

My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. Study Guide

My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. by Sidney Rosen

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Plot Summary

"My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson, M.D." by Sidney Rosen is a recounting of the practices of renowned hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson. Erickson was an innovator in his field of hypnotherapy, proving through years of practice and success stories that many patients are able to "cure" themselves through reframing their lives and problems.

Sidney Rosen was a colleague of the late Dr. Erickson and has first hand knowledge of many of the techniques and cases used throughout the book. Rosen has little to add to the work, except for some of his own anecdotes or brief comments regarding a particular case or theory. The work is entirely that of Erickson, a man who has been recognized as a pioneer in his field.

The title of the book, "My Voice Will Go with You," relates to one technique Erickson used in his practice. While a subject was under hypnosis or in some form of trance, Erickson would speak to the patient in such a way that the patient would choose to reframe past experiences. The technique often involved personal beliefs or traumas that were formed in the past and therefore, affected the patient's present and future. Erickson talked to the patient, attempting to remove negative programming in the patient's mind. It was obvious to Erickson that he could not be with the patient every waking moment and that the patient would have to learn to "hear" the suggestions for reframing everywhere the patient went. Erickson began to tell patients that the suggestions would follow no matter where the patient went. Erickson's voice would replace the patient's own as well as the voices of family, friends, colleagues, and anyone else the patient came in contact with on a daily basis. Because Erickson was able to convince the patient that "My Voice Will Go With You," the patient was able to reframe or reprogram negative experiences into positive ones.

Overall, the book can be seen as a practical guide to relationships and to simple techniques created to change a patient's life. The examples throughout the book are informing while being entertaining and thought provoking. Erickson's style is reminiscent of a story teller's rather than a medical professional. An added bonus is that Erickson interjects personal stories from his life, including experiences with the Erickson children that show the doctor practiced what he preached.

Rosen's contribution to the book also allows the reader to see that Erickson's work may have been controversial at one time, considered to be almost shamanic by certain colleagues but eventually, the proof of its relevance and effectiveness gave the doctor credibility. The work lives on in the practices of many and has gained Erickson a great deal of respect in the professional realm.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

"My Voice Will Go with You" is a recounting by Sidney Rosen of the practices of renowned hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson. Rosen does little more than add footnotes to Erickson's work, tales of years in practice as well as the development of unusual techniques designed to help the patient alter his own life. The work begins with Milton Erickson's description of various techniques employed throughout his career as a hypnotherapist. Erickson takes a direct hands-on approach which many people may find less than scholarly although the great deal of insight used in dealing with patients may exceed traditional methods. One of Erickson's main tenets is the practice of guiding the patient rather than forcibly directing the patient's changes in behavior and lifestyle. This approach help becomes the primary method of treatment and the patient's response becomes the prime indicator of the treatment's success.

Erickson's primary method of treatment includes the induction of the trance state to uncover unconscious behaviors and triggers. There is great number of examples where the patient doesn't "know" why the behavior exists or occurs much to the patient's dismay, discomfort or harm that may result from these actions. The patient may think that he is incapable of change, although Erickson simply believes it's about relating to the problem and pushing the appropriate buttons in order to get a sufficient reaction.

Erickson also believes that if one could alter the past two thirds of the current problem has been effectively solved. This may also relate to conditions, attitudes and automatic responses particularly if the patient has had previous trauma or a medical condition that causes certain unhealthy or erratic mental states. For example, Erickson treated a woman who had two kinds of cancer, including colon cancer. Treatment had not worked well for the woman who had had two surgeries to rectify the illness. As a result of the treatments, the woman developed an obstructed bowel that caused her a great deal of pain and eliminated the possibility of a third surgery that the doctor felt was necessary. The woman had to go to the doctor on a regular basis to have her colon cleansed and the experience was quite painful. The doctor needed to operate on the colon but didn't want to do another surgery considering the woman's present condition and ongoing issues with extreme constipation. After Erickson's treatment, the woman no longer had constipation problems and the doctor was able to operate with success. Erickson accomplished this by turning the woman's focus onto something else other than her medical problem.

"My Voice Will Go with You" effectively explains and dispels long lived myths regarding the trance state. Many people relate the trance with movies or stage performances where the participant is rendered completely unconscious or unreasonably susceptible to suggestions and requests regardless of how ridiculous they may be. While deep trances are possible, they aren't as common as one might believe. Many who are able



to achieve a deep trance state are trained in the process or have a lot of experience with other forms of trance induction, including meditation.

