

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE 1ST EDITION**

If the word “hypnosis” conjures up images of a powerful, magician-like figure dangling a gold watch in the face of a stuporous subject while giving the command to “sleep deeply,” then you are in for a pleasant surprise. Not only is that not what clinical hypnosis is all about, but that old stereotype of hypnosis has little relevance to the current perspective of hypnosis as a rich system of communication.

Hypnotic patterns are evident wherever influential communication occurs. The artistry of meaningful applications of hypnosis can be appreciated when one considers the dynamics of how one person can use communication to alter the experience of another.

It is my hope and anticipation that hypnosis will become a significant part of your range of interactional skills, even if after reading this book you never formally induce a trance in anyone for the remainder of your life. Although that may seem a grandiose goal for a hypnosis book, many years of teaching hypnosis to practicing professionals and graduate students have convinced me that the skills in communication described in this book can make a positive difference in the work you do and in the relationships you form with virtually everyone.

So much has happened in recent years in the fields of clinical hypnosis, clinical psychology, communications, linguistics, neurology, and other fields relevant to understanding human behavior that the impact has yet to be fully appreciated. Certainly a revolution has taken place in perspectives on hypnosis, described throughout this book. In the past there have been numerous theories explaining the various phenomena associated with the trance state, yet the practice of hypnosis was generally limited to one of two forms: (1) the “traditional” application of hypnosis emphasizing the power of the hypnotist in relationship to an obedient subject (this approach is best represented by the stage hypnotist), and (2) a “standardized” approach emphasizing the responsibility of the client to adapt herself to a scripted, and therefore nonindividualized, program of the hypnotist (best represented by prepackaged tapes and “cookbook” treatments). Both approaches have been quite limited in their ability to obtain positive results reliably (see Appendix A).

Fortunately, the field of hypnosis has evolved past these two limited approaches in recent years. This development is due in large part to the innovative and untiring work of the late psychiatrist and hypnosis pioneer Milton H. Erickson, M.D. Erickson evolved his own unique techniques which could recognize and use the creativity and individuality of each person. Recently, numerous texts and articles have flooded the hypnosis literature promoting Erickson’s methods, collectively called the “utilization” approach, though also referred to as “Ericksonian hypnosis.” In this model, emphasis is placed upon the utilization of as many dimensions of the client’s inner world as possible, particularly the unconscious mind’s unique resources.

The progression of hypnosis as a field beyond demanding blind obedience and offering scripted routines has radically changed its conceptual and practical frameworks. Hypnosis is no longer the “occultish” mystery it once was, although undeniably there are still things about hypnosis remaining to be explained. With the progression in understandings about hypnosis has also come acceptance.

Although most people encountering hypnosis for the first time still do so in a stage show context, increasing numbers of people are also being made aware of its clinical and other appropriate professional uses. Typically, they have been made aware through the media, which frequently runs programs and articles on hypnosis, or through friends who have obtained help through hypnosis.

The sole purpose of this book is to introduce professionals to the rich and complex world of clinical hypnosis. I hope it will allow you to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and issues related to its practice, and to acquire the basic skills that only years of regular practice and continued pursuit of excellence can build upon. Re-read, if you don't mind, the last sentence. It is one written with great sincerity. To become truly skilled in the use of hypnosis (or any other worthwhile endeavor for that matter) takes a great deal of time and commitment. This book can provide a broad and solid framework of understanding and experience that more advanced, specialized studies of hypnosis can build upon.

There are plenty of books, cassette and videotape packages, and training programs that promise to make you a hypnotist "overnight." They are not lying, either, for you can be a hypnotist overnight. Guiding a person into trance is not particularly difficult, nor is reading a prepared script to the hypnotized subject. Such approaches may even get some positive results occasionally. However, obtaining consistent results across a wider range of client concerns requires a sensitivity and deeper knowledge that is not available in such approaches. Developing sensitivity to the individual needs of the client and learning how to best develop her unique inner resources is not taught in the "overnight hypnotist" programs. Only rigid formulas are. The oversimplifications of the traditional and standardized approaches make them, in many instances, undesirable for use.

Unfortunately, a powerful tool like hypnosis can be placed in the hands of people who are not in a position to appreciate the full implications of its use. This is another reason why anyone can be a hypnotist: It is legal for anyone who wants to to hang out the "hypnotist" shingle on her door with no formal credentials, not even a high school diploma. Hypnotists who are untrained in the health professions are routinely providing physical and psychological health care, under ambiguous names of course, but health care nonetheless. Some are really quite good at what they do, but the potential dangers should be apparent.

