



Practitioner Diploma

Module Fourteen

| Module Fourteen

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Learning Outcomes For Module 14

BY THE END OF THIS MODULE, YOU WILL:

- Have an introductory understanding to the work of Milton Erickson
- Have an understanding of the use and benefits of Ericksonian Scripts
- Have an understanding of the use of metaphors within therapy
- Have an understanding of the use of Life Metaphors and the Metaphormosis Technique

Introduction to Milton Erickson

Milton Erickson has God-like status from many of his followers, and much has been written on his methods and techniques which, at times, can seem extremely complex. From my experience, the best way to get inside the mind of Erickson is to read transcripts of his sessions.

- “*Healing In Hypnosis*” is an excellent book full of fascinating examples, some of which are extremely direct and simple, but may require a certain lateral thinking ability to create spontaneously. Much of this is based around his work as a physician.
- “*My Voice Will Go With You*” is another good book, again containing case histories and examples.
- “*Solution Oriented Hypnosis*” is written by a different author (William Hudson) who worked and trained with him, but is a good one that aims to explain some of the Erickson ideas in simpler terms.

You can also see videos of his work on YouTube.

My own interpretation of his work is as follows:

- He always validates the experience of the patient so that they feel understood and are then in a better place to receive new information.
- He then helps the patient change their perception of the problem – and hence their beliefs – which then leads on to a reduction or elimination of symptoms.

Typically, he does this by:

- Direct & Indirect Suggestion, Including Double Binds
- Regression To Cause/Trauma etc.
- Metaphor

However, please bear the following in mind:

STUDY TIP

“[In this personal memoir] ..Ernest Rossi [long-time colleague and Friend of Milton Erickson] emphasizes what he considers the least understood and most underappreciated aspect of Erickson’s hypnotherapy—the fact that **his patients frequently experience intense emotional experiences as they access and replay their traumas in a therapeutic manner.**”

-Abstract from *“Gene Expression and Brain Plasticity in Stroke Rehabilitation: A Personal Memoire of Mind-Body Healing Dreams”*

by Ernest Lawrence Rossi

Milton Erickson's Double Binds

Erickson says he first learned the art of the double bind from his father.

Erickson's father would frequently ask...

"Do you want to feed the chickens first or the hogs, and then do you want to fill the wood box or pump the water for the cows first."

Erickson's father gave him a choice of which chore to do first; however, Erickson was not free to leave the chores undone. Erickson admitted that he consented to do the chores primarily because he chose the order in which he did them.

The secret of the double bind is that it provides an illusion of a free choice between two possibilities. Sometimes a client desires neither of the two choices, though both are to his benefit. Some examples of double binds:

"Are you going to buy the outfit you want before or after you lose twenty pounds?"

"Will you stop smoking before or after you get over your resentment?"

"Will your spouse be the first person to notice how you changed or will it be your best friend?"

In all three double bind examples there is a choice between two possibilities:

There is a choice between buying an outfit before or after losing twenty pounds.

There is a choice between quitting smoking before or after resolving resentment.

There is a choice between who recognizes the change first.

What isn't left to choose is losing twenty pounds, quitting smoking and changing. ALL the above examples are pre-supposing a certain outcome – as soon as the client makes a choice they are moving towards, or accepting the suggestion of, that outcome.

Here are some more of Erickson's effective double and triple binds, used in relation to inductions:

- *Would you like to experience a light, medium or deep trance?*
- *Would you like to go into a trance now or later?*
- *Would you like to go into a trance standing up or sitting down?*
- *Which of you would like to be the first in your group to experience a trance?*
- *Do you want your eyes opened or closed when you experience your trance?*

On one level, the double and triple binds give the client a choice of when or how to go into a trance. On another level the client unconsciously consents to enter a trance.

STUDY TIP

Think about some everyday life situations and see if you can come up with some double binds of your own:

Hint: Think of a desired outcome and then think of two or three ways or means of when or how that outcome may come about.