As for the behavior exhibited during a trance state, it is important to know that people will not do anything in the trance state that is against one's moral code, level of comfort or beliefs. For example, a person may be willing to act like a chicken yet will not consent to murder, if it's not something one would ever do in a conscious state. A trance may be as simple as a feeling of relaxation or internal rather than external awareness. This is a common state for people who are intent on practicing a specific discipline, particularly those that require a great deal of focus. Athletes who experience this state often call it being in "the zone." This is a state that is commonly referred to by runners who become filled with endorphins and the only thing that seems to matter is the activity at hand. Others who use a tremendous amount of focus in their work, hobbies or relationships may experience this state as well. All of these things are a form of trance, whether they are guided or self-induced.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary and Analysis

There are many things people learn throughout their lifetimes. A large number of a person's skills were once carefully honed but later forgotten. Erickson uses the example of walking. There was once a time when walking seemed impossible and took a great deal of effort. One had to learn how to stand, how to take a step, and how to keep balanced while standing or walking. The skill took a great deal of effort and often took a while to manage and master. After one learned to walk, there was an effort to conquer ongoing forward motion and coordinating different movements, such as hands and feet, arms and legs, separately or together. As one gets older, the learning process involved with the skill ceases to be remembered although the skill itself is used on a regular basis, as if without thought.

Walking is only one of the many skills people have that they take for granted. There are also cases where people will forget that they have learned a particular skill and therefore, will also forget that they possess the skill. Those limitations must be explored if they are to be conquered. One example may be riding a bike. There is an old adage that says, "It's just like riding a bike," meaning that one may have "forgotten" the skills necessary to ride a bike, yet once one is reminded the skill comes back without any real effort.

Erickson feels that there is a great deal to be said about establishing effective rapport with another person, particularly a patient. There was an example of Erickson's job involving the sale of books during his college years. Erickson visited a farmer who had no interest in buying the books although he agreed to let the young salesman give the practiced pitch. While the two talked Erickson unconsciously scratched one of the farmer's hogs on its back. The hog enjoyed it. The farmer was amazed at Erickson's actions since the hogs were his pride and joy. Erickson explained that he was raised on a farm and that the action was natural. The farmer instantly developed a rapport with Erickson, invited him to dinner and to spend the night with his family. The farmer bought the books. Even though the farmer was immune to Erickson's sales pitch, the natural activity of scratching the hog built an instant rapport that may not have been able to be achieved in any other way.

Sidney Rosen added comments about how Erickson's approach was an excellent way in establishing rapport although at the time, the man was unaware of the action. Erickson continued to use this method throughout his career, not as a manipulation tool but as a way to develop relationships with patients as well as colleagues.

Paying attention to others is key in understanding and relating to them. Erickson uses a tale about Arthur, a fellow psychologist that chose to attend medical school. Erickson liked Arthur and wanted to help him achieve the goal. Arthur was a bright student however his attentiveness proved to cause trouble with a particular professor. When it



came time to take an important exam, the professor asked if Arthur felt prepared. Arthur said he did as he already knew the ten questions the professor would ask. The professor doubted Arthur's confidence and challenged the student. Arthur detailed all ten questions that would appear on the exam, in order of their appearance. The professor became angry at the answer and accused Arthur of breaking into his office to obtain a copy of the test. Arthur proclaimed his innocence to no avail.

The professor took Arthur to the dean of the department, who asked if Arthur had cheated. Arthur said he had not. Arthur went on to explain that it was a simple matter of paying attention to the material and the professor's intensity, intonations and inflection when he gave lectures. The professor still challenged Arthur's claim. Arthur stated that he had a unique system of using asterisks to mark the most important points of each lecture and that if the professor or the dean chose, they could examine his notebook which was in his dorm room. In the notebook Arthur had used the highest number of asterisks to highlight the most important points - the ten points to be outlined on the exam. The professor was finally convinced of Arthur's skill at paying attention and dropped the matter. Arthur was congratulated on his attentiveness and was not required to take the exam.

Each patient unconsciously discloses information during a therapy session. One of Erickson's examples involved a woman who was extremely self conscious about a facial scar that had occurred when she was a child. The woman constantly held her hand over her mouth in an attempt to hide the scar. The action was so automatic that it became an unconscious gesture to the patient. Through a series of tasks, Erickson effectively got the woman to stop hiding her face. This was accomplished by redirecting the woman's focus to other things such as behavior while on a date. Patients may "cure" themselves of certain habits and behaviors once the unconscious marker is uncovered.

Automatic behavior is also discussed. Automatic behavior can be simple or complicated and can be attributed to all people, whether or not they are patients. People are simply conditioned to do certain things. Regardless of the origin or meaning of the action, it is almost always unconscious. Erickson uses the example of people walking by a bakery and automatically slowing to take in the aroma.

Automatic writing is another way to uncover subconscious or unconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Automatic writing is simply the process of writing while in a trance-like state. More often than not, the information written on the paper will reveal information that may not be apparent to the patient. The action may tap into another part of the consciousness that is completely unavailable to the patient and can bring forth information not otherwise attained. The handwriting of the patient during this time may also be altered and could be unrecognizable to the writer.

Erickson also states that if the patient has a large block when it comes to a particular subject, the information or answer may not be apparent. There is an example of a patient being asked ten questions about the man she will marry. For each question the woman would be required to write yes or no as an answer. Logically, at least nine of the answers should have been "no." However, because the woman was unsure of her



feelings, all of the answers were "yes." This in itself was a telling response. However, through observation, Erickson was able to determine the woman's true feelings. The way Erickson could tell the true answer was by the amount of pressure the patient used when writing the answers. The harder the pressure, the truer the statement.

