

C D R E V I E W

Hypnosis with Children**Featuring Milton H. Erickson, MD & Irving Sectar, DDS**

Audiotaped in Chicago in 1958
60-minute audio CD

Available through The Southern California Society for Ericksonian
Psychology and Hypnosis (www.SCSEPH.org)

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Hypnosis with Children is a rare archival audiotape of Milton Erickson, MD and Irving Sectar, DDS, in which they present an advanced hypnosis seminar at an American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH) meeting in Chicago in 1958. The audio is a bit difficult to understand, however, the content is fascinating. The recording is in two tracks. The first track is a 20-minute introduction by Erickson about how to work with children, and a description by Sectar on how he applies techniques to children in the dental office. In the second track, Sectar gives a demonstration using an adult volunteer, followed by Erickson's 10-minute commentary on the demonstration.

Erickson speaks with a force and style not evident in his later years, taking a stance of conviction in his recommendations to engage a child in a particular manner. Justified with reason and logic, Erickson expresses that the most effective way of inducing trance in a child is to set the stage so that the child wishes to "join in" with the hypnotherapist. Erickson explains how a child's experiential needs, propensity for eidetic learning, and involvement with play and imagination naturally facilitates the hypnotic process. Erickson emphasizes to *not* "tell children what to do," but rather "invite" them in a manner in which participation is an ac-

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tive choice. He repeatedly stresses that, "Children do not have the rigid limitations of adults...give them the freedom of doing it their own way." He also underscores the importance of allowing sufficient latitude for children to use their own imagination and memories, as opposed to having the hypnotherapist make specific suggestions that are less likely to fit. Erickson illustrates his style of suggestion to a child: "Can you see the puppy over there? What does it look like? Is it rolling over or wagging its tail? Can you hear it barking?" In this way, the subject is invited to use recollection, and auditory and visual memories to "join in with the *pretense* of seeing the image," which capitalizes on the natural tendency of a child to want to be part of the fun.

Sectar uses a distinctly different approach. His substantial clinical experience facilitated the development of his own style, which he describes without addressing how it differs from Erickson's. Often incorporating many of the "mistakes" Erickson advised against, Sectar expresses the validity of his own approach. This is illustrated with a volunteer subject to demonstrate delivery of suggestions.

Upon completion of the demonstration, Sectar invites Erickson to critique his clinical style. Erickson respectfully comments on some effective elements, and then takes exception to Sectar's comment, "Any smart child can learn this." Erickson remarks on how children often present with "a tremendous feeling of inferiority." Using a comment that today would be considered politically incorrect,

Erickson explains, "Any dumb child can learn this, even some of the smart ones," thus presenting a beautiful double bind.

The give-and-take between these two historical giants offers a chance for reflection on the power of a common desire to bring hypnosis forward at a time when it was scarcely accepted by the medical establishment. The contrast between Sectar's direct approach and Erickson's indirect style is fascinating. Overall, I found *Hypnosis with Children* to be enjoyable and useful for its historical value and practical applications. It's well worth the effort to attend to in close detail.