

# T H E P O W E R O F T W O

## Michael and Diane Yapko

By Roxanna Erickson Klein

Michael and Diane Yapko are a professional couple whose work is known in two different arenas. Michael, a clinical psychologist, is a 1980 graduate of United States International University; he is acclaimed for his effective integration of cognitive behavioral ideas with Ericksonian approaches to hypnosis and psychotherapy. Especially recognized for his contributions to the strategic, short-term treatment of depression, his clarity as an author and his elaboration of the socio-cognitive model of hypnosis has proved instrumental in bringing hypnosis into more of today's graduate schools curriculums. Diane, a 1983 graduate of San Diego University, holds a Master's degree in Speech Language Pathology and Audiology. Her passion has always been in working with children. After seeing her first client with autism in 1980, Diane's reputation for working effectively with this challenging population grew. Contributing to her clinical successes is her comprehensive assessments; emphasis on the whole child; inclusion of family members in treatment; and respect for the individual rather than devotion to a treatment model. She has advocated tirelessly for the appropriate educational placement and services for special needs children. Diane has blazed new territory with hypnotic and strategic work with children in the autism spectrum. She has conducted clinical trainings domestically and internationally as well as having written on the subject.

While their work focuses on different clinical populations, Diane and Michael share a common strength-based orientation that engages Erickson's utilization principles. The similarity of their clinical approaches stimulates mutual curiosity and enhances creative problem solving, benefiting both their work and relationship. Their home has separate office spaces divided by a glass doorway, a design that harbors containment while inviting interactive participation.

Sweethearts since their teen years, they committed themselves to grow together and they will celebrate 35 years



*Diane & Michael Yapko at the 11th Congress of The European Society of Hypnosis, Vienna, September 2008*

of joy in marriage this August. Their daily rhythm reflects adaptation, acceptance, and respect for individual differences. Michael likes to immerse himself in music, and Diane enjoys gardening--yet these individual pleasures are pursued in a backdrop of mutual consideration for each other's time. Both would prefer to share time together, and that is their priority. Love of the outdoors, taking hikes, and the simple pleasure of sitting in their backyard haven are ways they enjoy relaxing together.

When asked what a typical day looks like, they spoke of the good fortune of similar internal clocks, getting up early and sharing the tradition of connecting with each other over a cup of coffee (or two) before the day begins. Morning conversations include touching base about activities, appointments, and the process of planning to navigate the business day as a team. The day ends with a review of what has been done, what is left hanging, and reflections of interactions and activities. On days off, they typically share relaxed time with their lifelong best friends, further allowing them to revel in the reflections of growth and change over time.

While commitment to individual professional pathways fostered strong identities as clinicians and teachers, such dedication often compromised their time together. Six years ago, the Yapkos elected to unite their energies

to find a path that would facilitate more time together. Each made the decision to reduce their individual clinical practices and jointly expand their work in the arena of workshops and teaching. As part of the redirection, they chose to increase home-based work. To facilitate that, they decided to leave their longtime home near the ocean and build their dream home in the rural hills of northeast San Diego. The intense collaboration of designing and building a home was one of their greatest pleasures and brought forth artistic expressive elements and a clearer vision of future direction.

At the time, Michael already had a demanding schedule of clinical trainings across the US and abroad, just as he had for the past 20 years. But, his interest turned to conducting longer and more intensive teaching programs than the traditional two or three-day long seminars. Michael and Diane explored various ways to design and try out creative methods of addressing pro-

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professionals' needs for both introductory and intensive professional education. The framework they settled on and have now successfully run for four years includes a series of 100-hour workshops in clinical hypnosis and strategic psychotherapy. While the Yapkos' primary focus is to provide these workshops in Southern California, interest in the uniquely structured training frequently takes them elsewhere. Applying their strength-based philosophy, Diane attends to the administrative and management functions while Michael attends to presentations and teaching.

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A new generation of clinicians is being cultivated as the outreach to more countries is expanded and the use of technology is integrated. As Diane has done in the area of developmental disorders, Michael has given generously of his time and resources to address public needs. Through the use of public media and his publications, he has raised awareness of the problem of depression and clinical uses of hypnosis. To view the extent of the outreach, visit their website <http://www.yapko.com>.

Michael's passion and interest in clinical hypnosis and depression has been acknowledged by his peers with numerous professional awards. By authoring the first books ever written on the subject of treating depression with hypnosis, he became recognized as an effective change agent. His work took another jump in visibility with his authorship of *Suggestions of Abuse*, (1994, Simon & Schuster, NY), noisily launching what came to be known

as the "Repressed Memory Controversy." While other professionals did important research and legal groundwork, Michael reached out to clinicians by examining, advising and influencing the needed step-by-step changes within the profession. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the field, though, is his hypnosis textbook *Trancework* (3rd edition, 2003, Brunner Routledge, NY). Providing a sophisticated guide to learning the skills of clinical hypnosis, the text is among the most widely used by universities

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and hypnosis organizations around the world. Michael is currently working on a new 4th edition, which is expected to come out in 2012. He has written more than a dozen books, the most recent of which is *Depression is Contagious* (2009, Free Press: NY). That book was reviewed in the spring issue of this Newsletter and the review can be read online. One important aspect of this book is that, like *Suggestions of Abuse*, it reaches out to both professionals and the public, and clarifies the societal perceptual shift necessary to address this pervasive problem.

While Diane also provides workshops and writes in her areas of expertise, she is quite comfortable in acknowledging that Michael's contributions are more numerous and well known. She reports, "We're not in competition with each other. I get as much pleasure and pride out of Michael's accomplishments, as if they are my own." Michael describes Diane as being "concrete in the best of ways: pragmatic, even an intellectual anarchist." He states that she is his "best editor," "harshest critic," "most playful challenger," and "most important contributor". "She has a no-nonsense clarity, and knows how to make ideas functional." Diane describes Michael as being the "reflective one, goal oriented and gifted in both intelligence and humor". In response to questions

asked as to whether Diane is ever perceived as sublimated or a mere 'support' to Michael, both vigorously denied that construct-- "The sense of *us* transcends I or you. It isn't about me, it is about we." Their playfulness with each other and the deep love they share is obvious when you're with them. Michael stated, "When we walk into a room together, people see how I look at her -- she is everything." Those loving feelings are stated in another way in the dedication of his most current work: "To Diane, whose effortless ability to light up a room just by entering it highlights that love is contagious, too."

The bond of cooperative communication they live facilitates scaffolding of efforts. Dialogue generated by two intelligent minds, four ears, four eyes and two sets of impressions enhances the process of evaluation, reflection and revision. By knowing themselves and the cooperative underpinnings of who they are as a couple, they create a dynamic marriage that affords them the flexibility to work together on multiple levels that enrich life. They live what they teach--- commitment, hard work, dedication, appreciation, and balance of work with pleasure. They bring forth an energy that tells the story of the power of two in a way that words cannot.