“My Friend John” Indirect Induction Script

This idea was used by Milton Erickson for ‘resistant subjects.’

STUDY TIP

Read through this script and identify any direct or indirect suggestions, along with any other techniques you spot along the way.

Underline any you become aware of.

Read at quite a slow pace...

There are two common questions regarding hypnosis. The first is, what does it feel like... and the second is, how does it work. It's good to ask questions like that, isn't it?

“Yes, I think so.”

So, before you go on to be hypnotised, I thought I would explain to you how I put other people into trance. Is that OK?

“Sure.”

And I think the best way to do this – so you can get a sense of both sides of the process that you're interested in – is if I describe for you how I hypnotised a friend just recently. And whilst I'm doing that, you can follow my directions and imagine that you are hypnotizing someone else.

So, just imagine that there is someone sitting on that sofa in front of you. Form an awareness of how they look and how they go into trance whilst sitting there. And

as I describe how I hypnotised my friend, you can pass on those instructions to your friend. You can do it in your mind if you like.

I started by having them relax. So, what you can do is... tell them gently to relax... I say to them... Relax... let your shoulders drop... let your arms flop... imagine how the arms could just lie heavy and relaxed... as if they were made of lead...

And then I said to them... and you can tell your friend... let your legs relax now... just allow your legs and feet to be so relaxed that they feel heavy and totally relaxed now...

I tell them, focus on your breathing. In your mind... say to them... focus on your breathing... now... and with each breath out... you can find yourself... relaxing more and more... and each gentle breath will take them deeper and deeper... more and more relaxed.

Just focus on each breath... and allow each breath to make those arms and legs... more relaxed... and you might wonder just how relaxed a person could get...

And in your mind imagine what it would feel like for them to be so relaxed that they could hardly keep their eyes open... imagine them relaxing... (clients head began to drop forward slightly) head sinking comfortably... imagine how their eyes could be so tired that every blink gets longer... [wait for next blink] and the eyes stay shut longer... [wait for next blink] that's right... and imagine what it might be like to close those eyes... think what it would be like to feel your eyelids getting heavier and heavier and how nice it would be to allow them to shut and relax too...

Then I say, imagine saying to the person... and you might be able to feel the little muscles around your eyes... those weak little muscles that control your heavy, heavy eyelids... how tired they are... right now... and notice how heavy the eyelids feel... [wait for next blink] ...that's right... and you don't need to close those eyes until you're ready to go right into a deep trance.

[Wait for eye-closure] ...that's it. All the way...deeply relaxed...drifting down.

Then I said... focus on those little muscles around your eyes... the tiny, weak little muscles that control your eyelids... and what would it be like to pretend that those eyelids were so relaxed that they just won't work. How would that look... if those eyelids were so relaxed, so at ease that they just can't open.

And say... focus your awareness on those eyes... and how it feels when those eyes just will not open... when it feels as if they are locked tight shut... and just will not work...

[Wait for next out-breath, saying at the same time:] Deeper down...

Tell them to imagine going down a staircase... I tell them to imagine (...imagine...) going down and down... with each step, becoming more and more relaxed... from ten to one... and as each number passes go deeper and deeper... more at ease. more comfortable. So, I might count for them... and you might count... and you might count for your friend...

Ten, relaxing deeper

From the ninth step... to the eighth.

8, more relaxed, more at ease

From seven to six...

The sensation of relaxation doubling with each step... Allowing your mind to drift... And your body to relax.

Six to five.... Deeper... and deeper.

Five ... Doubling the relaxation... with each step... [wait for out-breath] as you go further down.

Three...

Two...

One...

Sometimes, I might do that a little bit differently. With you...or with your friend... I might just say, with each breath you go down further and deeper.

And you don't need me to count because with each breath you take, [wait for out-breath] now, your imagination is able to hear me counting inside your head.

