison long enough for her to give birth. James assigns the meaning that a jail can be a place of limitation, or it can be a safe place to bring something new into the world.

Adapt and Improvise

The same story can convey different meanings. Similarly, details of a story can be changed. James often tells a story about a child riding an elephant. With female clients, the child is usually a little girl; with male clients, the child is usually a little boy.

E X E R C I S E S

1. Think of one of your favorite childhood stories. For me, it was *The Cat from Telegraph Hill*. James Hazlerig loved *Where the Wild Things Are*. Think about the stories you enjoyed as a kid and then ask yourself: “Can I adapt this story for a therapeutic purpose?” Then begin using that story in either conversational hypnosis or in formal trance as a teaching tool.
2. Go to the bookstore or library. Seek out a book with stories, parables, metaphors, or poems. Identify two or three that you think would be of value to share with a client. Make a photocopy of the stories or bring the book to your office, and begin utilizing stories, parables, metaphors as part of your hypnotherapy processes.
3. If you have a long commute, use that time to practice telling yourself stories that you would like to use with your clients.

***An Ericksonian
Toolbox***

Chapter Thirteen

Time Distortion

Time Distortion in hypnosis is one of my favorite subjects. Time Distortion is the phenomenon of losing track of your internal time keeper for a therapeutic purpose. It is a prevalent phenomenon in trance, and like all hypnotic phenomena, it's something that almost all of us are aware of experiencing even in normal tasks of life. For example, have you ever gone to sleep at night and you wake up in the morning in the exact same spot and it feels like no time went by? It feels like you just went down and went to bed. But when you wake up in the morning and look at the clock, you realize you've been in bed for nine hours. You slept longer than you usually sleep. That's Time Distortion.

Here's another example of Time Distortion: You are sitting in front of the computer and you're doing some work, and you look at the clock and you realize almost three hours have already gone by. But it seems like you just sat down to compose that letter, or check that email, or do whatever it was that you are doing.

You may have experienced "Highway Hypnosis" on a car trip. This can really go kind of either way. You get in the car and you drive on that two-hundred-mile drive that usually takes about three to three-and-a-half hours. Maybe you're on the phone the whole time or you are deep in thought, so that when you get there, the trip didn't seem that long at all. The opposite can be true: You're driving to Nebraska or to Kansas, and what is only a three-hour trip feels like it took you all day long to make. That is naturally occurring Time Distortion.

There's an old saying about Time Distortion: If your hand is touching a hot stove, one minute is far too long. If your hand is touching someone you love, one minute is far too short.

So we've all experienced Time Distortion, and Time Distortion is something that we can direct our client towards in hypnosis for a variety of reasons. It can be used as a convincer, after the session, to convince the client that they were in fact hypnotized. Now, why would we want to convince the client they were hypnotized? Because hypnosis is a normal state of trance, clients will often acknowledge afterwards, "I feel relaxed and it seems like that was helpful to me, but it didn't really feel like Hollywood portrays hypnosis, where they don't know that they are hypnotized." Our clients have the belief that hypnosis will change them, but they often have to believe they were hypnotized to allow the change. If they know that they were hypnotized, they will act on that belief and will in fact be changed.

In that sense, Time Distortion is an effective convincer. Now, rarely do I ever use convincers with my clients before the session. What am I convincing them of? They called me, they made an appointment, and they drove over to my office. If they didn't think I would help them, they wouldn't be there. So I don't really feel the need to convince anybody of anything before the session.

But after the session, I want them to know that they were in fact hypnotized. I time all my sessions. I have a digital clock in my office, and I know exactly how long each session was. And I usually average between 27 and 35 minutes for the formal hypnosis session with a client—from 'close your eyes' to 'open your eyes.' When I'm done, I will often say to a client, "About how long did the session feel to you?" The question almost always catches them off-guard; they sort of look around and say, "I know it couldn't have been only five minutes, but wow, it felt like it was five minutes!" And then I point at the clock, which they probably did not notice before (it's actually right next to them) and say, "I've been timing the session, and it was 32 minutes long." They say, "Oh my gosh, that's incredible!" Their internal reaction is, "*Wow, I must have been really hypnotized.*"

Then I will usually ask them, "Do you remember some of the suggestions I gave to you?" It's kind of like a dream. They know they dreamed, but they're not sure what the dream was. That's what the suggestions are often like for my clients. They know I was talking, and they know they were listening, and they know I gave them suggestions; but when they try to recall my words, they usually can't. Sometimes I have to fill in the blanks with my client, and that's great.

Sometimes when I ask them how long did that session feel, my client will say to me, "I know I haven't been here for eight hours, but wow, it felt like it

was eight hours long.” It’s Time Distortion in the other direction. I’ll say, “Well, you’re correct. You weren’t here for eight hours. That was 32 minutes.” And they’ll say, “Wow, what an incredible feeling.”

Occasionally, I’ll have a client who simply looks bewildered and says, “Well, it felt like five minutes—or maybe five hours.”

By the way, about 80% of my clients have Time Distortion and feel like the session went by really quickly. About 15% of my clients have Time Distortion the other way, where it seems like it’s incredibly slow. And about 5% of my clients say this: “Well, let me think about it. Hmm... 32 minutes.” Although that’s not the answer I want—it happens about 5% of the time—I don’t say to them, “Wow, you must not have been hypnotized because you did not experience Time Distortion.” Instead, I say, “That’s awesome. You’re almost correct. It was actually 33 minutes. What that means is that you were really able to focus during the session and pay attention to the suggestions that I gave you. And because of your ability to really focus during the session, I know that you are going to do fantastic. So, Congratulations!” That’s what I do for the 5% who do not experience Time Distortion. Just because they did not experience Time Distortion, that does not mean that they did not experience hypnosis, nor does it mean the session wasn’t useful for them. So I simply normalize that response.

With almost all clients, no matter how they respond, I say, “That means these suggestions have become timeless for you.”

Time Distortion in hypnosis can be a tool for shifting perceptions and priorities. Have you ever been in a real big hurry and have to get whole bunch of different things done, and then something comes along, maybe a crisis or maybe something that totally distracts you, and your priorities get shifted and you recognize that you did not have to get all those things done in that order during the time period that you imposed on yourself? Time Distortion can be used in suggestion to do that.

Time Distortion is kind of like being a little kid. You remember the merry-go-rounds you used to spin around on? You spin around and spin around and spin around; and then you get off of it and try to walk in a straight line, but you can’t because your equilibrium is confused. Well, Time Distortion can be a mechanism for inducing confusion, which we have already pointed out throughout this course to have benefit in a number of different ways to our clients.

Time Distortion is a way of altering automatic behaviors because automatic behaviors are often time dependent. Smokers, for example, often say, “As

soon as I get done with the shower, I smoke a cigarette. As soon as I take a break at work, I smoke cigarette." So Time Distortion is a way of altering automatic behaviors, and teaching your clients to utilize Time Distortion can actually be a way of changing their routines.

Time Distortion is useful in age regression and age progression (also called Future Pacing). Although I don't do regression-to-cause, I do use age regression and progression with my smoking clients. I take them back to a point before they ever had their first cigarette, and then I induce hypnotic amnesia so that it is as if they have never had a cigarette in the first place. We then quickly go through their whole life as a non-smoker, even into a successful future.

Time Distortion is particularly useful in Future Pacing. I use it often with my public speaking clients, my confidence clients, my sports performance clients, and my fear of flying clients. By stepping into an imaginary time and experiencing success, my clients then react as though they have already conquered their fears and overcome obstacles.

Time Distortion Scripts

I'm going to share several methods for Time Distortion. The first is something that I frequently do as part of the hypnotic induction, as a deepening technique, or as a bridge between methods of suggestive therapy, also called a transitional deepener.

This is an example of how I might use Time Distortion in the context of a longer script:

"Find a comfortable place where you can relax, and breathe in and breathe out. Pay attention to your breath. You don't have speed up or slow down the breath; simply breathe. And as you breathe in and out, observing the breath, taking time to appreciate this moment, close the eyes. And with the eyes closed, continue to breathe. With each breath, all of the muscles in your body become more and more relaxed. Of course if you need to move for comfort or stretch or even scratch an itch, those things won't disturb you or make you unhypnotized. In fact, they will actually help you to relax even further, experiencing an even deeper trance.

And since you've come here today, you should have no doubt today that your goals will be met. And notice how wonderful it feels to take this time to practice and relax. Feels pretty good, doesn't it? As I

come backwards from five to one, with each number, allow yourself to access that resource state we call hypnosis. Doubling the sensation of relaxation with each breath and with each number. Five, four, three—all the way down now, completely relaxed—two, one, zero.

And as you continue to breathe, with each breath simply double the sensation of relaxation. In this state of deep trance, with each breath, notice your heart rate becoming more smooth and more rhythmic and how wonderful it feels to enter into a state of deep relaxation. You can even deeply unclench the jaw and deeply relax your shoulders. Allow the hands resting on your lap to become warm and heavy, very relaxed.

Think of a clock or think of your watch, an analog clock or an analog watch, the old kind of watch with the round dial. Imagine the hands at twelve o'clock. Both the small hands and the big hands straight up to twelve. Imagine seeing that clock and then realizing that in the state of deep relaxation, it's no longer important what the numbers on the clock say. In fact, you could move the hands to six o'clock or to say three o'clock, or nine o'clock. It wouldn't make any difference to you. In fact, as you continue to relax, you can let go of the meaning of time and let your clock move from twelve o'clock all the way to seven o'clock, from seven o'clock back around to one o'clock, from one o'clock to five o'clock, and then back to nine o'clock.

You can even imagine that the hands of the clock not only go clockwise, but can even counter clockwise, backwards. It's your clock, it's your watch, and you can imagine it any way you'd like to. No longer concerned about day or night, morning, A.M or P.M., three o'clock or nine o'clock. The time that it is right now is actually NOW o'clock. This moment, this time, right here and right now.

And continue to relax. With each number, doubling that sensation of relaxation. Three, two, one, zero. Enjoying this time of learning and enjoying this time of deep relaxation. Now it is time to reorient. As so take in a deep breath, and when you take in a deep breath, notice what 'now' feels like. As you breathe in and breathe out, let the oxygen fill your lungs. As it fills your lungs, let the oxygen be carried to every cell of the body feeling energized, awake and invigorated. Feeling wonderful and bringing your full attention back to the chair where you are sitting, to my voice. One, two, three, opening the eyes, wide awake, fully alert, and feeling fantastic."

The moving clock imagery with a client who is visual can really confuse their relationship to time. It can move somebody who is obsessed with the past or worried about the future to what I call “now o’clock.”

Another way we can use Time Distortion is to suggest that an hour can seem like a minute. We can do this as either direct or indirect suggestion. You might say to your client that keeping time is so much effort that it’s hard to know what time it is. And we can release them from the anxiety of a schedule or an agenda.

Here is an example for a client who’s experiencing pain:

“It is hard to know if it is time to experience pain because paying attention to the pain takes so much effort.”