The hypnotized patient is apt to take all suggestions literally. Therefore, previously learned information will be set aside in order for the suggestion to present itself as the way of the unconscious. For example, a patient ordered under hypnosis to see only one object in a room will focus only on said object and not be able to see anything else even if it is directly in the patient's line of sight.

Direct resistance of a patient can block any form of success with treatment. If a person is convinced that he cannot be put into a trance, chances are he is correct. However, there are ways around direct resistance, including distracting the patient's focus. Another is to have the patient pretend he is in a trance and eventually, the pretending will become real.

Rosen states that Erickson also uses intonation and inflection to put the patient at ease, therefore making it easier to circumnavigate the resistance. Intonation and inflection are also used in a wide number of techniques to create rapport and control the actions of the other person.

Another method for creating a successful result in treatment focuses on the redirecting of a patient's attention. There are several examples of this technique, including a woman who suffered from a severe case of warts. The woman was beside herself and asked Erickson for help. Although warts are caused by a virus and may not be curable without other forms of treatment, Erickson decided to try redirection. The doctor told the woman to soak in ice water three times a day for two weeks. By doing so, the woman became focused on the ice water that she completely forgot about the warts. It was only a short period of time before the warts were gone. Years later, Erickson ran into the woman and asked if there had been any recurrences. The woman had completely forgotten the warts had ever existed.

Rosen related this example to the statement made by Paracelus in the fifteenth century: "As man imagines himself to be, so shall he be, and he is that which he imagines."



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary and Analysis

Overcoming habitual limitations requires shifting the patient's focus from the skill involved to the task at hand. For example, one of Erickson's patients was an athlete whose sport was the shot put. Through treatment, Erickson was able to convince the patient that there were only self imposed limits as to how far the shot put could be thrown. The school record for the shot put was fifty-eight feet, a record that the patient fell short of with each attempt. Each time Erickson talked to the patient about this record, he encouraged the young man to believe that if a person could throw a shot put fifty-eight feet, one could also throw it fifty-eight feet and one sixteenth of an inch. Every time the doctor discussed the record, the potential for distance would increase. Eventually, the patient broke the record and went on to win gold in the Olympics.

Part of the method involved in this technique involved marrying truisms to possibilities. For example, it was a truism that the shot put had been thrown fifty-eight feet. Yet, there was a possibility that it could be thrown further. This technique allowed the patient to believe in the possibility and therefore he could be successful in breaking many records and winning medals at Olympic Games three separate times.

This story coincides with Erickson's practice of directing a patient to overcome a fixed mental state. One story involves a man who was afraid to walk on ice. Erickson claimed he could teach the man how to walk across glare ice without slipping or falling. The man was instructed to close his eyes and walk across cement. The man did as he was told. When he opened his eyes, Erickson revealed that they had walked across the ice together. The patient believed he was walking on dry cement so he did not invoke the usual fixed mental state, tighten his muscles, and expect to fall.

There are quite a few examples of patients who became successful after having their desires realized regardless of previous experiences with self-sabotage. One woman was desperate to lose weight. Erickson said that he could help her however she would not like the methods. The woman was persistent and agreed. Erickson told the patient that she was required to gain twenty pounds. After the weight gain, she would begin to lose weight. The woman balked against gaining the weight because she was already so miserable. Erickson was insistent that the patient follow the plan. The woman did as she was told but fought the process the whole way. After she reached her maximum weight, she began to lose weight easily. The purpose of the exercise was to reverse the woman's thinking. Once she had loathed trying to lose weight. Through the treatment, she was switched to loathing the task of gaining weight.

Patients often ask for solutions to problems they don't really want to have solved. Erickson relays several examples of people who wanted to lose weight, get divorced or stop drinking alcohol. Through the treatment process, the doctor learned that the people



didn't want to change those actions even though they professed to have a need to be "cured." A patient will only change when the desire is real.

Rosen introduces the topic of reframing by referring to one of the most famous cases in history. Victor Frankl was one of many people who were sentenced to a concentration camp during World War II. Instead of focusing on the situation, Frankl reframed the "potentially deadening and hopeless situation" by planning the lectures he would give once he was released from the camp. The main focus of the lectures would be victory over mental and physical limitations through reframing and changing one's thinking patterns.

Reframing can occur in many different ways. Erickson shows that one way for a therapist to induce reframing is through agreement with negative behavior, much in same vein as reverse psychology.

There was a retired police officer who wanted to stop eating, drinking and smoking compulsively. Erickson did not tell the man to stop. In fact, he told the patient to eat, drink and smoke as much as he wanted. However, if the man wanted to drink he had to walk to a bar. For a second drink, the second bar must be further away. The pattern continued with all of the man's issues. The patient was angry with the suggestion. However, that same patient revealed that the treatment had worked.