After you have read this book you will be faced with decisions about how much more, if any, training and proficiency you want to obtain. Beyond what you will be aware of learning, you can learn a great deal more without even realizing you are learning, and perhaps you can decide to learn just enough to take pride in your knowledge and skills. This is a book for training in hypnosis. There are exercises to do, concepts and terms to master, and points to discuss. I encourage you to experience and practice all the techniques you can. Ultimately, you can read about hypnosis, then read more about it, and talk about it, and then read still more about it, but there is no substitute for hours and hours of working with it. A lot of commitment, but the payoff is most rewarding.

—Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

San Diego, California

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE 2ND EDITION**

When *Trancework* first came out in 1984, it was riding on a wave of enthusiasm for the creative approaches to hypnosis and hypnotically based psychotherapy of the late Milton H. Erickson, M.D. The focus on Erickson and his innovative methods has spawned a whole new generation of clinicians interested in hypnosis and the applications it may have in various clinical contexts. *Trancework* is not a book about Erickson, though. It is a book about practical methods for developing the kinds of relationship and communication skills that will increase the effectiveness of your clinical methods, regardless of the context in which they are applied. I am a practical-minded fellow who is interested in therapeutic patterns that work. Erickson's emphasis was also a practical one, which I can appreciate. His influence on the material contained here is significant.

This second edition represents an effort to make the acquisition of skills to apply hypnosis more easily accomplished by the reader. The exercises and discussions can be the most powerful teachers of hypnotic skill, but this revised edition presents new features that will enhance the learning process. First, two new chapters have been added. Chapter 19 contains transcripts of portions of actual hypnosis sessions conducted with bona fide clients. Chapter 20 presents a verbatim clinical session in its entirety, including commentary intended to amplify points of interest in the learning of hypnotic communication. Both new chapters are intended to provide greater insight into the clinical applications of hypnosis and are considered a valuable addition to the text.

Another new feature is the Frames of Reference sections, which include worthwhile quotes on a variety of stimulating topics from leading figures in the field. These Frames of Reference provide an enjoyable glimpse into the thinking and the history of notable authorities. The reader will note that the Frames of Reference are listed separately, immediately following the table of contents.

Also new to this edition are 20 tables that clearly and succinctly provide key information. These tables can be easily memorized, allowing more rapid integration of the material. What makes hypnosis so potentially useful a tool? Is it the emphasis on acknowledging and respecting the subjective reality of each individual client? Is it the emphasis on the cooperative nature of the therapeutic relationship? Is it the enhanced appreciation and use of the recognition that words can heal? Certainly, all these are factors contributing to the effectiveness of hypnotic patterns, but the strength of doing trancework comes from undefinable sources within each human being. Whether these are termed the "unconscious," "inner wisdom," "the God within," or some other equally ambiguous name, there is a remarkable potential in each person that surfaces during those states of absorption called "trance" that one can readily appreciate. If there is a more dynamic and potent means of empowering individuals than by working hypnotically, I am not yet aware of it.

It is unfortunate, but nonetheless true, that the field of hypnosis remains an internally conflicted one. The focus on the clinical approaches of Erickson has been substantial in the last decade, and it is a basic truth that every movement creates a countermovement. While many were (noncritically) touting the wonders of "Ericksonian hypnosis," others were openly criticizing the apparent lack of objectivity in such strong claims. Just as there are divisions in the field of psychotherapy, there are those who align themselves with one model of hypnosis and openly express disapproval for any other

model. It is my hope that *Trancework* will permit you to sidestep issues of alignment and instead focus on issues associated with discovering how you as an individual practitioner can best apply these approaches in a manner congruent with your training and personality. While I generally favor the flexibility of less direct and imposing techniques, I am quite aware that what works well for me may not work as well for someone else.

Knowing what I know about trance states and ways to induce and utilize them, I am inclined to integrate the seemingly irreconcilable views about hypnosis. I generally promote the perspective that while the experimental production of specific trance phenomena is not an apparent capability of all people, the “real life” utilization of specific trance phenomena to create reality (including wellness and illness) is evident in all. The question of what is and what is not “trance” is interesting fodder for debates which cannot be won, but is irrelevant when a client is in distress and needs a skilled, flexible, creative therapist to interrupt self-limiting patterns while building self-enhancing ones.