So, your first breath in [wait for out-breath] and out would be number 1.

Your next breath [wait for out-breath] would be two, and so on.

And with each breath you take [wait for out-breath] that's right, you go further down that staircase... now... and as each number passes [wait for out-breath] go deeper and deeper... more at ease... more comfortable...

[pause]

"Now tell your best friend to breathe slowly, and deeply, in and out... deeper and deeper.

And now... allow the mind to focus on the hands... allow the mind to become aware of the left hand and the right hand... what they are feeling... where they are... and allow the mind to choose one hand or the other hand and you might become curious as to which hand will be chosen... and when the mind has chosen...

One finger or a thumb will lift on its own... entirely without effort... or it might be a hand or a wrist or something else...

"Tell your friend, that those fingers are lifting ever so slowly, ever so gently, off his lap [or wherever the hand is resting], and it is beginning to float all the way up."

"And when his hand touches his face you will go into a very deep trance. You will hear everything that I say but you will feel so comfortably relaxed that you just want to sink deeper and deeper down into that wonderful feeling."

Source: http://www.hypknowsis.com/SC95_MyFriendJohnInduction.php

More Examples of Ericksonian Scripts

FOR ANESTHESIA

“There is a tremendous amount of learning you have acquired during your lifetime of experience in developing anesthesia’s throughout your entire body.

For example, as you sit and listen to me now, you have forgotten the shoes on your feet ... and now you can feel them; you’ve forgotten the glasses on your nose ... and now you can feel them; you’ve forgotten the collar around your neck ... and now you can feel it ... you listen to an entertaining lecture, and you forget about the hardness of the chairs.

But if it happens to be a boring lecture, your chair feels so utterly uncomfortable. You sense those things.

We’ve all had tremendous experiences in developing anesthesia in all parts of our bodies, so how did you get that anesthesia for the shoes on your feet?

Not because there is a drug put into the nerve; not because you were told to have the anesthesia; but because in your lifelong learning you have acquired the automatic ability to turn off sensations and to turn them on again.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR INSOMNIA

“You use an awful lot of energy staying awake. You resort to every conceivable measure of preventing sleep. Now, if you sleep and rest yourself thoroughly, you will have an oversupply of energy. What constructive or instructive or developmental project would you like to undertake to use up that extra daily allotment of energy? You’ve got to direct it elsewhere rather than in keeping yourself awake. That nice rest each night is going to replenish your energy. How are you going to use it?”

Metaphors

STUDY TIP

Metaphor Definition:

“A figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance”.

www.yourdictionary.com

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A METAPHOR AND A SIMILE

Simile = “like” or “as”

“She was as fearless as a lioness”

“His handshake was like a wet dishcloth”

Metaphor = “is” or “was”

“She was a lioness.”

“His handshake was a wet dishcloth”

In (hypno) therapy metaphors can be used in several different ways. The ways I am most familiar with are:

- As part of a metaphorical story or description.
- Life metaphors – (What I call the Metamorphosis Technique”)

Metaphors as Part of a Metaphorical Story or Description

STUDY TIP

Famous Example of a Metaphorical Story

“There once was an ugly duckling ...”

Here the aim is to deliver a piece of information where the client can identify with the subject or content of the information in a metaphorical way, often in the form of a story or recollection.

Within the story or information, there is a learning or change process that takes place, and the aim is for the client to identify with the character or subject of the information that does the learning or changing, so that the client can experience the same process or benefit.

In effect, we are aiming to indirectly suggest a solution or new idea to the client, and so metaphors in this sense are a form of Indirect Suggestion.

This is often associated very much with Ericksonian Hypnosis, but metaphors are really only part of the therapy he used.

Although the story itself is indirect suggestion, Erickson would also embed direct bespoke suggestions to the client within the telling of the story. His idea was that these suggestions would be consciously forgotten but unconsciously remembered and acted upon.