By simply taking a minute to enjoy the process of hypnosis whether at home, work, or in the car, they can forget about the hands of the clock, forget about ‘I hurt more in the morning’ or ‘I hurt more at night.’ They can forget about keeping time and they can forget about what time it is. So Time Distortion is one of those techniques that I will use with my pain control clients. This is also helpful in forgetting to remember or remembering to forget those automatic cues in the environment.

Here is a brief example of how I might use hallucination and Time Distortion in pain control:

“Close your eyes and deeply relax. Although your pain level may have been high and although you may be aware of your discomfort, over the next couple of minutes you’ll have an opportunity to look at your pain from a new perspective, and in time, the treatment that you are enduring right now will come to an end. You will have the surgery or radiation or other medication. In a few weeks, or few months, or a few years, after this, you will feel of course better than ever or no longer be in the midst of the trial you are currently in. You will solve your health problem, and you’ll look back on this time as a difficulty that you passed.

So imagine yourself a year from now, seeing yourself as you know you will be, no longer healing but fully recovered. Imagine that. Create that image in your mind, and see yourself as you know you will be. Allow yourself right now to feel the feeling you know you will feel in a year. The fusion has occurred, the radiation has taken place, or the medication has helped you to succeed.

Imagine yourself next to you doing what you cannot do right now: bending the body, moving the body getting out of bed, or even running. See yourself doing that which right now might seem impossible. Involve your senses in the experience. Picture yourself up out of bed, running outside, smelling the scents of the day, feeling the pavement below your feet, hearing the sounds of the neighborhood, and seeing the radiance of the sun. Of course, we know that everything that does exist was a thought first.

And so by creating that imagery today, there is no question in my mind nor should there be in yours, that the future possibilities are endless. What the mind conceives today, we know the body can achieve tomorrow.

Let yourself reorient to the room, to the chair below you. Pay attention to my voice, the air in the room and allow yourself to return to this time and to this place with hope and knowledge of how well you are doing. One, two, three, open the eyes, feeling fantastic.”

Again, the elements of Time Distortion in that future pacing for a medical clients is a useful strategy that really has its basis in Ericksonian hypnosis techniques.

E X E R C I S E S

1. Practice Time Distortion as a tool in your self-hypnosis or your meditation. A lot of people who practice meditation become antsy about how long they spend the meditation. Time Distortion is a wonderful tool for no longer being concerned about how much you are spending in meditation. You can actually simply spend it in meditation.
2. If you're flying, intentionally use self-hypnosis techniques as a tool for distorting a long, boring flight into a short flight. On almost every flight I get on, I put on my headphones and listen to binaural beat music; I relax into the state of deep trance. And I get off the plane hours later feeling like I've been there for just a few minutes. You can also use this in any situation where you may be faced with a boring or monotonous task or one that you are not particularly looking forward to. You have the ability to simply zone out and enjoy a state of deep relaxation, deep trance, or deep meditation.

Chapter Fourteen

Anchoring

Now, the term of *Anchoring* does not come from Milton Erickson; however, the concepts of Anchoring that I'm going to cover in this chapter really came from Milton Erickson's recognition of the power of the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning processes, and our ability to create subconscious associations. It was actually Richard Bandler, the co-founder of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, who coined the term Anchoring after he studied of the methods of Milton Erickson.

When we talk about Anchoring, I always like to begin by talking about Russian behavioral psychologist Pavlov and his dogs. Pavlov rang the dinner bell every time he fed his dogs—this is called Classical Conditioning—so he created an association between the dinner bell and the meat. Then Pavlov removed the meat and only rang the dinner bell, and the dogs salivated in response to the bell. Now that's really pretty important. There's no meat, just the sound of the bell, but the sound of the bell produced a very basic biological response in the dog.

What this actually shows us is that not only the subconscious mind, but also the unconscious mind, can be altered by the methods of association. And that's really what Anchoring is all about.

Anchoring is process in which memory recall, state change, or even an idea or a feeling is associated intentionally with some stimuli. Now, these things can be associated unintentionally. The concept of Anchoring occurs in regular life as well as it does in hypnosis as well. But for our purposes, we're talking about state change, memory recall, or an idea or a feeling that is intentionally associated with some stimulus.

Here are some examples of this occurring in real life. Have you ever been driving down the road and a song comes on (and maybe it's a song you haven't

heard in ten or twenty years) and as soon as that song comes on, it instantly produces a feeling? Maybe a sense of happiness or joy from a different time overwhelms you, or maybe you re-experience a feeling of sadness associated with a different time. Maybe that song even produces the same response every time you hear it—because that song was playing during a highly emotional time in your life.

My colleague James Hazlerig was listened to Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony when he first read *Watership Down*. Now, hearing that music makes him picture rabbits, and even thinking about that book brings up strains of the symphony.

Hypnotherapists will certainly recognize anchoring as a post-hypnotic suggestion in stage hypnosis. My colleague John Cerbone has used the color red to create an association both as a bit in his stage hypnosis work and also in clinical hypnosis as a convincer. John Cerbone carries around red pens wherever he goes; he even has his name and his contact information on the side of them. It has sort of become his trademark. John says to his clients as a post-hypnotic suggestion:

"For some reason, when you leave this session, every time you see the color red, it will brighter, sharper, crisper, clearer. It will stand out wherever you go. Somebody's tie, shirt, cup, stop sign, tail light—whenever you see the color red, it will bring a smile to your face, maybe even some laughter, and then it will bring you back to this state that you've created here today of power, confidence, and success."

And so as this post-hypnotic suggestion is given, the anchor here is the state or resource in the hypnosis session to the client seeing the color red in their environment over the next couple of days. This subconsciously reinforces all the work that was done in the hypnosis session.

Anchors can be subconsciously programmed through repetition and repetitious suggestion. They can be created intentionally, and anchors can be, by the way, positive or negative. Of course as clinical hypnotists, we strive to be ethical, but anchors are set in politics all of the time. They're set in seduction and love all of the time. They're set in sales and manipulation all of the time.

If every time I say "I love you" to my wife, I touch her in some innocuous way—a tap on the shoulder, a touch on the back of a hand, or even just putting my hand up against her face—next time I don't say "I love you" but simply touch her, the anchor would be there and produce that response to my love.

Suppose I'm a shopkeeper and every time a kid comes into my store I give him a balloon animal. Every time he makes a purchase, I give him a balloon animal. So now when I give him a balloon animal, he's going to want to make a purchase. That's an example of an anchor that could be set in a sales type situation.

A politician might give away freebies every time they give a speech. Now everyone wants a speech. Why? So they actually get more freebies. Similarly, a politician might always gesture to one place when he talks about the problems the country faces—then when he talks about his opponent, he gestures to the same place to subconsciously connect his opponent to those problems in the minds of the voters.

In therapy, anchors are sometimes called “triggers.” These are what we associate with our clients’ non-therapeutic anchors that they’ve set through repetition or through prior learning. For example, “Every time I’m angry, I drink a beer” or “Every time I get in my car, I light a cigarette.” So the trigger is really an anchor. I hear other hypnotists talking about the way that they do smoking cessation hypnosis and they say look for the triggers: what they’re really looking for are the anchors their clients have set simply through the course of life.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is almost always anchor-based. The client has either had a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic experience, which according the diagnostic criteria, has done two things: 1. It has put them in imminent harm’s way or the perceived likelihood of imminent harm; and 2. It’s produced a negative response that is overwhelming and something that they find difficult and that they no longer wish to experience. That response set that is so distressing to them then comes about any time there is an auditory, visual, or kinesthetic experience that they associate with that first experience. And so, this negative state is recreated automatically whenever they’re in certain places or with certain people, which of course causes them distress.

This may produce an emotional response or with our more catastrophically difficult clients, revivification of the traumatizing experience—all as the result of an anchor.

Anchors are used in religion, as in an altar call at a Baptist church, for example. In politics, when you see that politician pointing in towards themselves while talking about prosperity and progress. Watch Tony Robins’ hands when he speaks. Every time he has a new idea, his hands go inwards towards himself as if he’s really giving the group a big hug and bringing that idea towards

himself. What he's doing here is anchoring a state of happiness, a new promise to himself as the speaker.

Almost anything can be used as a cue to fire off an anchor: hand motions, touch, music, vocal intonation, words, colors, image, gestures. Many hypnotists anchor states to the act of joining the thumb and index finger into an OK sign.

Repetition

The basic principle of Anchoring is this:

The more an anchor is practiced, the stronger it becomes.

The stronger the anchor becomes, the stronger the response set. This is what we see in our PTSD clients with their responses extremely strong because they've literally practiced that anchor in their subconscious mind over and over and over.

People who go to churches that burn incense will eventually associate the feeling of a church service with that incense—not because anyone ever suggested it, but simply because the smell and the feeling are experienced again and again at the same time.

Self-Hypnotic Anchors

You can use anchors in your own life to make your life better, and then you can share this technique with your clients. I teach my clients how to do self-hypnosis in almost all of the sessions that I do.

Here's a process for setting a self-hypnotic anchor:

1. Identify a positive state or resource state that you'd like to feel.

What would you like to feel? Would you like to feel confidence, joy, or amazement? Would you like to feel intelligence? Would you like to feel the capacity to retain information? For our example, we'll use confidence.

2. Identify a trigger or cue that you want to use when you want to feel that state.

For simplicity, I'm going to use the OK sign as an example.

3. Enter a resource state of deep concentration and relaxation.

In other words, go into a hypnotic trance. This doesn't have to be a deep trance, so just focus your concentration.

4. Elicit the desired state that you chose in Step 1.

An easy way to elicit a state or feeling is to think about a time when you were experiencing that state or feeling. Think about what you saw, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted in that moment. Think about where you were, what you were wearing, who was with you, and every other detail of that experience.

5. Magnify that state.

Make the colors brighter, the sounds louder and more distinct, the sensations more intense, the aromas and flavors stronger.

6. Experience that state as intensely as you can.

7. Set the anchor.

In our example, make the OK sign with your hand.

8. Re-orient and break your state, releasing the cue.

So, release the OK sign, open your eyes, move around, blink a few times—whatever it takes to return to a neutral feeling. That is called a “break state” in NLP.

9. Repeat Steps 3 through 8 twice.

10. Re-orient and break state.

11. Test the anchor by firing off the cue. If you do not experience the desired state, repeat the process several more times.

Here is a sample script of how I might lead a client through this process:

“Now, you don’t have go into deep hypnosis quickly here; rather just concentrate and relax for a moment. Set any stress about yesterday aside, and if you notice your thoughts about tomorrow being followed, simply bring your attention back to the breath. You can leave the eyes open for this but just concentrate for a moment and enjoy a minute of clarity, a moment of relaxation. One of the things that’s amazing about us is that we’re really not dependent on somebody or something outside of us to elicit a state. In other words, happiness is actually generated from the inside. I always hear things, ‘Oh, that/he/she makes me so happy,’ but it’s actually us responding to that or him or her that produces happiness.”