Another method was to make the patient want what once seemed so difficult to handle. One woman ignored her children, neglected her children, and refused to take care of the family home. Through Erickson's suggestion of traveling for a year, the woman wanted to be home more than anything in the world, taking care of her family.



Chapters 7-10

Chapters 7-10 Summary and Analysis

Erickson believes that therapy may not always work. However, there are times when the treatment will prompt a response in the patient. That response may act as a catalyst and in the end, solve or diminish the problem in place of the therapy.

Dream states are commonly used as catalysts, whether or not the technique is an intentional move by the therapist. Many times a patient will resist treatment but have a dream in which the problem has been resolved. The dream had convinced the patient that circumstances had changed. This tends to happen most with patients who attempt to intellectualize the treatment or are convinced that they are among those who can't be hypnotized.

There is a lot to be said for experiential learning. No matter how much theory one has it is only the experience that can properly teach someone how to perform. Erickson uses the example of swimming. Although a person may be taught all the necessary methods and strokes involved in swimming, it does not mean that the person will be proficient in the sport once he hits the water. Chances are that natural instinct will override the previous training and the person will do what comes naturally. There is a big gap between theory and practice, and in the end one learns best through doing.

Taking charge of one's life is paramount in accomplishing a number of things including staying alive. Erickson uses several examples of people who were ill or injured in some way and whose prognosis was grim or even terminal. Erickson showed that the person with the poor prognosis was able to conquer many maladies and illnesses simply through taking charge, whether it was denying that the ailment was terminal or simply refusing to give in. There's a lot to be said for stubbornness.

At times, disagreements cannot be helped. However, there are also times when people disagree just to disagree. When these people would go to see Erickson, the doctor would often point out that there was no reason to argue or be unhappy. In one case, a married couple had argued for thirty years over a number of things, often insignificant. Erickson simply asked the couple why they didn't want to be happy. The answer was as simple as that. The couple only knew how to argue.

Children are like empty slates. They have the ability to take in a wide number of things without being prejudiced by previous experiences, beliefs or judgments imposed by others. As a child grows, the ability to observe, absorb and believe diminishes and sometimes all but disappears. By recapturing the ability to think and perceive as a child, a person can obtain a great deal of knowledge and joy that may otherwise be overlooked.



One of Erickson's favorite therapeutic tools is to cause a patient to notice distinctions in every day situations. There are many examples of how this method has worked in getting a patient to remove himself from his problems and realize that there is more on earth than oneself.

One example regards a man who is an allergist as well as a heroin addict. During the course of the man's treatments Erickson orders the man to sit out on the green of a golf course until the man made a fantastic discovery. After a period of time, the man returned to Erickson utterly amazed that virtually every blade of grass was a different shade of green.

Erickson was fond of using his skill of observation in relating to or diagnosing his patients. Many patients tended to be defiant saying that they could not be helped or that Erickson was not the right man for the job. Noticing distinctions helped Erickson prove that the patients were wrong. One woman wanted to be hypnotized for a fear of flying. Erickson uncovered that the woman's fears were caused by an extra-marital affair. Another patient was shocked when Erickson made a small observation that showed the woman was in fact a man.

Erickson was one who believed that magicians, fortunetellers and illusionists are frauds and simply work their magic through distraction. While that may be an obvious conclusion regarding the fortunetellers and illusionists, the fortunetellers seem to pose a more difficult obstacle. Yet, Erickson showed that even they can be fooled when one supplies incorrect information.



11-13

11-13 Summary and Analysis

One of Dr. Erickson's beliefs is that one can help a patient to make major changes through one small change. Completely renovating one's personality is a daunting and perhaps impossible task. However, making one small change may seem easy and perhaps even pleasant. Erickson uses several examples regarding the effectiveness of small changes.

Early in his career, Erickson spent some time working with psychotic patients in a mental hospital. While in practice, the hypnotherapist learned to address seemingly small problems that would in turn rid the patient of larger issues. Two of the doctor's favorite tales in reference to this topic are "The Patient Who Stood: and "Herbert."

In "The Patient Who Stood," Erickson attempted to make a small change in the life of a man who refused to speak or do anything but stand in one place for a large part of the day. The man simply stood there without motion or activity except to eat or go to bed. All efforts to motivate the man or to get him to change failed. This went on for six or seven years. One day, Erickson took a floor polisher and put it into the man's hands. The doctor told the patient to move the polisher across the floor. The patient responded by moving the polisher a fraction of an inch. The next day, Erickson repeated the process and each day the patient moved the floor polisher. The therapy went on, with the patient increasing the movement a little bit each day. Eventually, Erickson had the man polishing the entire ward. One day the man began to speak, telling Erickson that it wasn't nice to make him polish the floor of the whole ward. Erickson asked the man if there was something else he would rather do since he clearly did not like polishing the floor. The man chose to switch to making beds. Throughout this process the man continued to talk and began to tell Erickson about his traumas. After many successful sessions, the patient was well enough to reenter society.