Metaphors in Practice

The use of Ericksonian-styled metaphors can be quite involved, complex and

confusing, especially if you aim to embed commands within commands, add loops within loops, stories within stories, and so on.

So, when you first begin using this, I would suggest either:

1. Keep it very simple.
2. Use a prepared script (did I just say that?!) written by an expert on this.

THE MOUNTAIN METAPHOR FOR REDUCING ANXIETY

One of the ways in which we begin to free ourselves from these destructive anxieties is to begin to see our anxiety as if it were a mountain.

And when we stand close to that mountain it is overwhelming.

But we can imagine getting into a car and driving some distance from that mountain.

And when we are far enough away, we can stop, get out and look back, and from this distance that mountain seems much less overwhelming.

And from this distance, we can begin to imagine different ways of getting beyond this mountain.

Perhaps we discover a path around one or other side of the mountain. Or perhaps we discover a tunnel through the base of the mountain.

We might even discover that we can fly over the mountain.

But from any event, that mountain of anxiety seems much less overwhelming.

And we begin to discover that some of the anxieties become insignificant; some even disappear.

*And those that remain become much more manageable from this perspective.
Everything does indeed become easier.*

Source: Handbook of hypnotic suggestions and metaphors

Obviously, the idea we are trying to convey is: “When we stand close to a mountain it can seem overwhelming, but when we drive further and further away, it can seem less overwhelming, and we can begin to imagine ways and means of getting around that mountain.”

You could turn this into a visualisation or a story, either real or made-up, scripted or improvised. Remember the principle and use it whenever it seems appropriate or comes to mind.

TURN OFF THE LIGHT METAPHOR FOR EASING A PAIN OR DISCOMFORT

“See yourself now in a house with many rooms. Explore this house and find the room that contains the unpleasant feeling or sensation you have been experiencing until now.

Take your time and be sure to find the right room.

Now, turn off the light in that room, turn off any heating, turn off everything in that room, just closing it down as you will no longer be using or needing it.

Take your time ... make sure it is all switched off now ...

And then, as you tiptoe out quietly, close the door and lock it so that those sensations don't bother you anymore.”

ERICKSON METAPHOR FOR TINNITUS

“Now I am going to tell you a story so that you can understand better. We learn things in a very unusual way, a way that we do not know about. In my first year of college, I happened to come across that summer a boiler factory.

The crews were working on twelve boilers at the same time, and it was three shifts of workmen. And those pneumatic hammers were pounding away, driving rivets into the boilers. I heard that noise and I wanted to find out what it was.

On learning that it was a boiler factory, I went in and couldn't hear anybody talking. I could see the various employees were conversing. I could see the foremen's lips moving, but I could not hear what he said to me. He heard what I said.

I had him come outside so I could talk to him. And I asked him for permission to roll up my blanket and sleep on the floor one night. He thought there was something wrong with me. I explained that I was interested in learning processes. And he agreed that I could roll up in my blanket and sleep on the floor. He explained to all the men and left an explanation for the succeeding shift of men.

The next morning, I awakened. I could hear the workmen talking about that damn fool kid. What the hell was he sleeping on the floor there for? What did he think he could learn?

During my sleep that night I blotted out all that horrible noise of the twelve or more pneumatic hammers and I could hear voices. I knew it was possible to learn to hear only certain sounds if you tune your ears properly.

You have ringing in your ears, but you haven't thought of tuning them so that you don't hear the ringing ... and think back; there are goodly number of times this afternoon when you stopped hearing the ringing. It is hard to remember things that don't occur, but the ringing did stop. But because there was nothing there, you don't remember it ...

Now the important thing is to forget about the ringing and to remember the times when there was no ringing. And that is a process you learn. I learned in one night's time not to hear the pneumatic hammers in the boiler factory – and to hear a conversation I couldn't hear the previous day ... I knew what the body can do automatically.

Now rely upon your body. Trust it. Believe in it. And know that it will serve you well.”

