

FOREWORD TO THE 4TH EDITION BY PETER SHEEHAN

The author of this fourth edition of *Trancework: An Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis* needs no introduction, especially after the established success of his three previous editions. Michael Yapko has an outstanding national and international reputation in his field. Amidst many accolades, he was recipient of the *Pierre Janet Award for Clinical Excellence*, a lifetime achievement award from the International Society of Hypnosis, as well as The Milton Erickson Foundation's *Lifetime Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Psychotherapy*. This fourth edition of this classic work shows why his work is so highly regarded by his professional colleagues.

Trancework has spanned 28 years of expert scholarship. The series began with Yapko guiding us to learn the skills of clinical hypnosis and expanded in subsequent editions to reflect the growth of the field and draw attention to the growing research-based evidence for the merits of clinical hypnosis. In so doing, *Trancework* established itself as an extraordinarily comprehensive guide to training in clinical hypnosis, giving the reader valuable hints on what to do and what not to in clinical hypnosis, familiarity with the full range of hypnotic phenomena, exposure to major theoretical points of view in the field, the practicalities of induction and utilization of hypnosis, strategies to adopt, and even potential hazards to anticipate and prevent. Throughout the text, the insights of the books are reinforced by superbly rich clinical material. The third edition consolidated the benefits of the 1st and 2nd editions, and became the book that was described by one expert as “a state of the art sourcebook that spans the depth and breadth of the hypnotic tradition” (Philips, 2003).

This new edition, by offering many new chapters as well as substantial revisions of previous ones, continues the march. It condenses past chapters to emphasize principal messages, and provides up to date research material on topics ranging from mechanisms of attention to relevant gene expression and behavioural medicine findings. Chapters new to this edition encompass such significant (and needed) topics as Mind- Body Therapy and Hypnosis, Hypnosis and Positive Psychology, Paediatric Hypnosis, and related contemporary techniques of focusing.

Previous editions have established the tradition of exposing readers to interviews with leading figures in the field. This edition carries on that tradition, and thereby provides a more personal glimpse of the innovators and pioneers of the field who each share highly distinctive perspectives on the nature and meaning of hypnosis. Every experimenter, theorist and clinician in the field necessarily has a particular set of assumptions, preconceptions, or leanings towards a particular point of view. The inclusion of chapters based on personal reflections and presentations uniquely allows those assumptions to become transparent. Not only does the material in this edition provide stimulating discussion of the nature of hypnosis, but it highlights fascinating material about the authors of those reflections.

One major, overarching set of assumptions and preconceptions in the field of hypnosis relates to the polar dimensions of realism and phenomenism, the subject of much of my own research. One might ask: To what extent are theory and practical considerations bound to assumptions of the way things look versus the way things really are? In his revised chapter on “The Phenomenology of

Hypnosis,” Michael Yapko recognises well the need for a practicing professional to respond to the demands of external reality. The practicing clinician must work for outcomes that establish and clarify effective responses to reality, which have to be perceived as helpful and meaningful by the client, if therapeutic outcomes are to be deemed beneficial. For instance, when pain exists, the reality of it cannot be ignored. But it is more than only physical pain. As Yapko forcefully and correctly argues, a client’s underlying needs and concerns have to be placed in the broader, external setting of the person’s family and social environment.

He makes this point often and very effectively, particularly when he describes and analyses the various phenomena of hypnosis, and defines them both in terms of the experience of the subjects and how they are affected and modified by external constraints. Later, Yapko reiterates his position that hypnotic phenomena are the building blocks of experience. He advances the notion that “in varying combinations (or) degrees of purity, the various hypnotic phenomena comprise ongoing experience, whether good or bad.” He makes it clear that the treatment dynamics of hypnotic sessions can never be understood completely without realistic assessment of the likely effects of intervening hypnotically, and emphasizes this point in his thoughtful presentation of the session material covered in the seven cases in chapter 22.

As a self-defined practical, introductory guide to clinical work in hypnosis, this revision by no means lacks theoretical sophistication. The book establishes new and stimulating ideas on theory throughout, and his ideas challenge and extend the reader’s thinking in many ways. On the contrasting dimensions of realism and phenomenism, however, the book is clinically right in emphasizing both, and I’m certain most readers will agree.

The complexity of the field of hypnosis, its various manifestations, and diverse theoretical underpinnings can be daunting. It is a tribute to the skills of Michael Yapko that he manages to capture and convey this complexity in a highly readable form. No one who picks up this book will fail to be guided through the art and science of clinical hypnosis in a highly revealing and scholarly way. This is a book that illustrates the understandings of an expert, an authority in the field, but one who can also communicate clearly what that complexity means. Yapko does this without lessening in any way its ever present encouragement to the reader to learn more. It is a comprehensive book, and referenced extremely well. One can dip into it at almost any clinical, theoretical or empirical level, learn the practicalities of being a good clinician (whether formally utilizing hypnosis or not), and emerge with very valuable hints on how to actualize the many potential clinical benefits of hypnosis.

To students, educators, clinicians, and researchers alike, this is a text that consolidates its reputation as being a classic in its field. Few professionals could emulate its prodigious scope and understanding of the issues, and practical work in the field. This is a book that respects the pioneers in the field, looks analytically at the contributions of fresh, innovative people working in the area, provides relevant examples of the points it makes, consistently champions the integrity and rights of clients, and keeps professionals and students alike thinking creatively about what an in-depth understanding of hypnosis can mean to themselves and others.

I recommend *Trancework* unreservedly for anyone looking for a stimulating, and pragmatic guide to the field of clinical hypnosis. I am conscious, though, that no one book is ideal for all audiences.

This book will suit most, but I think it is especially ideal for clinicians wanting to learn to use hypnosis in their clinical practices. This is Yapko's goal, after all, and he achieves it admirably.

This fourth edition, as did the ones that preceded it, communicates a wonderful enthusiasm for its subject matter. With all that Michael Yapko continues to learn and understand about hypnosis, he becomes even more passionately committed to the field. It shows clearly in the way he continues to write about it. I think every good professional in the area of hypnosis should strive to be like that, but few are ever fortunate enough, like him, to attain that worthy goal.

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Reference

Phillips, M. (2003). *Endorsement of Trancework (3rd edition)* New York: Routledge.