

## Ericksonian Hypnotic Language Patterns

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### **Volume 48. Putting them all together – a word on words**

Well, kids, if you've been reading these offerings throughout the year, you're clearly aware we've covered a great deal of language patterns these past 48 weeks. Close to 70, I'd reckon. If you are a more recent arrival to our humble newsletter, you may feel a little overwhelmed with them all. That's OK. Just do one at a time. There's no hurry. Play with the one 'til you feel confident with your competence and then add another.

And no matter what, please bear in mind that knowing these patterns and being masterful at their use is not the same as being good at Ericksonian Hypnosis or Psychotherapy. If ever I have given anyone the impression otherwise, let me correct that now.

Artful language is only one facet of successful change work. In fact, word choice alone is even a very small part of ANY communication, therapeutic or not. A researcher named Dr. Albert Mehrabian pointed out that in a given communication, people tend to value the words you choose at only 7% of what is communicated. How you say those words – your voice tone/rate/rhythm/etc. – conveys much more, 38%, and your "body language" conveys the most at 55%. As a rather extreme example a friend once offered, I could say "I love you" to a lady all I want to, but if I'm wild-eyed and screaming it through clenched teeth while swinging a machete, I don't think she'd take my words to heart.

**So, yes,** I am telling you that all this attention we've been paying to the words over the past 48 weeks really amounts to only a small proportion of a successful therapeutic interaction. So why are we spending so much time with it, you ask?

Well, to me, it is analogous to practicing technical exercises and scales and arpeggios as a musician. You would never go to a concert of a great pianist and expect that she'd sit down and start playing scales in every key, first major and then minor (all three types). As impressive as that might be you'd either fall asleep or leave and ask for your money back. However, those technical skills still need to be practiced. Artur Rubenstein, one of the greatest pianists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, once said that if he didn't practice for one day, he could tell the difference in his performance. If he didn't practice for two days, his wife could tell, and if he didn't practice for three days, his audience could tell.

I remember back to when I was a piano student. There was this one teacher who turned out students with impressive technique, but they played mechanically with no feeling or expression. By contrast there was another teacher who turned out students who were emoting all over the place but often played wrong notes, or were sloppy in any number of ways. These teachers did not care for each other very much and their disdain was thinly disguised. Then one day, the great Russian pianist, Vladimir Ashkenazy came to town to perform a recital of Beethoven Sonatas. His playing was transcendent, amazing, and magical. But what amazed me even more is what I saw at intermission.

These two teachers, both visibly moved by this magnificent performance, entered the lobby, saw each other and threw their arms around each other, laughing and crying, and exclaimed “It CAN be done!” They were behaving as if they believed this caliber of musicianship was the destination of the road upon which they were guiding their students.

But, of course, it wasn’t just sincere expression or pure technical mastery that made his performance that day so riveting, it was the combination of BOTH. (And as Stephen Gilligan might say, “And isn’t it nice to know that you can enjoy both at the same time?”)

So please go back and re-read the very first installment of these newsletters about the actual vocal delivery and also Volume 28, about phrasing. Because, while what you say IS important, how you say it is even more important.

That being said, here’s an exercise for you: Just for fun, knowing full well you would never do this in real life, review the “Structure of Magic” Presuppositions 1 – 29 from the last several newsletters and write one of each of them. Tie them together thematically, as if you are telling a therapeutic metaphor. Send in your finished work to this website. The first 5 people to send their completed “homeplay” will get a free Ericksonian language pattern CD. With your permission we may even post them on line.

**Have fun!**

-Doug O’Brien

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