STUDY TIP

Metaphors Question: *Is it better to explain the meaning of a metaphor or let the client work it out for himself/herself?*

Answer: *From my experience and understanding it is better NOT to explain it, but just let the client make sense of it.*

Milton Erickson would, however, say something like: *“I'd like you to give that some thought until you understand it properly”.*

Life Metaphors/The Metamorphosis Technique

Over the years I noticed that many clients naturally spoke in similes or metaphors or would spontaneously use them in the conversation, both in and out of hypnosis.

E.g.

Rugby Player: “On the pitch I feel like a frail observer”

Student: “In exams, my mind is like a sieve.”

Worker: “When I have a lot on, my mind is like a fire-fly, darting around all over the place”

I found that using these metaphors was a useful way of working with the client’s model of the world and so would do my best to stay in the metaphor as far as possible. These are, after all, effectively the “don’t want’s”.

I would then aim to have the client find the opposite, more positive version. More often than not, this was a simile, at first:

- Rugby Player: I’d rather be like the Incredible Hulk”
- Student: “I wish I was like the perfect librarian who could retrieve any piece of information.”
- Worker: “I wish I could focus like a laser beam on the task at hand and just get it done”

These are effectively the “do want’s” and once I had these, I would then convert them to a metaphor:

- Rugby Player: “On the pitch, you are The Incredible Hulk.”

- Student: “Your mind is a vast library, and you are the librarian, able to retrieve information in seconds.”
- Worker: “Your mind is a laser beam focused on each task until it is complete”

These were good and could then be used as mantras, or self-hypnosis, or as handcrafted-suggestions or visualisation, during a suggestion session.

But I also realized there are more levels to this that you can work with and when I dug deeper, with fluid questioning around the *metaphor*, they often went deeper into the metaphor, eventually getting closer and closer to *similes and metaphors around their core beliefs*.

E.g., Surface Level Metaphor

- Person 1: “My life is a road crash”
- Person 2: “My boss is a playground bully”

Digging deeper, we get ...

Person 1: “I’m a disaster waiting to happen”

Person 2: “I’m a defenseless insect, on it’s back in the desert”

When I then looked for more positive versions of these deeper levels, I got a much deeper level of response and transformation:

Person 1: “I’m a rock, strong, solid, steady, sure”

Person 2: “I’m an armadillo, with armor plating that no-one can penetrate”

These felt better in themselves, but when we transposed those back into the original surface level metaphors, and asked,

“So what does this now mean about our original metaphor?”, we got ...

- Person 1: “I am a boulder, rolling along an open freeway. Nothing can stop me.”
- Person 2: “I am a force to be reckoned with and can assert myself at work safely.”

I kept experimenting, but eventually found that 3 Levels Deep usually gave an even better result, especially if I began to structure it a little more, and, because I was often able to elicit a pretty good metamorphosis using metaphors ... eventually called it “The Metaphormosis Technique” (though it has taken me a while to be able to say it!)

The Life Metaphor/ Metamorphosis Technique Procedure

Most of the time I will only do this if the client naturally introduces a metaphor or simile as we are speaking. Occasionally, I will initiate this myself, usually if I feel we are stuck or I'm looking for a new angle.

By combining metaphors with another exercise, I sometimes do – 3 levels Deep – we can often initiate change quite quickly.

The aim is to use clients' metaphors to probe deeper, in 3 specific stages

1. The Current Situation
2. What's that like? (Feelings and Emotions)
3. Where does that leave you (Often this will be a core belief)

	OLD	NEW
(1) Current situation metaphor		
(2) <i>What's that like?</i> metaphor	↓	↑
(3) <i>Where does that leave you?</i> metaphor	↓	↑
		→

When we do a “Don't Want Do Want” at the bottom level, and then work our way back up – again only using metaphors, the results can be surprising and dramatic.

Here's an example:

Me: Describe the current situation.

