

Ericksonian Hypnotic Language Patterns

Douglas O'Brien

In the past 28 weeks we've covered 28 different language patterns. So this might be a good time to stop for a few minutes and talk about talking, That is, to reflect upon the actual spoken delivery of the words we've so carefully chosen to say.

In our opening newsletter article tonality and tonal shift was addressed. (Find all the previous newsletters in the Archives under "Articles").

In a future article we'll address the issue that no matter how artful or clever, language alone is not therapy. In the case of Milton Erickson, his use of language alone did not make him Erickson. Nor will it make us effective communicators unless we know why to say what we're saying. I certainly hope these newsletters never give the impression otherwise.

But for now, let's examine the use of...

PHRASING

In last week's example we touched on Christina Hall's exquisite use of punctuational ambiguity, but I'd like to also point out her brilliant use of phrasing.

Below we have the complete statement we quoted last week that Ms. Hall attributed to Richard Bandler. Notice that in the two examples below the words are the same. The phrasing, however, is quite different.

Read these two examples out loud to yourself noticing what happens with the difference in how they're phrased.

"Well, you know that you can sometimes feel confused and not know
yet continue to learn
because your conscious mind is very smart
and your unconscious mind also learns in a variety of ways
so why not let it do the work for you for a while?"

- or -

"Well, you know that you can...
sometimes feel confused and not know...**yet**...
continue to learn *because*...
your conscious mind is very smart *and*
your unconscious mind also learns in a variety of ways *so*...
why not let it do the work for you for a while?"

Chris will vocally emphasize the conjunctions and always pays exquisite attention to the inflection of her voice. (Remember the upward inflection implies questions, a downward shift is congruent with a command, etc.)

To me, when I read the first paragraph, at the end of each line my brain gets to agree or disagree; the speaker has offered a complete thought or suggestion that I get to vote on. In the second paragraph I have no such opportunity. My imagination is captured by the speaker throughout because I'm continually wondering what's coming next.

A few year's ago I had the opportunity to experience first hand the importance of this. The issue of using Hypnosis for Pain Management was to become very personal to me, as I had elected to undergo surgery without anesthesia. In preparing for the operation my colleague and I discovered that when the suggestions were delivered as in the first example below it was less effective than when delivered as in the second.

Imagine yourself in the Operating Room, all prepped and ready to go. You hear the voice that says,
"You are deep in trance.

You will experience nothing but comfort.

You will breath easily and normally,

You will experience no discomfort,
You will have minimal bleeding.
You are floating in the middle of nowhere,

Well here's what my brain would say at the each line:

"You are deep in trance. (No, not that deep really.)
You will experience nothing but comfort. (OK, I really hope you're right about that.)
You will breath easily and normally, (Doing my best...In...out... in...in... out)
You will experience no discomfort, (OW! What the hell was that?!)
You will have minimal bleeding. (I'm bleeding?!)
You are floating in the middle of nowhere, (I wish! But right now I acutely aware I'm in a nightmare.)

Fortunately it didn't come to that. While I can't quote exactly what was said because I was in a pretty decent trance, I can tell you my experience of what was said was more like this;

"And, as you float gently down
into a deep and comfortable trance
you might find that you can
follow your breath in...and...
out. That's right...
relaxing deeper
because you know a lot about how to
go into a trance... and
you don't even have to try... to
listen to every word I say...
You don't
even have to be here
You can go...in your mind's eye...
To a beautiful beach... with many
beautiful... people and things
to focus your attention...
there now

Another great advantage of shorter phrases is you can create a nice rhythm with your speaking that itself facilitates trance. (This is especially true if you time the pauses to your client's breathing.) Please refer to Dr. Michael Yapko's script we added to the website last week. Read that to yourself aloud and notice the nice effect the rhythm this fine script sets up.

Here's an Idea:

Since we have reached this milestone, let's take a few minutes and put them all together. Write out a script of your own and use all the different language patterns we've learned up to now. Now, of course, this is just for practice. You would never really do this in real life. These patterns are best used when you have a good reason to use them in the service of your therapeutic goal. Not "just because."

In classes that I teach, I recommend to my students that they fold a piece a paper in half vertically and write your script in phrases down one side of the sheet of paper first and then down the second half.

Maybe you'll want to **do that too**. Wont' you?

See you next week.

By the Way: Though she lacks a website we highly recommend the NLP work of Chris Hall.
Reach her through: The NLP Connection,
PO Box 7818,
Santa Cruz, CA. 95061.
Call: 831-425-3614
Fax: 831-688-1715

Copyright (C) 2005 www.Ericksonian.info