In "Herbert," Erickson challenged the patient to encourage his recovery. The man insisted that the doctors were crazy and that he was unable to eat. Erickson challenged him to eat. Herbert rose to the challenge simply to prove Erickson wrong. Each day, Erickson would visit Herbert and listen to his complaints about how the doctors were crazy. Erickson continued to challenge Herbert until a great number of his physical maladies were corrected. Many other instances follow such as playing cards or sleeping while in a prone position. Eventually, Herbert realized that many of his ailments were caused by his own beliefs, whether or not they were skewed.

Rosen relays Erickson's views on power and the element of surprise. Where many people fear taking charge, Erickson was very comfortable in doing so, especially if no one else would assume the role of leader. Additionally, Erickson used personal power surprise patients into changing their way of thinking. While this can be viewed as a form of manipulation, Erickson has shown that it works.



When in the midst of a conversation that isn't going well, Erickson will often say something irrelevant to knock the patient off kilter. It can be any comment, about snow or any old topic. Erickson also used this as a method of distraction for professors in college.

Erickson also mirrored a patient's way of behavior in order to get one to change. A good example is of a young girl who was in a psychiatric ward. The girl was very destructive and was perceived to be out of control. When Erickson encouraged and mirrored the girl's behavior, the girl realized that the behavior was wrong.

Another way to change a patient's way of thinking is to reframe what is perceived to be a problem into an asset. One example tells the story of a boy who was crippled. The boy had stopped speaking, socializing and all but disappeared into the woodwork. As one who had suffered from polio, Erickson could relate to the boy. One day while waiting for an elevator, Erickson said to the boy that "us cripples" should take the stairs and leave the elevator for the more able bodied. At that moment, the boy went from being an outcast to be a part of a group. That one comment completely changed the boy's outlook.

Erickson believes that people focus too much on the past and not toward the future. This is shown in the story called "Oats", about a man whose oat fields are ruined in a storm. Instead of fretting over the loss, the man chooses to look forward to the ruined oats providing feed for the cattle and toward the next year's crop. Where some may have seen this event as a tragedy, the farmer chose to look ahead.

Erickson focuses on a way to combat forgetfulness and chronic behaviors. Two examples are shown, both with college students. The first was a girl who had been chronically late her entire life. All throughout school and into college, the girl was late and while she tended to be sincerely apologetic, the behavior never changed. The girl somehow managed to get straight As yet drove the teachers crazy. The first time the girl went to one of Erickson's lectures she was twenty minutes late. Everyone expected Erickson to scold the girl at length. Erickson did not. The next time the girl was late to the lecture, Erickson "salaamed" to her but said nothing. As the girl went to her seat, each student did the same thing, still without speaking. As Erickson and the girl walked down the hall, every person they passed, including the dean of the department sent the girl a silent salaam. Because the girl was uncomfortable with this new sense of power, she went to every class on time after that day.

The second story was about another college student that continually missed a Saturday class. The school operated on a six day schedule but for some reason the student couldn't remember to attend the Saturday class. When Erickson confronted the student, the forgetfulness was revealed. Erickson proposed a solution. The student would attend a Sunday class instead. After three weeks, two of which where Erickson himself forgot about the class, the student was never late again.

Values and self-discipline are qualities that are not easily taught or learned. Through Erickson's experience as a doctor and a father, the therapist learned to teach these



values without scolding or punishment. The methods Erickson chose to employ were somewhat more manipulative and most definitely more effective than any of the traditional methods.

Erickson tells a tale about his son, Robert, who declared he was big enough to take out the garbage. Erickson disagreed but let the boy try. For the first two days, Robert did well. As time went on, Robert began to forget to take out the garbage a couple of times a week. Erickson developed a plan to make sure the boy remembered. Every night that Robert forgot to take out the trash, Erickson would wake him up in the middle of the night. The doctor would apologize for waking the boy and also apologize because he hadn't reminded his son to take out the garbage. This only occurred a few times before the boy remembered to do the chore and do it well.

There are other examples of self taught behaviors, such as the six year old girl who was a kleptomaniac until a letter from Erickson disguised as the Easter Bunny convinced her that the action was no longer secret. Another tale referred to Robert Erickson and how he willed himself to get better after a tragic accident. Finally, Erickson tells a story about his grandson Douglas and how the little boy liked to slam doors. Instead of scolding or punishing the boy for slamming doors, Erickson required the boy to slam the door each time he entered or exited. After a while, Douglas learned that while he was inclined to slam the door it wasn't something the boy actually liked to do. Through the experience with his grandfather, Douglas learned to refrain from slamming doors.



Characters

Dr. Milton H. Erickson

Dr. Milton H. Erickson (1901 - 1980) was a psychiatrist, psychotherapist and hypnotherapist as well as a highly acclaimed educator and author. Erickson is considered to be the founder of Clinical Hypnosis and undisputed expert on various techniques including hypnotic experiences, trance induction, and the development and effectiveness of rapport between the therapist and the patient.