Now as you relax, elicit that state that you identified that would be so helpful to you. Since it was confidence that you decided that you

wanted to experience, be confident. Choose right now to be confident. Think of a time when you were particularly confident, and re-create that sensory experience now. Good, magnify that state, increase that state. Increase that confidence; move it from awareness to a state that you're currently experiencing. And as you currently experience that, move it to the highest level possible.

Breathe in a breath, breathe in confidence. Breathe in a breath, breathe in joy. And realize that you've created that state. Remember the OK sign? Touch that thumb and that index finger together. Touch them together; press them together. And as you press them together, be confident.

Now, let go of the thumb and the index fingers. Let go of that for minute. Let your hand relax. Take in a deep breath. Breathe out. What we're really doing here is sort of 'breaking the state,' reorienting.

Let's go through that again. Concentrate for a moment and elicit that state, become aware of that state. Magnify it, and then bring it to its highest level. Be confident. Bring that to Level 7, an 8, a 9, a 10. Fire that anchor again, touching that thumb and index finger again. Perfect. Now release it. Just let go of the tension between the thumb and the index finger, and let your hand relax.

Now again, elicit that state. Step into that state. Be that state. Increase the quantity of that state. Bring it to Level 8, or 9, or 10. Fire that anchor again. Touch that thumb and index finger together. Feel that state that you've created and let go. Absolutely fantastic.

Now, break the state. Have sort of have a mental saltine, if you will, for a moment. Here's what I'd like you to do. If you're sitting down, stand up for a minute right where you are. Sit back down for a minute. Blink your eyes a few times; wiggle your fingers and toes. And now touch that thumb and that index finger together. Just do it right here and now. Touch that thumb and that index finger together. Press it together as tightly and as hard as you can.

Notice when you do that what you're feeling. Notice that feeling of confidence rushing through you."

Applications of the Self-Hypnotic Anchor

This technique is extremely useful with all manner of clients.

Let's say you are client who came to me because you lack confidence in public-speaking situations: You can simply touch that thumb and that index finger together as you go up to the podium.

Let's say you're a student who came to me because you are nervous about test-taking. When you step into the exam room and set your books on the floor, press that thumb and that index finger together to enter that resource state of intelligence and recollection.

Say you want to feel joy with a partner. For some reason, they want to watch a movie that isn't your favorite type, and you find yourself following those feelings which are unpleasant to you. Simply take in a breath, touch that thumb and that index finger together, and bring yourself instantly back to the joyous state that you've created and anchored.

This is a technique that you can use to improve your own life, but this is also a great technique to teach your clients. I teach this to most of the clients who come to my office.

Replacing Negative Associations with Anchoring

Another common use for a therapeutic Anchor is to replace negative associations. For example, whenever a client drives past a store he was fired from, he feels his self-confidence lag. He has a negative association that can be replaced with a new, positive association.

Here's a simple process to do that:

1. When you have a client who has a cue, a trigger, or an anchor, identify what it is.
2. Identify the automatic behavior or feeling that is produced whenever your client encounters that trigger. (Chances are, merely thinking about the trigger will produce the automatic response.)
3. Elicit a more positive, preferred state (as in the previous section) and set an anchor for it.
4. Elicit the distress state that was identified in Step 2. (For example, ask your client to think about the store where he was fired.)
5. Fire the positive anchor that was set in Step 3.

6. Break state.
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 three times.
8. Test by asking the client to think about the trigger, which should automatically produce the preferred state.

Anchoring in the Office

Some of my colleagues help their clients set a “trance trigger”—a word, thought, gesture, or other action that will take the client back into a resource state.

I find that my clients associate the hypnotic resource state with the “hypnotic” furniture in my office. This is why I do the intake interview in one area and the formal trance in another. When clients return to the “hypnotic” chair in the second session, they almost always go into trance.

If you don’t have separate furniture for formal trance, you can do what my colleague James Hazlerig does: to initiate formal trance, he puts headphones on his client, makes the chair lean back, and turns down the lights. His clients soon anchor hypnosis to those cues.

It’s not at all unusual for a repeat client to anchor the state of hypnosis to the hypnotist’s voice.

One of my colleagues who is a Licensed Massage Therapist uses a particular blend of essential oils in her office, so her clients soon connect that scent to the feeling of getting a great massage. Every time she gets a new set of business cards, she applies a little bit of the oil to the edge of the cards, usually while they are still in the box. She then gives a card to every client, instructing them to sniff the card if they feel stressed. Of course, this is an excellent way to encourage her clients to schedule return visits.

E X E R C I S E S

1. Guide yourself through the process outlined in this chapter for setting a self-hypnotic anchor.
2. Look for ways to use anchoring in your practice.

Chapter Fifteen

Modalities and Submodalities

Representational Systems

We take in all of our information through the senses, and we represent reality internally with corresponding sensory modalities. Understanding these modalities, also called Representational Systems, can be very helpful to an Ericksonian hypnotherapist. Because hypnotherapy is a learning process, it's useful to note that these ideas are helpful for teachers, who often think of their students as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners.

In NLP, we talk about "The VAK Model" for Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. We actually talk about the five senses: sight, sound, touch, olfactory, and gustatory. (Some call it VAKOG for that reason.) Really there are more than five senses, but we focus on the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic because those are the dominant sensory systems for the vast majority of humans. And so when we can understand which of these primary representational systems our client manifests as their primary strategy, we can create rapport with them and create effective interventions by operating in their map of the world rather than our map of the world. It's useful to identify our own Primary Representational Systems (PRS) so that we have an understanding of our own biases and tendencies.

One way to think of PRS is it's how we remember our past. If you say, "Think about a time a year or two ago when you..." different people will respond according to their PRS. The auditory learners are going to be recreating either conversations or internal dialogue. The visual learners will think of what they could see at the time; they'll be creating visual images. The kinesthetic learners will be recreating a subjective interpretation or experience of the way that they

felt physically, maybe even emotionally. (In NLP, physical feelings are designated *Ke*—for Kinesthetic External. Emotional feelings are designated *Ki*—for Kinesthetic Internal.)

PRS is also how we project our future. One stumbling block about building rapport can occur if you're a very visual person and you say to your client during Future Pacing, "What I'd like you to do now is to see yourself ten years from now." Well, if your client does not have a high level of visual acuity, maybe they should be listening to what they would be saying to themselves ten years from now. We're going to be more effective when we operate within their world and their primary representational system.

One system is usually dominant with each one of us, but it's important to remember that most people use all of their senses to some degree. Some people are so well attuned to all of their senses that we don't really have to be that careful in choosing our language. Also, it's important to realize that people may change from one PRS to another depending on the situation. Finally, it's important to note that we can train our clients to improve in the less dominant areas.

Here are some clues to help us understand the representational systems of others.

In general, Visual people:

- Talk rapidly
- Gesture as if painting when they're talking
- Glance upward
- Speak with a higher pitch
- Breathe high in the chest

Generally, Auditory people:

- Talk at a medium-fast pace
- Gesture close in or to the side
- Glance to the side
- Have a more musical sound to the voice
- Breathe in the middle of the chest

Again, generally speaking, Kinesthetic people:

- Speak slowly
- Gesture at insubstantial ideas, as though they were physical objects
- Glance downward
- Speak lower, both in pitch and volume
- Breathe from the belly

It's important to keep in mind that these are general guidelines. Not every individual will fit perfectly in these categories, nor do people stay within one category all the time.

In addition to looking at body language and noticing vocal quality, we can pick up clues in the content of our clients' speech.

Linguistically, the Visual learner is going to be using phrases like:

- “I see what you mean.”
- “I can't see how I'm going to solve this problem.”
- “Can't you ever see it my way?”
- “This looks like a problem to me.”

The Auditory language patterns might include:

- “Listen to me now but hear me later.”
- “Sounds true to me.”
- “That's a real bell ringer.”
- “That's music to my ears.”
- “That set off alarm bells in my mind.”

The Kinesthetic will use language related to touch and feeling:

- “I feel your pain”
- “It feels like I can't get out from under my depression.”
- “It touched my soul.”
- “I had a peaceful sensation.”

Finally, pay attention to your client's hobbies and profession. Painters and designers are likely to be highly visual people, while sculptors, dancers, and athletes may be more kinesthetic. Musicians and writers may be more auditory. Again, these are not hard and fast rules, but rather tendencies that can help us.

It is perhaps as important to be aware of a sensory deficiency as it is to be aware of a Primary Representational System. For example, some who are primarily Auditory can nonetheless visualize quite well; with them, you are safe using a visualization, though you'll want to include plenty of sound-based content. A different Auditory client might not be able to visualize at all, in which case you should avoid visualization techniques.

Interventions Using Modalities

In addition to noting your client's PRS to facilitate communication and rapport, you can use modalities (often in conjunction with submodalities, covered next) to help clients make change.

For instance, when a person experiences physical pain, that is a kinesthetic experience. Asking your client what sound the pain makes or what color it is will shift the client out of the kinesthetic modality into one of the others. This approach can often diminish or alleviate the pain. It also places the experience in a different modality where it can be further manipulated by altering the sub-modalities.

Submodalities

Sensory modalities are our representational systems—what we see, hear and feel. Submodalities are the parameters within each of these representational systems.

For example, when it comes to visual imagery, we have color, shape, size, distance, brightness of light, brightness of color, whether something appears opaque or transparent, and many other visual parameters. These are the sub-modalities of the visual modality.

The auditory modality deals with how things sound; its submodalities include loud, soft, high-pitched, low-pitched, sweet, grating, pure, crunchy, fast, slow, clear, scratchy.

The kinesthetic modality is tactile, about feeling things. Its submodalities include rough, smooth, hot, cold, heavy, light, near, far, wet, dry.

Though I've mentioned only a few, there is probably an unknown or unlimited number of potential submodalities for each of these primary representational systems.

Submodalities are important, not just because they exist and are great descriptors, but because submodalities have meaning. We encode our experience in our submodalities.

For example, in a horror movie, there may be a high-pitched sound. Think about the high, screeching violins in *Psycho*, and the emotional impact that sound has.

Remember the opening scenes of the original *Wizard of Oz* movie, which starts out in black and white. And only when they get to Oz is there color. The state changes. The feeling change is signaled by changing the submodality.

Submodalities really are, for all practical purpose, the code in our linguistic programs. Language is important because, as we've been studying, it is how we elicit and record responses to the world around us. This is the way we describe the world around us. And submodalities create subjective subdivisions between one experience and another.

Why is this important to the therapist? We can change a person's entire experience by taking a few minutes to change the submodalities. Having our clients look at things from a new vantage point can change their experience.

Submodalities for Fear of Flying

Let's take fear of flying as an example.

I love working with clients who have a flying phobia in part because I used to be afraid to fly. I spent about ten years driving whenever I had to go somewhere, and really not leaving the Midwest. My phobia of flying developed when a plane I was on came very close to crashing. It was actually worse than an emergency landing and less severe than a crash. They call it a "flop."

I no longer am afraid to fly. In fact, I have been executive platinum on American Airlines for years. That's the highest level status. I fly on a regular basis.

