

Eliciting Creative Change

Hypnotic Realities was the first work done collaboratively by Ernest Rossi and Milton H. Erickson. The cooperative way in which the two explored the territory of hypnotic trance, consciousness and the multitude of phenomena related to these ideas radiates a sense of trust, appreciation and joie de vivre. Roxanna remembers those treasured years when Ernest came to stay at the Erickson family home. The two of them would focus their attention as long as Erickson's stamina would carry him. As they quieted down for the evening, they would continue to talk about ideas for the morning.

This volume includes the original 1976 Foreword by André Weitzenhoffer as well as recent 2021 Foreword by Jeffrey Zeig. Each of these contributions reflects a deep appreciation for the uniqueness of the work of Milton Erickson. Over the many years of Erickson's professional exploration, we have been enriched by the collegial relationships, the similarities of perspectives and the differences, agreements and disagreements, the intense discussions and the mutual collaboration in a quest for understandings. With each of these individuals, as will the multitudes of other clinicians, researchers. And students of art who seek a more holistic understanding of the nature of consciousness we see this work as a piece of a much larger collective of wisdom.

Erickson demonstrates a myriad of approaches by which psychotherapists of all persuasions can facilitate psychological development with or without the formal induction of trance. Erickson teaches that trance itself is a different experience for every person; indeed, clinical trance may be understood as a freedom in which individuality can flourish. From this point of view one comes to understand Erickson's work as an active approach to the basic endeavor of all psychotherapy: helping individuals outgrow learned limitations so that inner potentials can be realized in service of therapeutic goals.

It will be seen on the following pages that clinical hypnosis and therapeutic trance (using these terms synonymously) are carefully planned extensions of some everyday processes of normal living. Without quite realizing it, we all experience the *Common Everyday Trance* wherein we are absorbed in a moment of inner reverie or preoccupation. During such periods we go about our daily routine somewhat automatically; much of our attention is actually focused inward as we experience ourselves a bit more deeply and possibly gain a fresh perspective or even solve a problem. Similarly, in the clinical utilization of trance we can be more receptive to our own inner experience and unrealized potentials in ways that are most surprising. With the help of a therapist's guidance, these potentials may be explored and further developed.

Most people are startled to learn how Art, Beauty, and Truth turn on gene expression and brain growth during creative activity. It is profound to realize that our highest and most inspired states of consciousness can facilitate optimal gene expression and brain plasticity while negative stress can distort and suppress it. Mind-gene communication engages the transformational alchemy of mind, body, and spirit, which generates our health and well-being as well as personal illness and the clash of cultures. These are the important insights that eventually emerged from publication of Erickson & Rossi's *Hypnotic Realities* in 1976.

"What is a Suggestion?" added in 2010, tells the story of how neuroscience research on activity or experience-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity builds a bridge over the Cartesian gap between body and mind. The new world of neuroscience is entirely consistent with our emerging view that the function of consciousness in general, and the focus of attention and expectancy in therapeutic hypnosis in particular, are to turn on activity and experience-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity for creative adaptation, problem solving, and healing. This is the deep secret that generations have searched for since the beginning of mesmerism and hypnosis more than two centuries ago. This is the science of what is behind many of the purported "mysteries of the human mind," the ever-popular myths of everything that seems strange or mysterious, and so-called "fascinating powers of stage hypnosis." Activity or experience-dependent gene expression and its attendant brain plasticity is the basic psychobiological mechanism for understanding the changes and transformations evident in therapeutic hypnosis, psychotherapy, and the creative insights of human consciousness in art, science, and culture. This is how we can "talk to our genes" and change the neural networks of our own brain and mind.

This new neuroscience framework was not available to us when we published the first edition of *Hypnotic Realities* in 1976. Yet, as can be seen when we read this volume today, every chapter and line anticipates our new neuroscience perspective to a remarkable degree. The subtitle of the original *Hypnotic Realities: the Induction of Clinical Hypnosis and Forms of Indirect Suggestion*, which emphasized Erickson's use of "indirect suggestion", is being re-framed today with the more apt concept of "implicit processing heuristics." "Implicit" is the current neuroscience term, for the "unconscious." "Heuristics" are hints we give each other for priming and prompting a new activity, thought, emotion or experience of consciousness. Implicit processing heuristics are linguistic tools psychotherapists use to turn on experience-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity for creative change and healing. This leads to propose that "implicit processing heuristics" provides a more general neuroscience framework for understanding the subtlety of Erickson's indirect forms of suggestion in therapeutic hypnosis and psychotherapy. In common parlance "indirect suggestion" has the unfortunate connotation of being tricky or sneaky. This was certainly not Erickson's intention. Rather, implicit processing heuristics are the open questions and linguistic tools we use to creatively activate gene expression, brain plasticity, and Milton H. Erickson's use of neuropsychophysiology for facilitating mind-body healing and the so-called "spiritual transformations" of consciousness. Each reader will have to ponder these issues as they seek to integrate the creative edge of Erickson's contributions with their own evolving understanding and efficacy in the therapeutic arts.

Hypnotherapists share many views in common with other well-trained psychotherapists: an understanding of the dynamics of unconscious processes in behavior; an appreciation of the significance of emotional and experiential learning as well as intellectual knowing; a high regard for the unique life experience of each individual; and so on. Hypnotherapists are distinct in practice, however, in that they are more specialized in the deliberate utilization of these processes within individuals to help them achieve their own, individual, therapeutic goals in their own unique ways.

This volume can thus serve as a heuristic, stimulating practicing psychotherapists to improve their own education and training. It also provides researchers with a clinical source of hypothesis about hypnotic phenomena and hypnotherapy that can be tested in a more controlled experimental fashion. Erickson was a creative innovator, and even the most basic of his demonstrations contain a depth of sophistication making this material of great interest to all psychotherapists, regardless of their level of training or area of specialization.

Hypnotic Realities remains an original source for understanding Milton H. Erickson's essential contribution to therapeutic hypnosis, psychotherapy, and current consciousness studies. We editors take great pleasure in bringing forth this digital volume of *Hypnotic Realities*, as part of our ongoing efforts to make the works of Ernest Rossi and Milton Erickson more widely available. Thank you for your interest.

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