Erickson's childhood was unusual in that he was part of one of the last migrations from Nevada to a Wisconsin farming community via covered wagon. Many consider Erickson's tragic bout with polio at age 17 a significant factor in his decision to become a medical doctor. Against all odds, Erickson recovered from polio and worked his way through college at the University of Wisconsin. Erickson became fascinated with hypnosis while he was an undergraduate in psychology at the university.

Erickson's fascination with muscle skill led him to pursue his medical career while simultaneously earning a master's degree in psychology. Erickson continued his interests in various areas of medicine and psychiatry, eventually founding the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis. Erickson also authored a number of important papers on new and innovative uses for hypnotherapy with a wide variety of patients.

Erickson was revisited by another strain of polio in 1952 and once again overcame great odds to walk again. Erickson and his wife, Elizabeth, moved to Phoenix, Arizona in later years where the doctor continued to practice.

Dr. Sidney Rosen

Dr. Sidney Rosen is the author of "My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson, M.D." As a student, friend and colleague to Milton Erickson, Rosen lends a unique twist to Erickson's teachings. Rosen also uses these teachings in his own practice and has served as president of the New York Society of Ericksonian Psychotherapy and Hypnosis. Rosen is also considered to be one of the world's foremost authorities on Milton Erickson and has appeared at a number of international congresses exploring Erickson's work.

Sidney Rosen is a graduate of the Syracuse Psychiatric Hospital who maintains a private practice and specializes in General Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Affective and Anxiety Disorders. Rosen also specializes in using hypnosis as a treatment for medical problems. Dr. Rosen is also a highly acclaimed psychiatrist and author.

Rosen sat on the faculty of the American Institute for Psychoanalysis at the Karen Horney Psychiatric Center in New York and also served for twenty years as the director



of the Psychiatric Services Division of the Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University's Medical Center.

Ernest L. Rossi, PhD

Ernest L. Rossi, PhD is an internationally known psychiatrist and teacher of a form of mind-body healing techniques. Rossi was also a colleague and co-author with Milton Erickson.

Robert Erickson

Robert Erickson is the son of Milton Erickson and the subject of several anecdotes.

Herbert

Herbert is the patient who was convinced that he had a large number of physical ailments that turned out to be mostly psychological.

Donald Lawrence

Donald Lawrence is the Olympic athlete who sought Dr. Erickson's help in improving his technique and skill. Through Erickson's help, Lawrence won a number of gold medals.

Kathleen

Kathleen was a student of Erickson's that sought treatment for a phobia involving vomiting.

Professor Rodriguez

Professor Rodriguez was a doctor of psychiatry from Peru who visited Erickson for treatment. Rodriguez was completely convinced that Erickson could not hypnotize nor help him in any way.

Lance Erickson

Lance Erickson is the son of Milton Erickson and a good example of therapy completing itself through dreams.

Heidi-Ho

Heidi-Ho is a six year old kleptomaniac who was "cured" through Erickson's treatment while posing as the Easter Bunny.



Objects/Places

Wayne State Medical School

Wayne State University School of Medicine was the location of Erickson's position as Associate Professor of Psychiatry. He eventually became a full professor at the university's graduate school. While in Michigan, Erickson also served briefly as a Visiting Professor of Clinical Psychology at Michigan State University and as the Director of Psychiatric Research and Training at Wayne County General Hospital.

Founded in 1868, Wayne State University School of Medicine is the largest all inclusive medical school in the U.S. Located in Detroit, Wayne State is well known for its MD and PhD programs as well as programs to serve indigent or under-insured patients. The school also remains the only medical school located in Detroit.

Wayne State is also where Erickson met a young psychology student and lab assistant named Elizabeth. The couple was married in 1936 and went on to work together on a number of projects including various papers which they co-authored.

Erickson's Walking Cane

Erickson's walking cane is a tool the doctor often used to create a rapport with patients and students who may have suffered from some medical or psychological ailment. The cane represented Erickson's youth and struggles with his own health.

At age 17, Milton Erickson was stricken with polio. For many weeks the young man lay in bed, paralyzed and unable to feel his arms or legs. The doctors had informed the family that Milton would never walk again. Erickson was unable to accept the doctors' prognosis. The young man spent countless hours attempting to move muscles and establish feeling in his extremities. Eventually, Erickson was able to use crutches and eventually, a cane.

When Erickson was just past fifty years of age, he was stricken with another strain of polio and received another dismal prognosis. Once again, Erickson proved the doctors wrong by hiking several trails in Arizona with the use of two canes.

One poignant example of Erickson's use of the cane as a tool was in the tale "Us Cripples," about a boy who had become withdrawn due to a medical ailment. Erickson's use of the cane and disclosure about his own struggles made great changes in the boy's behavior.



Bali

Bali is the location visited by Margaret Mead, Jane Belo and Gregory Bateson who were interested in studying autohypnosis on the Balinese culture.