A lot of people are afraid to fly, but I don't always tell my clients that I used to be afraid to fly, too—and here's why: Though my prior experiences inform the work that I do, that's not what makes me an expert. What makes me an expert is the same thing that makes you an expert. You've studied, you've taken time, you've practiced, and you've read this book and others like it. You have

learned the skills needed to help others, even with problems you've never faced yourself. Because of this, you're able to work with anybody even though their experiences and interpretations are different than yours.

The main reason I love working with people who have a flying phobia is it makes a big difference in their lives. It means they can visit their grandchildren; it means they can continue in their employment. There are all kinds of great things about helping clients with flying phobia.

When I have somebody who comes into the office and is afraid to fly, I'm going to ask questions to elicit the submodalities that are in play:

"What happens when you step onto the airplane and find your seat? Describe for me what that is like. What's it like waiting in line? When you get onto the plane, you move down the aisle and you find your seat, what's that like? Describe for me that process, your experiences, what you're feeling, what you're thinking, and what you're sensing."

And then I just shut up and listen to them.

What they're going to tell me is usually they're visualizing the plane crashing or the plane having some other problem. Or they're hearing in their mind a committee talking about whether or not flying is safe, or whether the crew is competent. Or they're hearing sounds of the plane sputtering like the sound of a Hollywood movie plane that's having difficulty. If they're kinesthetic, they will tell me: "I don't really know what I'm thinking about. I'm usually just zoned out. But I feel this intense pressure; it's almost as if I'm being crushed as soon as I step on the airplane," or "When I sit down on the chair, I begin to feel a little bit better, but then it feels like the top of my body is just sinking into the bottom part of my body." This would be a very kinesthetic description.

I'm listening for which representational system they associate with the discomfort, the anxiety or the fear, or the claustrophobia of their experience on the airplane. Then I'm going to help them to change their submodalities, either during the pre-talk or the formal trance.

Imagine that we've done this and found that the client is very visual. We've done an induction and a deepener, so now we're in deep trance:

"So just imagine that you're on a plane. The plane hasn't taken off yet. You're still on the ground. People are still coming in. But this is where typically you begin to notice things. Is the plane old? Is the plane new? Is the plane wide, or is it narrow and uncomfortable? You begin to see the people coming on the plane and, traditionally of course because

you're afraid to fly, you think, "Wow, each one of them has a story. What will this look like in the movie they make about the plane crash?"

(I've had lots of clients with that thought as they visualize the people coming down the aisle.)

"Simply sit there on your seat and take in a breath. Breathe in and breathe out. And even though you're creating with the imagination the visual imagery of sitting on a plane, you're actually sitting in your chair; you're sitting where it's safe listening to my voice.

But in your mind as you view those people boarding the plane, change each one of their images in your own mind to a smile—maybe even a big silly smile, a super-silly grin. So as you see each person walk past you, they all have a big grin rather than that look of grumpiness passengers on a plane usually seem to have.

That's the nice thing about visualization and hypnosis: You can actually change the imagery to anything you'd like to. It's almost as if you know how to work CGI. It's almost as if you are an expert video editor. As the people come on the plane, paint smiles on them, big, broad, happy smiles.

Now, look at your movie. Is your movie devoid of color, like airplanes usually are? Imagine that you're an executive at Boeing and that you can use mood lighting to create new airplanes to have a new warm and welcoming interior. So even if your mental image is of an eggshell white 727, put that new modern mood lighting into that airplane. Add a blue light and pink neon light and a yellow light to that cabin.

Imagine everybody coming on passing through those lights with a smile on their face. Maybe you notice that the carpeting on the plane was dingy office blue. Put some green or chartreuse shag carpeting on that plane. Make it a little bit retro; it's super fun. Turn those ugly seat covers into seat covers like a teenaged girl might put in her car—a leopard print, a zebra print—making the plane something entirely different than you've ever seen before, almost like it's a party plane. Of course if it's a party plane, how would that make you feel? It would make you feel fun, wouldn't it? Everybody likes to be where there's a party, don't they? That's exactly where you are right now."

This is just a short example of how I might go through the process of changing the perception of my clients using the submodalities of their primary representational system to alter the way they feel. Of course one of the basic tenets of NLP is that every time we do work with a client, we check our progress. So I would have my client open their eyes and I would say: "Now think about being on an airplane tomorrow. Do you feel any less stressed than you did when you first came in here today?" The answer is always, "Yes, I feel less stressed about it." I answer with a suggestion: "Awesome, then I am sure you'll do fantastic when it comes time for tomorrow's flight."

Submodalities at Work

My colleague James Hazlerig used submodalities one night when his wife was suffering from an ear infection. Now, she'd been to see a physician that day and had taken her prescribed medications, but she was still in considerable pain, so much that she had curled into a fetal position and was whimpering. When she told James, "It feels like there's a white-hot ice pick going through my ear into my brain," he realized that he could utilize that information to help her feel better, so he asked, "Can you picture the ice pick?"

She said she could. At that point, she'd switched from a kinesthetic experience of pain to a visual experience.

James then asked, "Can you imagine it shifting from white-hot to red-hot?" (Notice that he kept the kinesthetic language for this question, and then dropped it for the next.)

She nodded.

He then asked, "Can you let it shift from red to orange?"

She nodded again. He noted that she was looking more relaxed with each question.

"Can you left it shift from orange to brown?" (Notice he's going from warmer colors to cooler colors with each question. He's shifting the submodalities of color and temperature at the same time, but mostly focusing on the visual modality, since pain is kinesthetic.)

She nodded again, so he continued, "Can it shift from brown to yellow?" They continued on in that fashion until the ice pick was blue, then James asked, "Can it become a dull, cold grey?" She allowed that, so he asked, "Can that grey ice-pick start rusting? Can it then crumble and disintegrate?"

By that point, she looked completely relaxed and deeply entranced, so he proceeded to use other images and direct suggestions to support the healing her antibiotics had already begun.

EXERCISES

1. Ask your friends to tell a story or share an experience, and focus on the cues they give to understand representational systems based on some of the things in this chapter.
2. Almost every computer, tablet, or phone has a recording feature, so tell a story from your memory to your device, then play it back and listen to it. Take note of the sensory language you use, so that you can understand your own PRS better.
3. Think about a slightly unpleasant memory, and take note of the modalities and submodalities involved. Then explore how you can change your feelings about the memory by changing the submodalities. For example, if the memory brings up an image, try making the colors brighter or draining them out completely. Find out what makes the feelings more or less intense for you, realizing that each person will respond differently to submodality changes; in other words, what works for you may not work for your clients.

Chapter Sixteen

Neuro-Linguistic Programming Ideas Based on Erickson

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is largely an outgrowth of Richard Bandler and John Grinder studying Milton Erickson. The guiding question of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is: “Why are effective people effective?” Milton Erickson was identified as being one of those psychiatrists who was effective, not only because he used hypnosis, but because of the way he approached and communicated with his clients—ways that were, particularly at that time, completely different from the way other people worked with clients.

So Neuro-Linguistic Programming built some of its patterns or protocols by modeling Milton Erickson and then extrapolated from his ideas. In this chapter, I’d like to discuss some of the NLP techniques and concepts that are based on Erickson’s work.

State Change

What I’m talking about when I refer to “State Change” is really the praxeological status of a person. That word *praxeological* refers to the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—every aspect of who the person is, taking into account experience, intentions, finances, family connections, political affiliations, sexual identity, religious identity. The word “state” in NLP really refers to the Gestalt, to borrow a term from Fritz Perls (one of the other therapists Bandler and Grinder studied).

Every one of us has the ability to self-regulate our state. We have the ability to regulate the intensity of our states, the presentation of our states, the way

that we experience anything ranging from creativity to commitment, sorrow, love, happiness, or success. All of these things are examples of states; these are not merely emotional states, but resource states as well.

In my hypnosis and NLP practice, I spend a lot of my time training my clients to recognize and utilize the resource states associated with hypnosis: the state of learning, the state of concentration or focus, the state of confidence. I draw my client's attention to these states when I do any sort of work with either anxiety, stage fright, or sports performance.

There's an old saying, "You have the same pants to get glad in that you have to get mad in." In other words, something outside of us does not control how we feel. As a psychotherapist working in family therapy, one of the things that I am accustomed to hearing is clients who report that they have what we call an "External Locus of Control": "*My wife / husband / lover / child / parent made me feel this way.*" Nobody else has control over us. We have the ability at all times to self-regulate and to control the intensity and the presence of any state.

To many of my clients, this is something that they really aren't even aware of. They always believe that something outside of them dictates how they feel. They have practiced the habit of helplessness, but it's a habit that can be broken. NLP teaches people to take control of their own states, and these state change strategies are really outgrowths of Milton Erickson's work.

In NLP, a strategy refers to sequence of representations that lead to an outcome. So in NLP, when you hear somebody say "here's a strategy," what they're really talking about is a process or a protocol of various representations or various tasks that lead to an outcome. NLP is very process-oriented.

Here is a state change strategy that comes from NLP that really originated in the work of Milton Erickson:

1. Identify a current undesired state that you have.

Although you're doing something enjoyable, reading this book, there are probably other things going on in your world as well. Maybe there's some discontent, irritability, restlessness.

2. Identify active submodalities.

Here's how I might phrase this step to a client:

"Now that you've identified your undesired state, I'd like you to close your eyes and identify the active submodalities, the core characteristics of that state. How do you feel it? Is it heavy? Is it light? How do you see it? Is it close, far, red, big, black, or white? How do you hear it? Is

it somebody saying something to you, is it you saying something to somebody else, or is it you talking to yourself? Is it loud, quiet, high-pitched or low-pitched? Is it not a voice but just a sound?”

Now in the process, you thought about the non-desired state you have and you've identified the submodalities that describe how you experience it.

3. Replace active submodalities with antithetical submodalities.

“But now I want you in your own mind—and you can do anything you want to with your own mind—replace those submodalities with antithetical submodalities. In other words, if you were seeing an undesired state close, move it far. If it’s far, move it close. If it’s in color, make it black and white; if it’s black and white, paint it red, white, and blue. If it’s loud, imagine you have a radio knob and you can turn the volume of that voice down or those words down. If it’s a low, turn it up: listen to it. Whatever your submodalities are, change them and re-experience that same experience with an entirely new set of submodalities.”

4. Create a new scene that uses the new submodalities.

“What you’ve actually done here is actually create a new scene or a new act, or a new script. Imagine that new representation of the undesired state being in front of you with the old scene or the old script in front of that, between you and the new one.”

5. Fade the new scene onto the old scene.

“Now imagine the old scene, the one closer to you moving backwards, dissolving into the new scene. Bring that new scene forward with the old one continuing to disappear off into the distance, leaving only the new scene, the new submodalities for that same experience present.”

6. Test your current state.

“Now think about that undesired state, however you labeled it: anger, procrastination, restlessness, irritability, whatever it was. But experience it from the new perspective with the new submodalities and ask yourself this question: “In any way, does this feel different? Am I experiencing my undesired state differently than I did before?”

