

# Ericksonian Hypnotic Language Patterns

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## Pattern 16. Utilization

Utilizing whatever response your client offers you in a positive way.

Examples:

(The client reports, "I don't know if I was in trance.")

"That's right, you don't know if you were in trance because you're trying to evaluate it with your conscious mind and trance is not a conscious process."

(The client warns, "I'm not like those other people you've worked with.")

"Yes, you're right. And that's exactly why Ericksonian Hypnosis is perfect for you, because every session is tailored to your unique needs."

Here's a real life example that happened when I was working with a client. We were right in the middle of a trance induction, when a fellow, looking for the dentist's office across the hall, burst into the room. He took a minute to register his mistake, and then said loudly, "This isn't the Dentist's office!" Where upon he turned and walked out, slamming the door behind him. Now, some might have scuttled their efforts at that point and tried to start over again. Instead I just smiled at the startled client, held his gaze and said, "That's right... this is not the dentist's office and you knew that. This is not a doctor's office, and you knew that. (I stood and crossed over to the door and locked it, without missing a beat) The nice thing about *this* office is you can **lock out** those people and experiences that aren't important right now. (Sitting again) Here you can **close your eyes** and **forget** those outside influences in life and turn your attention inside. Inside this room, inside your mind. And you can **close the door** on past experiences that you no longer need to remember. Knowing that every time one door closes, another door opens, or a window... (and continued from there)

Now, I would like to suggest, like I do every week, that you **stop** and **write out your own examples** of this language pattern, but I won't. Because you really can't. You can't specifically plan spontaneity, but you can plan to utilize opportunities when they are presented to you and to see everything as an opportunity. Because it is.

**NOTE:** *Utilization* is much more than a simple language pattern. It may be *the central principle* of Erickson's approach to therapy; that a client's unique patterns of self-expression are recognized and utilized as the basis of therapeutic trance development.

There are scores of examples throughout the literature. A famous example is when Erickson approached a man in the state hospital who claimed to be Jesus Christ and told him he understood he had had some experience as a carpenter. The man said yes, that was true. Erickson asked if it was also true he liked to be of service to his fellow man, and the man again agreed. So Erickson asked him to help the hospital build some

much-needed bookshelves. The patient did so and was able to start participating in constructive behavior rather than continuing his symptomatic behavior. (“Uncommon Therapy” by Jay Haley)

Another example is when he had a patient who was stubbornly refusing medical advice given her for her peptic ulcer. In trance Erickson utilized her talent for being stubborn by telling her she should take charge and dominate her therapy. He said she should do this by stubbornly following the medical advice and by having a happy attitude throughout, no matter what. Her ulcer cleared up soon thereafter. (“Collected Papers,” vol IV.)

Read more about this important orientation in Stephen Gilligan’s “Therapeutic Trances”, William O’Hanlon’s “Taproots” and more. You can find many examples by looking up utilization in O’Hanlon’s “An Uncommon Casebook,” which is a comprehensive index of the cases presented throughout the Ericksonian literature.

**Have fun.** See you next week.