



The Milton H. Erickson Foundation NEWSLETTER

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CHAPTER REVIEW

An Ericksonian Model of Hypnotherapy

by W. J. Matthews, S. R. Lankton
& C. H. Lankton (in press)

In *Handbook of Clinical Hypnosis*
Edited by J. Rhue, S. Lynn & I. Kirsch
Washington, D. C.:
American Psychological Association

This chapter, in a soon-to-be published reference volume undertakes the complicated task of defining Ericksonian hypnotherapy. The authors have met this challenge, and it is fitting that Erickson's model of hypnosis finds a place in this benchmark resource.

Matthews, Lankton and Lankton have a strong background in the Ericksonian arena. They have extrapolated and clearly present Erickson's views of the conscious, the unconscious and the processes of hypnosis. For example, they accurately note that, "The essence of the Ericksonian approach is creating the context that will allow hypnosis to occur."

The chapter eloquently summarizes the fundamentals of Ericksonian hypnotherapy and emphasizes interpersonal relationships and their influence on the development and resolution of problems. While symptomatic behavior may have developed in the past, the Ericksonian view focuses on the present of the problem and utilizes the patient's own strengths in problem resolution.

The authors provide an extensive description of research projects on Ericksonian approaches and indicate the need for better controls in empirical research.

However, when dealing with individualistic responses, the controls needed for empirical research limit full understanding. A great deal can be learned by using a qualitative research design. At least one such study is presently under way dealing with Ericksonian indirect suggestions. There is a paucity of research and the authors regretfully overlooked the opportunity to appeal to readers of this eminent publication to conduct more research on Ericksonian methods.

The weaknesses of this chapter are few. I disagree with the limiting comment that hypnotic suggestion is a "creation of new meanings, attitudes or beliefs..." Erickson viewed hypnotic suggestions as a more expansive process. The authors fail to utilize Erickson's own work for the case history example. Also, in the clinical application of Ericksonian hypnotherapy they rely too heavily on Lankton and Lankton and do not duly recognize other authorities.

Overall, this chapter provides an excellent explanation of Ericksonian hypnosis including its applications and limitations. The authors' precise writing style make the chapter comprehensible and enjoyable reading.

— Reviewed by Roxanna Erickson
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You start patients in a train of association, but they drift along on their own currents of thought and frequently leave the therapist stranded far behind.
(Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976, P. 93)