This is an example for a strategy for state change. It can be adapted and utilized with clients.

Calibration

Calibration is a handy tool for becoming aware of our experience.

Most of what we do, feel, and think is automatic. It comes from our subconscious mind based on our previous experience. With awareness though, we can better take control and manage our states. Calibration is the conscious practice of awareness of the intensity and traits of states commonly or uncommonly experienced. It's really a tool for recognition. Calibration is all about understanding what you're experiencing.

In therapy, we can use Calibration to help us be proactive, to identify those "Red Flags" or triggers, the behavior, emotion, relationship, or social changes that precede crisis.

A great way to do this is to calibrate our experiences on a Likert Scale. A Likert Scale uses equal intervals, usually from one through ten. For example, "How much do you love this book you are reading on a scale of one to ten? Rate it." That's the Likert Scale, named after Dr. Rensis Likert, who developed the idea. So for example, I'll often have my anger management clients scale their anger into perspective: "How angry are you on a scale of one to ten?"

This is really important because my clients are usually aware of all or nothing: *I'm either angry or not angry. I either want a cigarette or don't want a cigarette. I either want to eat or don't want to eat.* They're all or nothing.

But when I have them calibrate their emotions, experiences, and states on a scale of one to ten, then they see often for the first time, even though it was clear to others and to me, that they are experiencing things in different ways in different circumstances. That means they can choose different outcomes, different ways to respond, different ways to interact with people around them.

Calibration is an important part of many NLP processes. For example, in the state change strategy, we might begin by calibrating the client's initial state and then measuring when we're done. In a craving control strategy, we might start off by asking, "On a scale of one to ten, how intense is your craving right now?" After changing the submodalities associated with the craving, we might check our progress by repeating the question.

Perceptual Positions

This is a concept that really grew out of Erickson's use of dissociation techniques, which were discussed in an earlier chapter.

Perceptual Positions are very important, particularly for those who are interested in the subject of regression. Now I don't regress-to-cause, but I do sometimes have my clients re-visit past events, for instance when I have a smoker go back to before the first cigarette.

The reason Perceptual Positions are important in regression is that many regressionists aim at revivifying past experiences—often traumatic experiences—having the client re-experience events as though they were happening right now. Of course, this looks very dramatic on television or in workshops, especially when clients are having violent abreaktions. However, it is totally unnecessary; past events can be re-visited without re-experiencing trauma (and potentially re-traumatizing the client) by using Perceptual Positions effectively.

The first perceptual position is me experiencing me as me—or more accurately, you experiencing you as you. Right now you're sitting down, you're reading a book and you are you as you are reading. You are seeing with your eyes, hearing with your ears, feeling with your hands, and walking with your feet. (This is also called being “associated.”)

The second perceptual position is where we step into role of another person or even another me to see and experience me from outside me. Again, this is a way for you to step into the role of another person. You, for example, could imagine being me speaking to you, observing you from my perspective. You could imagine another you outside of you on the other side of the room, watching you read this book. If you've ever heard the saying, “Before you criticize someone, walk a mile in their shoes,” that saying is basically advising you to look at the situation from the second perceptual position. It's a way to see yourself as others see you. (The second and third perceptual positions are also called “dissociated.”)

The third perceptual position involves seeing the situation (and yourself) as a detached observer; it's a bird's eye view. This is really one level even more removed. This is you watching you watching you. This is great for self-evaluation.

What's the value in working with these Perceptual Positions? The value in it is that when I move further back from any scenario or situation, I can see a

larger picture and how things relate. In marriage counseling, moving people to the second perceptual position (the point of view of their spouse) is something that is often done. David Calof, who was a student of Erickson, wrote a book called *The Couple Who Became Each Other*, named for his use of the second perceptual position in marriage counseling. When we see ourselves from this new vantage point of being outside of ourselves, it can give us an entirely new perspective.

So when I work with clients who are looking at experiences from the past, I'll usually have them look at past events from a new perceptual position, typically the third position, as a distant observer seeing the whole picture in a new way. They see the picture in relation to the time that's gone by, the picture in the relation to the people around them or the others involved. This new perspective gives them clarity about previous experiences and how they've taken those learnings into the present. In the case of many of my clients, they can give up those old ideas by recognizing where they came from and how they might not be so helpful to them. Not only does this approach allow for new insights, but it avoids re-traumatizing clients the way that re-living a memory while associated into it can.

One exercise you can use with clients is to have them identify situation or conversation that didn't go as planned, and then ask them self are they ready to accept change if it's needed. We always want agreement. Then have them relax, go into a trance state, an insight state, a resource state; and go to a first position. Revivify that state. Quickly define the experience and then break the state ("Open the eyes"--*a mental saltine*). Have them close the eyes again and direct them into the state again of learning, of insight, of getting along with others. And move them into the second perceptual position as the other person. Have them notice their own facial expressions and their own tone of voice. Have them notice how they behaved and came across in that situation from the perspective of the other person, and then have them break the state again. Then process the experience with them. *What did you learn?* Do an evaluation with them. *Did you come to any new conclusions?*

You can even then have them go back into that resource state—"close the eyes, and take in a breath"—and then move to a third perceptual position as a stranger in the room or a fly on the wall. Have them look at new learnings / new evaluations / new conclusions from that perspective. Break the state. ("Again, open the eyes.") And then process with them. Have them define new behaviors, resources, ideas.

And this simple exercise in first, second, and third perceptual position can be a great learning experience for the vast majority of our clients.

Ecology Check

An Ecology Check in NLP is the process of helping the client define choices and actions, and it is used to make sure that new choices, changes, and actions fit the client's values and intentions. Ecology is about creating balance: Positive change sometimes has unintended consequences.

For example, many alcoholics who are married end up getting sober—and then divorced. It's interesting that divorce occurs after recovery more often than *before* recovery. Two hundred pounds of weight loss sounds awesome for the client who is 375 pounds, but it can lead to significant personality or social changes that they had not yet anticipated. An Ecology Check is about making sure that the client is all right with the ramifications of the change.

An Ecology Check can use that third perceptual person, that dissociated state, to help a person envision what change will be like and evaluate new possibilities and new problems, identifying incongruence with parts of the plan that have conflicting outcomes.

Here's an exercise that you can use to implement at Ecology Check Pattern with your clients:

1. Identify the proposed change.

“I want to quit smoking / lose weight / stop chasing cars.”

2. Have client dissociate into the third perceptual position, looking at the situation from the outside.

3. Ask your client questions: What thoughts and feeling do they have about making the change and why they would make the change?

One way to execute step three is to explore the situation with Cartesian Coordinates:

- “*If I make the change, what will happen?*”
- “*If I make the change, what won't happen?*”
- “*If I don't make the change, what will happen?*”
- “*If I don't make the change, what won't happen?*”

This is a great exercise to guide somebody to that third perceptual position, where they can see a much larger perspective. Moving through the Ecology Check Pattern as they choose to make decisions can help them to become congruent about the choices they make and the actions they take.

Some hypnotic techniques combine Future Pacing with an Ecology Check. When my colleague James Hazlerig works with a weight-loss client, one of the first things he does is ask them their current weight and their goal weight. He then guides them through a visualization of stepping on a scale in front of a mirror, seeing their current body and reading their current weight on the scale. He then instructs them to see the weight reading decreasing gradually and the body changing along with it. He stops at various increments for an Ecology Check: “Notice what your body looks like at this new size. Notice how your world is; what people are saying to you and about you; and how your family, friends, coworkers, and strangers interact with you. Are you okay with these changes?”

Fitting the Technique to the Client

One question I get from students of NLP and hypnosis is this:

“What happens if you use a technique, but your client doesn’t make the change?”

The answer, based on an Ericksonian approach, is simple:

Do something else.

Milton Erickson didn’t view “resistance” as something that needed to be overcome. Instead, he viewed it as information he could use to succeed.

I spent a number of years as a drug and alcohol counselor. In drug and alcohol counseling we would have group therapy in which we would have everyone around a circle, but we would put a chair in the middle. We called that the “hot seat,” and we would actually have the group confront the patient who was sitting in that hot seat because we wanted break through denial.

Now that’s not a technique that I would probably use currently; back in the day, that was really one of the predominant approaches to chemical dependency counseling.

That is really the antithesis of the Erickson’s approach. Erickson didn’t believe there was resistance. If there was resistance, what it really meant was the

therapist needed to make changes to become more congruent with the client, to listen and to function within the clients metaphors and representational systems, and to elicit the values that the client thought were important. That's why the Ecology Check covered above is vitally important.

So if you're using a technique with a client and not getting the results that they've articulated they wanted or you believe they should be getting, that's an indicator to simply switch modalities, submodalities, language patterns, choices, or approaches to meet your client's needs. In other words, fit the therapy to the client, not the other way around.

One of the presuppositions of Neuro-Linguistic Programming applies here:

There is no such thing as failure; there is only feedback.

That axiom certainly applies in Ericksonian hypnosis.

EXERCISES

1. Practice the State Change Strategy in this chapter.
2. Practice scaling your emotions. When you feel happy, ask yourself, "How happy am I on a scale of one to ten? What could I do to move closer to ten right now?" Do the same with all of your emotions.
3. Think of a social obstacle or ongoing interpersonal conflict you face. Go through the Perceptual Positions process described in this chapter, examining the issue first as you see it, then as the other person or people involved see it, and then from a neutral, bird's-eye view. Note what new insights and solutions arise from this exercise. (Note: This technique has been used by Mahatma Gandhi and many other prominent world leaders.)
4. If you are considering an action or choosing between two actions, perform the Ecology Check process, imagining what the results of each action might be.
5. Practice using the Cartesian Coordinates. You can even practice this with situations that are not very important, to get in the practice of doing it: "*What will happen if I order pizza*

*tonight? What **won't** happen if I order pizza tonight? What will happen if I **don't** order pizza tonight? What **won't** happen if I **don't** order pizza tonight?"*

6. After you have done each of these exercise yourself, practice by leading a friend, family member, or colleague through these exercises.

***Moving
Forward***

Chapter Seventeen

Helpful Ideas in Hypnotic Communication

Michael Yapko's *Trancework* is one of the best-known introductions to hypnosis. As Yapko was trained in the Ericksonian tradition, *Trancework* is in many ways a fundamental textbook on Ericksonian Hypnotherapy. For that reason, I'd like to take this chapter and discuss some helpful ideas for hypnotic communication in Yapko's work.

Keep your Suggestions Simple and Easy to Follow

One of the reasons why I love Milton Erickson's approach is that his suggestions are fairly short and pretty easy for clients to take action upon. They may be direct suggestions cloaked in indirect language, or they may be embedded in double binds, but ultimately his suggestions are easy to carry out.

Listen to your Clients and Use their Language as Much as Sensibly Possible

In Neuro-Linguistic Programming, we talk about Matching and Mirroring as a way to build rapport: Breathing at the same time that our client breathes; leaning in or leaning back or opening the arms or even closing the body posture in ways that are similar to what our clients are doing.

