

### Real Sense Memories: A Lifelong Gift

It is a great honor to write this forward for *Volume 5, Classical Hypnotic Phenomena, Part 1, of The Collected Works of Milton H. Erickson, MD*. I remember with great clarity a lecture by my family therapy teacher, professor Helm Stierlin, at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in 1975. He introduced Jay Haley's *Strategies of Psychotherapy* (1963). I was completely fascinated by the case presentations, especially those of Milton Erickson. During my night job, I tried to analyze and understand the creative and surprising strategies Erickson used. When I expressed my interest in Erickson's work, Professor Stierlin gave me a copy of Jay Haley's book, *Advanced Techniques of Hypnosis and Therapy: Selected Papers of Milton H. Erickson, MD* (1967). This changed my life.

I originally studied psychology—after studying economics and engineering—to become a psychoanalytically-oriented family therapist. In January 1979, I attended the first workshop facilitated by Jeffrey Zeig in Munich, Germany. After that, my friend and colleague Gunther Schmidt and I organized workshops with Zeig, Paul Carter, Stephen Gilligan, Ernest Rossi, Stephen Lankton, Carol Lankton, Michelle Rittnerman, Marc Leher and Deborah Ross, among others. Starting in 1983, I began teaching hypnosis techniques to others. The interest to learn Ericksonian approaches grew rapidly in Germany and all of Europe.

We founded a publishing house to publish books in systemic family therapy and hypnotherapy. One of the highlights of this work was to translate and publish six volumes of *The Collected Papers of Milton H. Erickson, MD* into German (Erickson & Rossi, 1995-1998). It was an immense work and also a significant financial risk for a young publishing house, but we succeeded. During this time I reviewed, checked, and re-checked the translations. As a result of this work, I learned to appreciate even more the virtuosity and artfulness of Milton Erickson's use of language. I always hoped to have more time to study carefully and in detail the incredible things Erickson was doing and describing. I wanted and continue to want to learn about human consciousness and our inherent possibilities and potentials in a deeper way.

Based on this work, I know that these contain a great deal of wisdom that even very advanced colleagues can absorb. Knowing something about my background may encourage the reader to personalize these works even more. For four years, from 1982 to 1986, I worked in the speech department at the University Clinic of Heidelberg. One day, they asked me to treat a suicidal patient with paralysis of the tongue and swallow reflex after brain tumor surgery. The rehabilitation treatment provided by a specialized speech therapist was not working. The treatment team and patient were both becoming desperate. The speech therapist asked me if I could use hypnosis with this patient to restore easy swallowing.

At first, I refused to take this case as I did not think hypnosis could be effective for what was so clearly a biological condition. As I continued to think about this case and wondered what I might be able to do, I remembered the paralysis of young Milton Erickson and his remarkable rehabilitation after polio. In an interview conducted by Ernest Rossi, Erickson described how one day he was surprised to notice that the rocking chair he was sitting in was starting to rock seemingly on its own, despite the fact that he was paralyzed. With this experience, Erickson discovered that his mental processes were in fact connected to some movement. He could make involuntary movements, but they were not yet voluntary. More movement occurred when he recalled and re-experienced previous events, like remembering spilling hot water over his leg and how his body reacted by twisting away via these old and vivid pain memories. Ernest Rossi said, "Now I understand, you work with your imagination." Erickson's answer was, "Not with imagination, but with real memories." Rossi's title for this section was, "Working with Real Sense Memories."

Based on these ideas I decided to see the patient. The interview helped me to develop a hypnotic intervention which allowed the patient to swallow 20 to 30 times at the first hypnosis session. Specifically, I invited him to recall and re-experience events associated with tongue movements and swallowing.

This critical difference between imagination and real sense memories has helped me in many treatment situations, including in the mental training of athletes. There is a critical difference between imagining a movement you have not done before and working with the memory of a movement, especially when that memory is a strong one.

Working with real sense memories was also helpful in my own rehabilitation when I experienced a stroke with left side paralysis, including facial paralysis January 2021. I immediately began working with real sense memories and recovered in amazing speed. My occupational therapist, who specialized in such cases, saw me for a first treatment around 10 days after my stroke. He was sick the first week and was unable to treat me. After 30 minutes of working with him he told me, "You are already where others are usually at the end of my treatment. I can show you some exercises, but I cannot help do more for you."

I thank Roxanna Erickson-Klein and Kathryn Rossi for their patience in preparing this foreword. My fast typing has been impaired for a number of weeks and I am happy to be able to type now. This has been a healing exercise for me, moreover, writing about one of the Erickson and Rossi interviews, explaining the difference between imagination and real sense memories, is an excellent example of why it makes sense to study *The Collected Works of Milton H. Erickson, MD* particularly this volume of *Classic Hypnotic Phenomena*. Every time one reads or rereads these papers, new insights and new discoveries of immense value are possible.

One (of many) lasting contributions of Ernest Rossi is his contributions for compiling, editing and re-editing these volumes of *The Collected Works of Milton Erickson* joined by Roxanna and Kathryn together they help us understand that complexities of Erickson's hypnotherapeutic skills are vast and can be ever growing. Let's do more research expanding hypnotherapy to develop new avenues of knowledge and understanding for alleviating suffering and encourage people into satisfying happy lives.

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