

BOOK REVIEW

The Wisdom of Milton H. Erickson by: Ronald A. Havens

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The Wisdom of Milton H. Erickson: The Complete Volume is a collection of primary resource materials. Havens has meticulously selected key concepts, gems of information, and pearls of wisdom, and, with sparse commentary, arranged them so that Erickson's vast writings are accessible. Although Erickson was a prolific author, he did not organize his works into format that allowed readers to orient themselves easily as to where specific ideas or concepts were discussed. Havens emphasizes that Wisdom is neither an analysis nor a discussion of Erickson's work, but rather a handbook to where the reader may go to learn directly from Erickson.

The first copies of Wisdom were published in 1985, and were compiled without the benefits of modern technology. Prior printings of the book were released in volumes and in reverse order from the original.

Havens' new preface describes the importance of a unified version of the work, and the circumstance under which it was printed in two volumes. Appropriately, this updated version of Wisdom "renders previous editions obsolete" by more extensive referencing and proper binding. The book is a compact and fundamental guide to Erickson's ideas and methodology. Havens sorted through all published works of Erickson's, including books, papers, tapes, and transcripts, in order to create an all encompassing reference to Ericksonian Hypnosis and Psychotherapy.

In 380 pages, Havens presents Erickson's wisdom in three broad sections: human behavior, psychotherapy, and hypnosis and hypnotherapy. Each of these sections is divided into chapters which are further divided into essential concepts. These eloquently written concepts are followed by a plethora of direct quotations from Erickson. The quotes are taken within context and are relevant to their allocated concept. Havens provides detailed referencing of each chapter and an extensive index.

I found that Havens gave an extensive overview to Erickson's ideas in logical format, beginning with the most basic of fundamentals. He established credibility with the broad base of essentials from human behavior, which were poignantly woven into the concepts of psychotherapy, hypnosis and hypnotherapy. Each quotation proved insightful and carefully chosen. Although complex subject matter, I was not alienated with technical terminology as Havens carved a natural path between successive concepts; the introduced terms were aptly defined and necessary for the work. The summaries at the end of each chapter were concise and emphasized the most important ideas from the concepts.

The lucid presentation of such complex material may give the novice, or even the scholar, the idea that "complete" understanding of methodology warrants unsupervised or unguided practice. I do not think Havens emphasized the responsible practice of hypnosis and hypnotherapy enough. Although all quotations were relevant to their concept, their redundancy emphasized one of Havens' points—that Erickson maintained consistency in his philosophy over decades.

The Wisdom of Milton H. Erickson belongs on the bookshelves of the scholar, the novice and the advanced therapist. For each, the book serves as a different but always

valuable resource and a complete synopsis of the beliefs and methods Erickson presented to his students. Havens provides an overview of the tools necessary and the processes by which a novice therapist may become an effective Ericksonian therapist. For the advanced therapist, Havens provides an extensive reference guide as well as a review of specific ideas.

I highly recommend this book to all audiences--- and offer the advice that the more time the reader is willing to invest, the more layers of depth reveal themselves.

Reviewed by:

**Ethan Milton Klein
Dallas TX**



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