We can do this linguistically as well, and Milton Erickson did that. We should of course be listening to our clients as they describe their primary relational frames. What metaphors are they using to describe their issues? Are they using auditory, kinesthetic, or visual language? Whatever language your

client is using, you want to be able to respond with similar language, especially regarding their Primary Representational System, that is, what sense they are using to interact with the world.

Now, on my website at www.subliminalscience.com, there is a “Free Resources” section and one of the things you can download is the “Nongard Assessment of Primary Representational Systems.” This is a tool that is free for you to use with your clients to determine their Primary Representational System.

Have the Client Define Terms Experientially

One of the other tools that Yapko suggests is that when clients describe their problems, have them define their issue experientially. And of course the question to ask to have them to do this is: “When you feel that way, what do you do?” Another way of phrasing that is, “What has your experience been?” For example, I don’t ask my clients, “Did you do the homework assignment I gave you last week?” Instead I ask my clients this question, presupposing that they did the homework assignment, “When you did your homework assignment this week, what was your experience?” And when we ask our clients to define their outcomes or their problems experientially, we are much more effective in the clinical hypnosis.

Clients are often inclined to label their problems and then present us with the label, assuming we’ll know what they mean. For example, my colleague James Hazlerig received a call from a woman who said she wanted to be more submissive to her husband. Now, James, a staunch egalitarian, was tempted to end the call right then, but instead he asked her to explain what she meant in experiential terms. She replied, “When we got married, we agreed that he would work and I would stay home with the kids. I find myself resenting that agreement and getting angry at my husband and children over it.” Ultimately, she wanted to get back to the state of happiness she’d had earlier in her marriage; it had nothing to do with being submissive, but she had no other way to express what she wanted until she was asked to describe her experience.

Use the Present Tense and a Positive Structure

When I'm creating suggestions for my clients, I want to stay in the present tense. This is of course one of the focuses of Contextual Psychology, and it really was one of Milton Erickson's approaches as well. Although he would talk to clients about their past experiences as a way of helping them gain new vantage points, and although he understood the hypnotic phenomenon of regression, when you listen to Milton Erickson's audio and videos, or when you read the transcripts of his various client sessions, really most of it was not based on the Freudian idea of regression-to-cause. Milton Erickson's suggestions primarily were about the present and what the client is experiencing at this moment. His language patterns had a positive structure. Instead of telling his clients not to do something, he asked them essentially what it was that they could do or what it was that they were discovering.

Determine Ownership of the Problem and Find Problem-Solving Resources

Really this goes to the heart of the Serenity Prayer ("God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.") Although the Serenity Prayer made popular by Alcoholics Anonymous has been floating around for almost eighty years now, it's really a great strategy that could help us structure effective solutions for our clients. In fact, I know a number of hypnotists who have commented that their entire practice really boils down to helping people live the Serenity Prayer.

Keep your Clients as Informed as Desired and as is Necessary to Succeed

Just like a TV series, a hypnosis session can be spoiled by too much information about what's coming next. At the same time, in the co-operative approach, we have a duty to share information and even decision-making with our clients. This is a balance we have to strike as therapists.

Give your Clients the Time They Need to Respond

Now, patience is not my virtue, but one of the keys to effective therapy is giving the clients the time that they need to respond. Often if there's silence in the hypnosis session, the hypnotist thinks, "I had better say something because if I don't, the client might re-emerge from trance." Once you realize that your client is always in trance, it's okay if they re-emerge from deep trance for whatever reason or that they move from deep trance to a lighter level of trance and back and forth within the session. So I often say to my clients, "And I'll give you a moment with your subconscious mind to continue to access the resources that you possess. I might even be silent for the next couple of minutes and you can give me a signal for me to move on—you can move a finger or nod your head or you can even say yes—and it's at that point that we'll continue." And then I become silent, giving the client the time they need to respond either verbally or internally.

Use Touch Selectively and Only with the Client's Permission

Touch is something that I think is really important. I don't touch my clients at all during the hypnotic process. Maybe this comes from my experience as a licensed mental health professional. We're very concerned about the litigious society we live in.

For example, the Dave Elman Induction, which traditionally involves touch, has been learned by many professional hypnotists, and there are a lot of principles that we can apply from the classic teaching of the Dave Elman Induction to our knowledge of hypnosis. But this was an induction that was developed long before the litigious society that we live in now, for use by medical doctors in the 1950s. Entering my client's personal space and touching them is not something that is necessary to achieve hypnosis, nor is it advisable in the current climate of therapy. So I generally do not touch my clients during the course of therapy for any reason. If I do, I always, before they go into a deep trance state, let them know if I will be touching them and why I would be touching them, and I ask for my client's permission.

Use Anticipation Signals to Announce your Intent

For the most part, you don't want to startle your client or have your client wondering how to respond (unless of course that is your goal, as when using a Confusion technique). At every step of the hypnotic process, explain what you are about to do and how the client is expected to respond.

For example, I might say, "In a moment, I'm going to tap you on the back of the hand. When I tap you on the back of the hand, that will be our cue to begin the pain control process that I just taught you."

This lets my client know what it is that I'm going to be doing and why I'm going to be doing it before I do it. That creates a greater acceptance of the suggestion I might give.

Use Voice and Demeanor Consistent with your Intent

Use your voice and body like musical instruments. Recognize that your voice can sound encouraging, supportive, tense, relieved. You can build and release tension with your vocal tone.

Chain Suggestions Structurally

There is sort of an order to the way that I do a hypnosis session. Although I'm flexible with my clients, after my induction and deepener, I almost always begin with indirect suggestion (a story, metaphor, parable), then I usually move into direct suggestion, and then a time of teaching and letting my client respond. And this is really the basic structure that I use in my office before I move into post-hypnotic suggestions in the awakening process. And my suggestion to you is that you have a structure for the work that you do.

Build Response Sets Gradually

What this means is that we don't go into a hypnosis session with the desire to "get to the good stuff" right away. In fact, the very beginning, the pre-talk is the good stuff. It's all important. Many hypnotists set themselves up for failure by expecting rapid arm levitations or rapid hypnotic anesthesia when they're first learning Ericksonian hypnosis.

The reason why we do a formal induction is to build response sets. First, there's eye closure, then there's physical realization, then there's mental relax-

ation, then there is following a process of suggestions so that we can get to the more dramatic phenomena later.

Many of my readers are not stage hypnotists. In fact, some people, particularly Ericksonians, are not big fans of stage hypnosis. But watch a stage show and you'll see that the order of the skits really is important. They don't begin with name amnesia; the skits always go from the easiest to the most difficult, building the response set gradually. That's something that clinical hypnotists can learn from stage hypnotists.

If Desirable, Substitute Other Terms for Hypnosis

I use the term *resource state* all of the time with all of my clients. I'm not opposed to using the terms *hypnosis* or *trance*. Rarely do I ever use the word "sleep," even though Milton Erickson did, but I think it's perfectly okay.

A few years ago during a training in Austin, and there was a priest who was a psychologist attending my training session, and he said to me at lunch, "Boy, this stuff is great, but if I go back to my parish and tell one of those little old blue-haired ladies who have anxiety disorders that I'm going to hypnotize them, they're going to freak out."

So on the way back from Austin I thought about it. Of course you may know my background is in ministry and theology as well, so I started thinking about Psalm 1:39, which is a great set of hypnotic suggestions. So by the time I got home after an eight-hour drive home from Austin, I sat down on my computer and I actually wrote a script that never used the word "hypnosis" but went through the process of hypnosis using Psalm 1:39 as the suggestions. And I sent them to the priest and he said, "Wow, this is awesome. I really appreciate it. Thanks a lot." What's interesting is I put that as a download on my website, and it's by far one of the most popular hypnosis MP3s even though I never use the word "hypnosis."

EXERCISE

1. Re-read this chapter, stopping after each hint and asking yourself, "Do I do this in my practice? How can I do it more effectively?"

Chapter Eighteen

Final Words and Further Reading

When I've taught courses on Ericksonian Hypnotherapy, I've often heard this question near the end:

"Did we learn everything there is to know about Ericksonian hypnosis?"

The answer, for those courses and this book, is an unequivocal **NO**. There is a lot more to learn.

I've been studying the work of Milton Erickson for more than twenty-five years, and I certainly do not know everything about Ericksonian hypnosis. People spend their entire lives devoted to the academic pursuit of studying exemplars like Milton Erickson, yet at the end of their career, they still can't possibly understand every application, every nuance, and every idea.

Nonetheless, I hope this book has given you a solid, practical framework into what the methods and techniques of Ericksonian hypnosis are all about. My hope is that I've opened a door to a new land for you—and perhaps given you the tools you need to navigate and the language you need to communicate within this new vista. But of course, your journey does not stop here.

When young Milton Erickson regained the use of his arms through self-hypnosis, he embarked on a lengthy canoe journey to strengthen those arms through constant use. But he did not stop there. He then went on to college, to graduate school, and ultimately medical school. However, he did not stop there: He continued to gather new insights and new learnings, to devise new methods and techniques, to share new lessons and growth with his students until the day that he died.

Let the journey you have begun here last your whole life.

Further Reading

- *Trancework: Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis* by Michael Yapko
- *Therapeutic Trances: The Co-operation Principle in Ericksonian Hypnotherapy* by Stephen G. Gilligan
- *Ericksonian Approaches: A Comprehensive Manual* by Thomas L. South and Rubin Battino
- *My Voice Will Go With You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson* by Sydney Rosen
- *Uncommon Therapy: The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.* by Jay Haley
- *Patterns of Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.: Volumes I & II* by Richard Bandler, John Grinder, and Judith DeLozier
- *A Guide to Trance Land: A Practical Handbook of Ericksonian and Solution-Oriented Hypnosis* by Bill O'Hanlon
- *Time Distortion in Hypnosis: An Experimental and Clinical Investigation* by Lynn F. Cooper and Milton H. Erickson
- *Experiencing Hypnosis: Therapeutic Approaches to Altered States* by Milton H. Erickson and Ernest L. Rossi
- *The Collected Works of Milton Erickson: Volumes I-IV* by Milton Erickson
- *Clinical Applications of Hypnosis* by George Gafner

Appendices

Appendix A

The Reverse Arm Levitation Induction

Milton Erickson was famous for the classic Hand Levitation Induction, in which the client's hand was rising towards the face. He would often do the entire session with the client's hand planted firmly on the cheek.

I like to use my own twist on the classic; I call it the Reverse Arm Levitation Induction. It starts with the client's arm in the air, slowly descending.

People have sometimes asked me, "Why would you do a Reverse Arm Levitation?" Well, the reason is simple: It's a lot easier to experience success when you go with gravity rather than against gravity. Milton Erickson in his hand levitation was going against gravity. The Reverse Arm Levitation goes with gravity, making it an extremely easy way to do a hypnotic induction or to help people experience the kinesthetic elements of hypnosis.

