

BOOK REVIEW

The Beginner's Mind

The Complete Works of Milton H. Erickson

**Volume 10 – Hypnotic Realities: The Induction of
Clinical Hypnosis of Indirect Suggestion**

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Review by Richard Hill, MA, MEd, MBMSc, DPC

Imagine being in a room with Milton Erickson, at his invitation, to learn about his unique style of hypnosis. That might be difficult considering Erickson passed away so many years ago. Perhaps it is easier to imagine being in a room with Ernest Rossi, just to experience and learn. For everyone who reads this volume, which comprises the book published in 1976 by Erickson and Rossi & Rossi titled *Hypnotic Realities*, you will, indeed, be transported to these imaginary possibilities.

Eight chapters deal with different forms of induction, a ninth provides an excellent summary, and Ernest and Kathryn Rossi offer a modern, neuroscience-informed update on “What is Suggestion?” We can read the actual dialogue and the actions Erickson used, along with commentary between Ernest Rossi and Milton Erickson on the finer details of the processes, plus editorial comments and updates. Ernest and his then wife, Sheila, visited Erickson in order to learn, so they asked lots of questions, many of which I would have asked too, which made me feel as though I was actually there. There is no clearer or more thorough insight into what Erickson did than in this volume. For example: “...[it’s]not only what one says to the patient or subject, but how one says it, and where one says it...” (p. xiv). Erickson’s Preface reminds us that “...trance itself is a different experience for every person...and may be understood as a free period in which individuals flourish...” Erickson believed in “...helping individuals outgrow learned limitations so that their inner potential can be realized to achieve therapeutic goals.” (p. 2) The inductions range from a conversational induction in Chapter One, which can be “...so innocuous and indirect that it is often difficult to recognize that trance is being induced,” (p. 5) to the handshake induction in Chapter Three, which is a “...non-verbal technique...[to] distract and promote the confusion that Erickson acknowledged as a basic process in his approach to induction” (p. 83), and indirectly conditioned eye closure in Chapter Seven which “...emphasizes the need for careful observation of trance induction...” (p. 234)

As fascinating as it is to be able to read transcripts of Erickson’s precise words and actions, the most exciting thing is the commentary between Ernest Rossi and Milton Erickson that is interjected throughout. Rossi carefully listens to Erickson’s explanations of what he is doing and asks the questions that I’m certain many students wish they could have asked. Erickson sensitively answers everything.

The purpose of these sessions was to teach the Rossi’s about hypnosis, both theoretically and practically. Nothing I have read to date achieves the experiential nature of this volume. In addition, there is a fascinating breakdown of the elements utilized: the language styles, forms of questions, and modes of thinking. Surprise, confusion, implied directives, double binds, contingent and serial suggestions, voice dynamics, displacing and discharging resistance, and right and left hemisphere functioning in trance are my favorite elements detailed in this volume, but there is even more. Chapter Nine is a summary that collates the brilliance of all eight chapters and leaves us with focus and clarity.

There is no shortage of Erickson quotes, which are still relevant today. I suggest their relevance is because Erickson recognized the fundamentals of human nature that transcend the shift of society through time. One of the problems with working directly with the conscious mind is that “Consciousness is thus programmed to meet outer consensual standards of achievement, while all that is unique within the individual remains in abeyance.” (p. 18) I recognize this principle as a foundation of my second book. In our co-authored book (Hill & Rossi, 2017) based on Rossi’s Mirroring Hands practice, we presented many of these fun-

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damentals because they remain true today.

This volume highlights the care and time that Erickson would take to ensure the quality of the hypnotherapeutic experience for both patient and practitioner. We can see the important checking and testing of the quality of the trance and the time described as “training,” given to the subject to establish his or her own engagement with the hypnotic experience. Nowadays, there seems to be a resurfacing in some quarters of prepared scripting, speed, and immediate, if not guaranteed, results. This is not the way of Erickson, who worked toward a unique, client responsive therapeutic experience. Although Erickson may have used direct suggestion in his early years, “...he later emphasized that attempting to directly program people without understanding their individuality was a very uninformed way of doing therapy.” (p. 322) Working slowly and carefully through this volume will leave you enriched with the essence of Ericksonian hypnotherapy and equipped with all the elements or ingredients you will need to create your own unique form of practice.



**Now You Wanted
A Trance Demonstrated Today**
by Milton H. Erickson, M.D.

Teaching Video Tape/DVD

Erickson demonstrates and describes his philosophy of psychotherapy and hypnotic approaches to:

**Dissociation • Age Regression • Mind / Body Separation
Amnesia / Hypernesia • Positive / Negative Hallucinations
Arm Levitation • Deepening • Trance State Identification
Direct / Indirect Inductions • Utilization of Resistance...**

Accompanying Annotated Transcript contains:

- **rhythm-formatting**
to give you what Erickson said as well as the rhythm and the way he said it
- **literature-based analysis**
- **the subject’s experiences of Erickson’s interventions**
- **content and process indexes.**

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