Oswego College

Oswego College is a part of the University of New York State, an institution attended by Erickson.

The Erickson Farm

The Erickson Farm is where Milton Erickson grew up and developed a love of learning.

Worcester Hospital

Worcester Hospital is one of the places Erickson worked and practiced his technique on a young girl with behavioral problems.

Colorado Psychopathic Hospital

The Colorado Psychopathic Hospital was the hospital in which Erickson conducted his internship.

Erickson Home

The Erickson home is the site of many of the doctor's anecdotes, particularly those involving the Erickson children.

Korea

Korea was the site of a great number of instances involving "cultural brain washing" of American prisoners of war.

Peru

Peru is the home of Professor Rodriguez, an arrogant psychiatrist who tried to prove Erickson was incompetent.

Themes

Rapport

According to Erickson's beliefs, little if anything can be accomplished without rapport. This applies to life situations as well as therapy. If a person cannot feel a sense of rapport with another, any type of relationship will be practically impossible.

At the root of the human psyche is the need to feel accepted and to belong. Rapport effectively fills that need. In reference to patients, Erickson's rapport is what allowed him to be successful in helping a large number of patients.

For example, Erickson tells a story of a young boy who was crippled and began to withdraw to the point of almost becoming mute. Teachers and parents were worried about the boy who had once been an outgoing and sociable person. The boy had experienced a tragedy that left him crippled. Erickson, having suffered from polio as a child, related to the boy. One day, Erickson, the boy and several students were waiting for an elevator. The elevator took a long time to arrive and would have been overcrowded. Erickson turned to the boy and suggested that "us cripples" take the stairs and leave the elevator to the able bodied students. The boy immediately changed his frame of reference and suddenly felt as if he belonged to a group rather than being forced to exist alone.

Another excellent example of rapport can be seen in "Herbert." Herbert was a patient with many physical ailments. Erickson was convinced that many of the ailments were psychological. By developing an "us against the world" type of rapport with Herbert, the man's ailments quickly began to fall away.

Past Experiences

One major tenet of Erickson's practice was that if one can change past experiences, then two-thirds of the patient's problem has been effectively solved. Regardless of how or why certain experiences occurred, every person is deeply affected by every thing that has happened since birth. These experiences can be either positive or negative, although the negative episodes seem to be the ones that cause the most conflict in therapy patients.

One of the stories that best illustrates this point is the tale of the patient who desperately wanted to lose weight. Although the woman had tried countless times, each effort had eventually failed, often resulting in weight gain. Erickson told the woman that he could help her with the problem however, he was quite sure that she would not like his methods. The woman reiterated that she was desperate and having exhausted all other options agreed to whatever Erickson would ask her to do to accomplish the goal.



Erickson told the woman that she would be required to gain twenty pounds. After she had gained the appropriate amount of weight, she would begin to reduce as she had requested. The woman was horrified by Erickson's methods and balked against gaining any additional weight because she was already utterly miserable. Erickson was insistent that the patient follow the plan. The woman did as she was told but fought the process the whole way. After the woman reached her maximum weight, she began to lose weight easily. The purpose of the exercise was to reverse the woman's thinking. Once she had loathed trying to lose weight. Through the treatment, she was switched to loathing the task of gaining weight.

The Trance State

The trance state is something that is vital to the success of a hypnotherapist's work. Erickson spent many years battling the false information and stigma surrounding trances and proved through many case studies that trances are often misunderstood.

For thousands of years, people have been using trances as a form of relaxation, healing, magic, and therapy. Trances can be self-induced or guided and the method seems to have little to no impact upon the results. A trance is simply a state of awareness of self. Many people slip into a trance state when highly focused on a particular activity, such as sports. Most people experience a trance-like state just before drifting off to sleep or while daydreaming. Erickson proved that the trance state is a natural state rather than a mystical state of being.

While in a trance, a person becomes receptive to suggestions, either direct or indirect. The indirect suggestions may come in the form of post hypnotic suggestion, a technique that encourages the patient to subconsciously change some ideal or behavior.

Much to a hypnotherapist's chagrin, movies and TV are often responsible for portraying a false definition of the trance state. Because of the media, many may believe that trances render one helpless or susceptible to all sorts of ridiculous behavior, when in fact, it is not true.



Style

Perspective

Milton H. Erickson was a highly respected hypnotherapist who was also a teacher and consultant. Dr. Sidney Rosen was a friend and colleague to Erickson, which undoubtedly gave him insight unavailable to the casual observer.

Despite Rosen's own opinions and perspective, the author takes an unusual look at the work of Dr. Erickson. Rosen allows Erickson to tell his own tales in a decidedly unique way, offering only small pieces of insight, explanations, or relevant facts and stories. This allows the reader to experience Erickson's knowledge, humor and wisdom.

It is clear that Rosen was quite fond of Erickson, although this fondness is not permitted to cloud the work or the reader's perception of either the author or the subject. Rosen does not presume to characterize Erickson in a way that is biased or false, he simply allows the doctor to recount his own discoveries and experiences.