Sometimes I'll have a client who on the second or third session will say, "Well, it's been relaxing, but I really want to feel hypnotized." What they're really telling me is that they're seeking a kinesthetic experience. So when I do this exercise with them, the Reverse-arm Levitation, it really is quite a powerful demonstration of hypnotic phenomenon.

A few notes: Like any script, the one below is provided as a starting point for you to adapt, fitting it to your style and your client's needs. For example, if my client appears fond of jewelry, I might substitute more and more heavy golden bracelets for the bucket of sand. It is the process and experience, not the exact wording, that is crucial here.

Also, hand position matters. When I use this process, I direct my client to hold the hand out palm-down and to relax the hand. I hang the imaginary strap from the back of the hand or on the wrist. The reason is simple: We are used to

lifting or supporting items palm-up. Our arm muscles are not built to support weight with the back of our hands.

Here is a typical script I might use:

"I want you to feel self-hypnosis here, so I am going to ask you to do something. I'm going to ask you to hold your hand out here in front of you. Hold it up actually a little higher than eye level and just stare at the back of your wrist. Where a bracelet would be is probably about the spot to be staring at. So you're really holding your arm straight out and up.

Now I want you to notice that hand, that straight arm in front of you. Keep your eye fixated on that spot at the back of your hand. You're going to let that hand just be limp and relaxed, but continue to hold that arm up straight. Find a spot at the back of your hand where you can focus. Maybe it's a hair on the back of your hand, maybe even a knuckle, an indentation in the skin. Just find a spot that you can focus on. Keep your eyes focused on that spot as you keep your arm rigid in the air, with your hand limply relaxed. Bring all your attention to that spot.

And of course it's okay to breathe during this exercise, so take in another deep breath. Breathe in and out. As you focus on that spot, you might notice your arm begins to feel a little bit heavy. That of course is a normal sensation. After all, arms are heavy. As you hold your arm out straight as you are doing now with your hand limply relaxed, continue to stare at that spot on the back of your hand.

Now, close your eyes. Let your eyes relax and keep your eyes closed from this point forward.

Picture in your mind the suggestions that I'm going to offer to you. As your hand is extended out in front of you, imagine that I have placed an imaginary sand bucket, one that a child might have at the beach, over the back of your hand. It's going to hang from your hand. It's made of plastic. It's very light. It's not a heavy bucket, but feel that resting at the back of your wrist. A little bucket, of course, comes with a little plastic shovel. I'm going to take the plastic shovel, and I am going to take an imaginary scoop of sand, and I'm going to add it to the bucket. So imagine that I've taken the little tiny shovel and added a little tiny imaginary scoop of sand to the bucket on the back of your wrist.

Although it's not very heavy, with the added weight of the sand, it is something that you can feel. As you feel the added weight of the sand in the bucket hanging from your wrist, it becomes a little bit heavier and your arm becomes more relaxed.

I'm going to add another scoop of sand to the bucket. As I do, you can probably notice the increased weight begin to draw your hand closer to your knee. The bucket is not heavy, but it is in fact a little bit heavier with an extra scoop of sand. And this of course weighs down your arm.

Imagine that I add a third scoop of sand to the bucket. You can now notice the increased weight of the sand bucket as you relax. And as the weight becomes heavier, the relaxation becomes more and more intense and the bucket becomes a little bit heavier and a little bit heavier.

Now I'm going to add a fourth scoop of sand to your bucket. As I do, notice that the weight of that sand begins to pull your arm down deeper as all of the muscles in your body become relaxed. If I add another scoop of sand, the bucket becomes even heavier; it becomes easier to just let the hand continue to fall, resting your hand on your knee or the armrest of the chair. And that's fine. In fact, you can go ahead and adjust yourself for comfort in any way that you want to. Letting your hand simply relax, experiencing a moment of tranquility, relaxation.

Take a breath. Feel the air filling your lungs. As you exhale, note a sensation of peace and relaxation in your experience, forgetting to remember that silly, little bucket and letting your hands just be heavy and relaxed on your lap. In your mind, you have the ability to relax at any time, especially if you are going to enter a state of hypnosis or trance.

This is actually a state of hypnosis that you've created right here. You know you could open your eyes, if you wanted. But you simply don't care to because it feels so good with each breath to continue to relax. So, as you allow yourself to sink deeper into a state of relaxation, I'm going to count from five to one. With each number, I'd like you to double the sensation of relaxation you experience. Five—a deeper relaxation. Four—all the way down. Three—letting go completely and enjoying this moment of serenity. Two—deeper yet. One—all the way down now. Zero.

It's as if your problems are a thousand miles away, and all that is left are solutions that are inside of you. You have the ability at any time in the day to make healthy choices and to do the things that you know in your heart are good for you. Your stresses and concerns about some of the difficulties you've experienced in the past can simply melt away, noting instead the ability to draw the experiences you have to solve any problems in the present.

As a result, from this point forward, you should face the challenges in life with the resources, the strengths, and the friends that you have. We can all come together to help you become a more perfect person who is able to handle life's difficulties with pride and power. These are things that are important to you. Those are the choices that you have the ability to make at any time. This is a state of relaxation and peace that you've created.

Life might become stressful at any time. But you can choose in your mind to think back to this place and this time and use this experience of relaxation and tranquility to manage the stresses in everyday life. You know that that's a perfectly good thing to do, don't you? It is something that you have the capacity and the willingness to do, isn't it?

You know that anytime you want to return to this place of peace and tranquility, you have the capacity to do so by simply choosing to. This state of hypnosis is not one that I've created for you, but one you've allowed yourself to create and experience.

There are tasks before you as you go throughout the rest of the day. And I know that because you spent this time practicing this session, you are going to be able to complete those tasks with excitement and energy. You are going to go about the rest of the day feeling better than you have felt in a long time: Rested, refreshed, and better than ever.

And now, I'm going to count from one to three, and when I do, be ready to open the eyes feeling fantastic and experiencing the rest of the day. One—breathing in a breath. Two—noticing the air in the room around you and the chair below you. And three—opening the eyes, wide awake, feeling fantastic and ready for the rest of the day.”

Appendix B

Two Sample Healing Hypnosis Sessions

You can feel free to use these scripts for your clients the way that I use scripts with my clients: adapt them, change the language or the wording to meet your specific clients and their specific needs. In other words, use these scripts as a guide.

Whenever I am using a script with a client, I will print the script out and have it ready to use. After I do my induction and deepener, I will simply say to my client:

“And over the next few minutes as I give you suggestions, they’re actually suggestions you’ve asked me to make by coming here today. You may hear me read from my notes or even from a book, and the reason why of course is I want to cover everything that’s important to you today.”

Then I can feel confident in using a script.

So you can actually use these scripts with your clients, but of course read them and know what the content is first. Cross out the things you don’t like, highlight the things you love, use some of your own language, and integrate it into the client’s situation, so that you’ll be using these resources as an effective tool.

These sample scripts use a number of Ericksonian techniques along with formal trance processes. They also draw on the ideas of Emile Coue, an early twentieth-century hypnotist who pioneered the use of affirmations.

I’ll be including a brief induction, but of course you can decide to use a different induction and deepeners with the main content of any script I provide.

Healing Hypnosis Script #1: Natural Healing after Surgery

"And so go ahead and kick back in your chair in a way that's comfortable to you. Once you are comfortable, breathe in and breathe out. You don't have to speed up or slow down the breath. Take a deep breath or shallow breath. Just breathe.

And as you breathe in and breathe out, notice your body. Pay attention to the feeling of the muscles in your shoulders, neck, arm, and back. Any muscles that are tense, simply relax those muscles. You'll notice that even the little tiny muscles in the eyes can relax. If your eyes are not closed yet, pay attention to the muscles in the eyelids. Notice how you can relax the muscles around the brow and around the eye socket, and even the little tiny muscles that open and close the eyelids. When they relax, you'll find it's easier to simply let them close than it is to keep them open. And then continue letting an awareness of relaxation extend to the neck and shoulders and back; hands, body, feet; having any tension you're aware of simply melt away as you relax completely, finding it easy to enter into that resource state that you find hypnosis. It feels pretty good, doesn't it?

I'm going to count backwards from five to one. And with each number, with each breath, allow yourself to relax even further. You may find during the session that you pay attention to each and every word that I use, paying attention carefully to the process I guide you through. Or you might find that you no longer pay attention to the words—or you're hearing every third or fifth or seventh word—experiencing the process of hypnosis rather than paying attention to the process of hypnosis. Either way of course is fine. Five, four, three—each breath and each number, relaxing even further into a healing state of deep trance. Three, two, one, zero.

Now in the next few moments as you continue to access this state of hypnosis, you may hear me reading from a book or even my notes, and of course the reason is I want to make sure that I cover everything that's important to you today. You've come here to focus on the idea of healing the body. The ability of nature to heal is always amazing to a child. It seems every child who visits the zoo is mesmerized by the snake shedding its skin, or even the wounded lizard who is able to regenerate a part of the tail when injured.

Not only do the animals have the ability to heal, but plants also have a healing ability. Have you ever seen leaves that shed on a deciduous tree and are replaced by new green and healthy leaves in the spring, or by the plant that seems to quickly come back to life with a little water or sunlight after it's been left unattended during a dry spell?

All of nature is programmed by the Creator to live and to regenerate and to heal. The same child who was drawn to the ability of an animal to shed its skin is also usually captivated by the scabbing of a wound, and the healing that takes place underneath it, and the new life that emerges where pain used to be, and where injury once was. When you were a child, did any of these things ever capture your attention? Of course they did. And because of this ability to focus that attention, I know that you will be able to harness your own body's ability to heal today. What is amazing is that as children, we simply accepted these remarkable abilities in nature without wondering if they were possible or if it always worked.

Allow yourself now to go back to a time, a pleasant time, a time of little stress. A time when you were a kid, maybe sixteen or twelve or ten or eight, or even earlier than that. A pleasant time. A time when you simply accepted the wonder of life and the ability of the body to promote healing within itself without question—simply marveling at our Creator's infinite wisdom in giving this gift. And of course, realize that today you are the same person as before, simply with more experiences in life and more wisdom. But still that same person who you created, that person with the innate ability to heal. It feels wonderful to possess this truth, doesn't it?

And using that creative part of the mind, experience the feeling of energy within as the body heals. Some people visualize this energy as light, and others feel it as a place in the body where healing begins; and yet others seem to hear the voice of healing and regeneration, allowing it to speak to every cell in the body. There is really nothing mystical or magical about this. These are abilities to pay attention to the body that we were created with. And in paying attention to this, we realize that the body is doing its job automatically, bringing healing energy, light, sound, and feelings to every cell of the body. It does this automatically and everyday, even though we usually pay no attention to this because we usually don't have an injury or wound to draw our attention to it. But there it is, isn't it?

Now follow that feeling or that light or even that voice of healing through your body as blood pumps life into each cell and as oxygen delivers its healing breath to each cell; focus on that part of the body where you need healing most, realizing that nature always does its job, and that today, right now, the recovery process is already underway. As with each breath, in every way you get better and better.