Student: *When I fight with my daughter and we are at loggerheads, it feels like a runaway train, about to fall off the tracks of harmony.*

Me: What's that like?

Student: *Fast-moving, everything going too quickly.*

Me: What's the result or outcome?

Student: *A big crash!*

Me: OK, instead of being in a big crash, what do you want instead? [don't want-do want]

Student: *I'd rather be in a sailing boat.*

Me: What's that like?

Student: *Slower, more in control, gentle breeze, calm waters.*

Me: So how does the situation begin to feel now?

Student: *More like smooth sailing, teamwork, together. [ie opposite of at loggerheads]*

I then created a summary idea to take away and focus on.

Me: *“Any time you sense you are at loggerheads with your daughter, instead of allowing it to become like a runaway train, moving too quickly and destined to crash . . . take a deep breath and, as you breathe out, think of the idea of a sailing boat, moving slowly, more in control in the gentle breeze and calm waters, so that you can work together, as a team, and things can be more like plain sailing.”*

	OLD	NEW
(1) Current situation metaphor	<i>loggerheads, it feels like a runaway train, about to fall off the tracks of harmony.</i>	<i>smooth sailing, teamwork, <u>together</u></i>
(2) What's that like? metaphor	<i>Fast-moving, everything going too quickly (out of control)</i>	<i>Slower, more in control, gentle breeze, calm waters.</i>
(3) Where does that leave you? metaphor	<i>A big crash! (feeling useless/bad mom)</i>	<i>I'd rather be in a sailing boat</i>

We still get the result we want – moving from being “At Loggerheads” to “teamwork, together”, but by going 3 levels deep we have a better understanding and greater chance of success.

Sometimes, we may have to “mind the gap”, and help the client understand what they need to think or feel differently, in order to be able to move from one side to the other, and very often this will involve core beliefs around self-worth, safety, control, acceptance, love and so on.

	OLD		NEW
(1) Current situation metaphor			
(2) <i>What's that like?</i> metaphor	↓		↑
(3) <i>Where does that leave you?</i> metaphor	↓	→	↑

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1: Elicit the negative metaphor for the current situation

“How would you describe your life / the situation?”

Step 2: Dig deeper into the metaphor,

“In what way? What’s that like?”, and convert these feelings into a new metaphor (be sure to make sure it is different, and not a variation on the first one).

Step 3: “Where does that leave you? What’s the outcome?” Again, keep questioning gently until the client has given you a new metaphor for their “outcome”.

Step 4: Convert this 3rd level deep “Don’t Want” metaphor into a new “Do Want” metaphor.

Step 5: Move back up the levels asking the client to describe new metaphors for each level now.

Step 6: Convert the whole set of phrases into a mantra or hand-crafted suggestions they can take away and use.

NOTE

Many students find this method/exercise confusing at first – until they go through it themselves.

Like much of this work, the only real way to fully learn it, is to experience it.

Coursework | Module Fourteen

1. When might you use a metaphor during a therapy session – please give an example.
2. Please give your own example of a double bind and when you might use it.
3. Are there any disabilities that you would be uncomfortable working with for any reason or any that may cause problems in terms of your physical environment?
4. Ethics Compliance – give three examples of when you must not treat a client.
5. Give 3 examples of when you may not wish to treat a client.
6. How do you explain confidentiality to your clients?
7. Why is confidentiality so important?
8. What do you do if a client asked to see their notes?
9. Please give an example of positive self-disclosure and negative self-disclosure on the part of the therapist.
10. How may a client display resistance and how would you deal with this?
11. What is the difference between a Spontaneous Abreaction and an Induced Abreaction?
12. How do you deal with abreactions?
13. What do you understand by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
14. Give a brief comparison of CBT and Solution Focused (Hypno)Therapy and explain any preference you may have for one over the other, and why.
15. What do you understand by False Memory Syndrome and how do you minimize the risk of it occurring?

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