As a member of the Department of Psychiatry at the highly acclaimed New York University's Langone Medical Center, Dr. Sidney Rosen is perhaps the best person to relay Erickson's work and promote its continued use in the practices of psychologists, hypnotherapists, and psychiatrists. Rosen's insights are also a welcome addition to readers who are not in related fields.

Tone

The tone of "My Voice Will Go with You" is relatively objective and overall is not highly affected by the author.

Dr. Sidney Rosen allows opinions and anecdotes to shine through in various comments throughout the book, yet there is no hint of personalization in the analysis of Erickson's work. Rosen seems to be content adding vignettes and relative tales without hindering or overshadowing Erickson's own tales and works. The analysis by Rosen is purely objective and lends a great deal of insight to Erickson's methods and experiences. This is particularly helpful to readers who may not have experience in any of the sciences related to Erickson's work, such as hypnotherapy, psychiatry, psychology, or Neuro Linguistic Programming. The explanations are also useful to people in other fields of medicine that may not be well versed in the effect of the psyche on a patient's physical health.

By explaining some of the techniques used in Erickson's practice, Rosen allows readers to realize the simplicity of the work and how it may be more effective than years of traditional therapies.

At no time does Rosen attempt to defend or supplement Erickson's work, rather, the author allows the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Structure

"My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson, M.D." by Sidney Rosen is a non-fiction work that is 253 pages in length. The book is divided into 13 chapters. The shortest chapter is three pages; the longest chapter is 44 pages. The average page length of the work is 16 pages.

Each chapter is well paced, with clear separations between tales and topics of interest. While each main topic or tenet warrants its own chapter, there is a progression in the book that allows the reader to follow Erickson's techniques.

Each chapter also contains studies, anecdotes and stories relevant to the chapter's topic. Each story is clearly defined and all inclusive so that the reader will have the opportunity to refer to a specific subject, patient or anecdote without a great degree of difficulty.

The language used in the book is easy to understand and avoids using a great deal of technical references or terminology. The language meshes well with the informal method of story telling and undoubtedly makes a difficult subject much easier to understand for those not in any relevant professions. The tone is also conversational to such a degree that the tales feel like a story being swapped between friends or colleagues rather than through a medical journal.

The format of the book is clearly the work of the author, Dr. Sidney Rosen, a friend and colleague of Dr. Erickson. The format gives the impression that Erickson himself is the one telling the tales, a structure that makes the book easy to read and entertaining while being informative.



Quotes

"In my opinion, change is accomplished most effectively and permanently when the therapist focuses on influencing his patient's unconscious patterns, which frequently include his values and frames of reference."

Pg. 25

"As already mentioned, the unconscious mind can be influenced by positive input."

Pg. 29

"One of Erickson's most important and useful approaches could be called 'mind reading.' By observing the patient carefully and by mirroring his behavior and responses, Erickson gives the patient the feeling that his mind is being read and that Erickson really knows him."

Pg. 34

"We learn so much at a conscious level and then we forget what we learn and use the skill. "

Pg. 47

"Too many therapists think they must direct the change and help the patient to change. Therapy is like starting a snowball rolling at the top of a mountain. As it rolls down, it grows larger and larger and becomes an avalanche that fits the shape of the mountain."

Pg. 56

"You see, trance induction should not be a laborious thing."

Pg. 63

"I go into a trance so that I will be more sensitive to the intonations and inflections of my patient's speech."

Pg. 66

"The very pressure of handwriting can convey an important message."

Pg. 73

"Hypnosis is best accomplished by thinking about certain phenomena."

Pg. 86

"Each problem carries the past and future. What Erickson realizes is that if you eliminate the past and change the future, you've changed two thirds of the problem."

Pg. 106



"Psychotherapy should be an orientation to the patient and an orientation to the primary problem itself."

Pg. 116

"How can we learn to think like children again and regain some creativity?"

Pg. 179

"Patients give away the fears that they are trying to hide."

Pg. 191

"I've been accused of manipulating patients - to which I reply: every mother manipulates her baby - if she wants it to live."

Pg. 213

"Significant therapy can often be done very, very simply, even though the therapeutic task looks to be huge."

Pg. 228

Topics for Discussion

Erickson routinely told patients that what they learned in therapy would follow them through their lives, that the sound of his voice would seemingly be everywhere. Do you feel this was an effective method of therapy?

Think of some skills that you have yet never think about, such as tying your shoes or driving a car. Is teaching these skills difficult? Discuss some of the skills.

Discuss examples of events where experiential learning was more valuable than theory.

Do you believe it is possible for a sick person to refuse to die? How is it possible?

Think of a childhood experience where punishment did nothing but cause rebellion against your parents or teachers. Might Erickson's approach have worked better?

Do you think it is possible for therapy to complete itself during the dream state? Discuss.

Think of at least one dream that offered an explanation or solution to a particular problem in your life. Discuss.

What might Erickson have done if reverse psychology had not worked on the children?