And now, in your mind, imagine that surgical incision like a child's scab, giving way to life underneath, and realizing that soon the dynamic power of nature will result in new life where old pain used to be. Each and every day, take a moment to breath, and focus on that breath and this thought: "In every way, each and every day, I am getting better and better." You can even say it to yourself: "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better. Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." You can even say that out loud right now or hear it in your mind, in your own voice: "Everyday, in every way, I am getting better and better. Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better."

Now, take a moment to enjoy this state that you've created through this hypnotic experience. You can even pat yourself on the back for having done a great job of not only paying attention, but of accessing this resource inside of you, this resource which has always been there. With each breath, be present in the moment, feeling fantastic and ready for the rest of the day.

In a moment, I'm going to count from one to three. When I count to three, open the eyes feeling refreshed, ready for new experiences for the rest of the day. One—taking in a breath, paying attention to it. Two—stretching out any muscles that need to be stretched. And three—ready for a fantastic rest of the day, opening the eyes, wide awake, feeling fantastic."

Healing Hypnosis Script #2: Pre-Surgical Future Pacing

A lot of people come to me with anxiety about medical procedures. My office is actually right across the street from probably the largest hospital in my city. Because of that, in my six-storey building, there's five floors of physicians and allied health professions, so I get a lot of medical referrals.

Somebody I saw not too long ago has been diagnosed with an illness—I didn't ask what the illness was—but it required that she have weekly phlebotomy (blood draws). The needles really disturbed her. She was unable to do it; she was unable to go on with her treatment. I've had clients before CT scans that were anxious, clients before minor as well as major surgery that were scared for a variety of different reasons: about their health, treatment, care, or infections. So, one of the areas that hypnotherapists can offer medical support services to their clients is in helping them to overcome anxiety and fears about upcoming medical care and procedures. And so, I've included a script that includes the idea of Future Pacing, one of the Milton Erickson's foundational ideas for setting a client up for success.

Use whatever induction and deepeners you deem best, then proceed with this script:

"Over the next few moments, you're going to be guided through a brief process using hypnosis and pain control. If you haven't closed your eyes yet, close the eyes down and bring yourself to that point of learning that we call hypnosis. Breathing in and out, with each breath relaxing more. Even though your pain level or your anxiety level might be high, and you may be constantly aware of your discomfort or what's wrong, in time the treatment that you're undertaking will actually come to an end. You'll have that surgery, radiation, or procedure done. And in the coming weeks, months and years, you'll no longer be in the midst of the trial you are currently in. Instead you will have resolved your health problems.

You'll look back at this time as a tribulation that has passed. In your life, you probably experienced some difficulties, some ups and downs. But looking back on those things now, you can see that while yes, although they were in fact difficult, many of those have passed. And because we know that we can learn from our previous experiences, imagine yourself a year from now, seeing yourself as you know you will be. You are no longer healing, but fully recovered. Allow yourself to experience the feeling that you know you will have in a year, long after

your medical treatment is complete. We know that you will do well because not only do you have skilled physicians, but you've taken the time to invest in your own recovery by coming here today.

Imagine yourself a year from now, doing the things that you can't currently do. See yourself bending, moving, getting up out of bed, and feeling wonderful. Maybe even imagine yourself running. Hearing the sounds of the outside, if you're confined to indoors right now, in your mind's eye you can watch yourself doing the things that might currently seem impossible and hear the voices of those encouraging you in success. Picture yourself out of bed and outside running. You can smell the scents of the day and feel the pavement below your feet. You can hear the sounds of the neighborhood and enjoy the radiance of the sun. It feels pretty good on the skin, doesn't it? When you imagine the feeling of the radiant sun on the back of your hands, you probably even noticed the sensation of warmth.

Of course, we know that everything that is, was a thought first. By creating this imagery, there is no question in my mind, nor should there be in yours, that the future possibilities are endless. A French hypnotist told us long ago: "What the mind can conceive today, the body can achieve tomorrow." And so we know even though you may have come in here today feeling anxious or scared or pained, the outcome will be beneficial and helpful. Because of that, your comfort and confidence during the procedure can be 100% of what it needs to be for you to feel peace, tranquility, and contentment.

In this moment, you can actually release anything either known or unknown keeping you from success. You can let it drift through the soles of your feet and into the core of the earth. Or you can let it rise above you if you'd like, departing from your spirit forever.

And now, begin to reorient to the room around you. You can do that with the eyes closed by paying attention to the chair below you, the air in the room around you, to my voice. Allow yourself to return to this time and this place with hope, renewed energy, and a fantastic experience in learning.

When you're ready to open the eyes, open the eyes wide, bring a smile to your face, stretch out your arms. One, two, three-wide awake, feeling fantastic."

Appendix C

Prairie Dogs by Dave Parke

About three years ago, I actually had a couple of TIAs (mini-strokes) and ended up in the hospital. Not being a fan of traditional medical treatment, I was alarmed to be in the hospital. And so I called my colleague Dave Parke in the middle of the night, and I said, “Dave, you’ve got to help me. Look, here’s what happened. I’m stuck in the hospital. There’s all kind of heart monitors, all kinds of things tied up to me. I don’t know if I’m going to live or die, or what’s going on here. But I need you to hypnotize me.” And so Dave said, “Give me twenty or thirty minutes.” I said okay, and so twenty minutes later, he called me back and said, “I sent you an MP3. This is for you.”

What he created really follows the Ericksonian model and language patterns, using story and metaphor brilliantly. It does not have a formal induction, yet you’ll find it mesmerizing.

If you are looking for more resources from Dave Parke, you can find Dave at www.lifeafterfear.com. Dave Parke and I frequently teach classes together. He is a certified professional hypnotist and certified life coach certified through the Center for Credentialing and Education. He lives in New York City.

Here is a transcription of the MP3 he sent me:

“You may already know that I grew up in the Kansas. Kansas is an interesting state with wide open planes and clear endless skies. When I was a boy in Kansas, I always enjoyed the springtime. The springtime for me is a very, very relaxed time. Springtime is a time for natural growth and healing. And during the spring, I would easily walk to my favorite park near my house, where I would always find my friends waiting for me. We would sprawl out in the green, fresh grass and

talk for hours about the things boys talk about. We would talk about sports, television, or the new girl in school. And I'm sure you know the feeling as you lie on the grass, looking up at a clear blue sky, being carried away in important conversations about nothing. You know you don't have a care in the world in this moment, and this moment lasts forever.

And as we talked, I looked up at the sky and the clouds. Occasionally, I would see shapes in the clouds. I might see a puppy or a kitten or a little squirrel. And when I would think about squirrels, I would think about prairie dogs, because prairie dogs after all are a type of squirrel. And sometimes I would wonder why squirrels were called prairie dogs, or why a squirrel was called a dog, because I didn't know of any dogs that were called squirrels.

Prairie dogs actually live in their own towns. I don't know if their towns have names, but I do know they are a complex system with passages and things. And the heart of the prairie dog family is made up of several chambers. Those chambers are connected to the body of the prairie dog community by a system of tunnels. And those tunnels help the prairie dogs get around and they also help with moving rain water throughout the community and controlling erosion inside the body of the prairie dog community.

Of course sometimes the erosion is a little too much for the tunnels to handle, and they collect from the side of the tunnels. Luckily, the community of prairie dogs are skilled in handling these problems, having actual and organic ability to clear these blocked passages quickly and easily. And all it takes is for the community is to work together in an instinctive and natural way. And everything in nature is about that, isn't it? Whenever there is a problem, nature has given us a biological solution. All we have to do is allow our natural defenses and our natural doers to do their jobs, just like the prairie dogs that I would sometimes see in those fluffy clouds as they are drifting by on a spring day.

And then our conversations might turn to the changing of the seasons. Kansas is a place of hot summers and cold winters; and cold winters and hot summers and the winters, which were cold and brisk with plenty of snow. I always enjoyed the winter, and I always enjoyed the snow because most young boys do enjoy the snow and we enjoy making forts and building snowmen, and having snowball fights. But

there was another interesting thing that I have learned about the winters in Kansas and the way things work: The roads in Kansas are flattened smooth, and it's just very easy for traffic to move on these roads. Very natural for it to flow back and forth. And you can imagine the traffic on an easy day just flowing through the network of highways and roads. And during the winter as it snows in Kansas, sometimes the snow builds up on the roads. But the cities are already prepared for that and have created an organic way to remove the collection of the snow. The city may put salt down on the road, which is a way to prevent the snow from sticking and collecting, so traffic continues to move easily. But sometimes the snow does stick, and one of the smaller lanes or roads will become a little blocked or pitted by the snow. The city has an organic defense against this, too. It will activate its snow ploughs and snow trucks to go out and easily remove the blocked snow, the built-up snow. And I learned that the snow removal was a natural part of the city's planning that the city has learned long, long ago, many, many generations ago, how to take care of itself, and how to remedy the problems that they may have, such as the build-up of snow on roads.

Sometimes instead of thinking about winter, I would think about the summer. And the summers were the fun time for us, and they still are. My friends and I, we always enjoyed going to our favorite water park. And the water park had a number of different features, each one appealing to each of us. Some of my friends really enjoy the water spikes, the idea of moving quickly and easily down a smooth surface, rushing from one point to the next easily and without hesitation. I actually prefer the wave pool. I like the far end of the wave pool the best. It is quiet, relaxed. And I would lie on my raft and listen to the happy sounds of people enjoying themselves far off in the distance. Not so loud, but more like a happy chatter of birds. They were gleeful and healthy children. Children like you and me.

And on the far end of the wave pool, where I like to be, is where the waves first start. All that is felt is a gentle and slow rocking motion as I lie upon the raft. And it's that rocking motion, the drifting and dreaming, that as you know carries you deeper and deeper. And sometimes as you are being carried, gently floating, I would count. Sometimes I would count as the waves would rock and I would tell myself: "We will go deeper with each wave as it gently rolls." And the first wave would roll under me and I would quietly think: Ten. And the

second wave will follow the first and I will think: Nine. And then one by one the waves would gently and easily follow. Eight, seven, and now six. And one breeze carrying away all thoughts and leaving a wonderful, pleasant sensation that blows across your body. Five—floating, drifting and dreaming. Four, three—the warm sun bathing, bathing you in a healthy light; enabling your natural healing ability to do what is so easy for it to do. Two—no cares in the world. Completely relaxed. And one—nothing but bliss and joy and deep, deep relaxation.

Just thinking about those days as I lay on the grass on a beautiful spring day, watching as the clouds float across the open sky, I realized that you can learn so much in those quiet moments. And a lot of the learning was just listening and allowing. And right now, you can listen and allow for as long as you like. Lying here in the grass on a beautiful spring day, you may drift off into a deep, healing sleep. But if you choose, you may gently emerge from this while allowing your body to resume its natural healing processes. And you can take all the time that you want to do whichever you choose. Drifting and floating, dreaming, allowing yourself and allowing your body to listen, to heal, restoring yourself to a vibrant healthy state.”