Technique is inevitably bound to context. What succeeds in one context can be faithfully duplicated but still yield unfortunate results in another context. What *Trancework* is ultimately about is synthesizing what is known about social influence, communication, psychotherapy, and clinical hypnosis in order to sensitize you to the healing power of words, the healing power of beliefs, and the healing power of relationships.

In that regard, I have chosen not to focus on facts and issues unrelated to the development of actual skills in using hypnosis. Detailing the ancient history of hypnosis or reporting unusual experiments with hypnosis that lead to nonclinical questions such as whether or not hypnosis can be used to get someone to rob a bank is simply not consistent with my aim in writing *Trancework*. I am all too aware that most professionals do not get their hypnosis training in academic institutions—they get it in privately sponsored workshops. If you are taking a university-sponsored course in hypnosis, consider yourself fortunate to have some progressive aspects in your curriculum. Most hypnosis training takes place in small groups of interested and experienced clinicians. As one who routinely offers such training, I am aware of the participants’ desire to focus on skill-building above all else. For this reason, I have included things to discuss and things to do in every chapter. The conceptual framework of the first part of the book is simply a foundation for more easily assimilating the techniques of the second part of the book. The true skills, however, come only with practice, as you would naturally expect.

I would like to make one final point about usage in this edition. Rather than refer to people exclusively as male, as tradition suggests, or exclusively as female, as I did in the first edition, I have consistently made use of both male and female pronouns in an inconsistent way, throughout the book. Male and female therapists; male and female clients. Just like in the real world.

I hope you find *Trancework* a valued ally in your efforts to learn clinical hypnosis. More importantly, I hope you find resources in yourself you can appreciate as you learn.

—Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

San Diego, California

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE 3RD EDITION**

Welcome to this new edition, the third, of *Trancework: An Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis*. It has been a labor of love to prepare this new edition. Being in this field for as long as I have, it is a wonderful thing to feel even more enthusiastic about it than when I began. I hope my enthusiasm will come shining through, and that you will find *Trancework* a valuable introduction to a dynamic and fascinating field.

## **WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION**

First, let me say a few words about why a new edition was necessary, and what you can expect to find in this volume. The second edition of *Trancework* came out in 1990, more than a dozen years ago, and so much has happened in the field in the interim that this revision is actually quite long overdue. In fact, so much has evolved that I considered changing the title of the book simply to eliminate the use of the obsolete word “trance” just to keep in step with the times. But, the title *Trancework* is so well known within the field that it made practical sense to keep it, thereby requiring people to look beyond the title to see what's new.

So, what's new in this third edition? Two brand new chapters have been added, as have many entirely new chapter sections spread throughout the book. Other chapters have been substantially modified, a response to the explosion of good recent studies revealing and clarifying many aspects of hypnosis. An invaluable addition to this edition are the many hundreds of reference citations provided throughout the text. For careful readers who want to be pointed in the direction of supportive research for points made, or who simply want further information on a particular topic, the extensive reference sections at the end of each chapter will be welcome.

Every field has its share of distinguished contributors, and clinical hypnosis is no exception. You will be introduced to many of them in this book through special sections throughout called “Frames of Reference.” In these sections, you will hear pioneers and innovators in the field of hypnosis present some of their ideas on principles and applications of hypnosis. I am pleased to have the chance to introduce you to some of the field's most influential figures.

*Trancework* is a textbook meant to guide your training in hypnosis. It is meant to inspire you, of course, but also to teach the skills to be effective in applying hypnosis. The chapters are filled with practical information, and at the end of almost every chapter, you will be presented with “Things to Discuss” and “Things to Do.” I hope and expect you will find these an invaluable part of the learning process.

## **WHAT'S NEW IN THE FIELD**

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Clinical hypnosis has been the subject of serious scientific inquiry for only about 70 years, but has been the source of fascination for students of human experience for more than two centuries. Only in the last two decades, however, has hypnosis research reached a level of sophistication that offers some objective evidence for its clinical value.

Three powerful forces converged in the 1990s and continue to the present that re-shaped many of our understandings of clinical hypnosis. The first of these forces has been the growing emphasis in the field of psychotherapy on proving its worth with empirical data affirming its effectiveness. The drive for developing so-called empirically supported psychotherapies has pushed and pulled the field in different, and sometimes even contradictory, directions, taking hypnosis along with it since hypnosis is most commonly applied in the psychotherapeutic domain. A direct result is the division within the field of those who see hypnosis as a vehicle for delivering “standard” psychotherapies (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, etc.) and not a therapy in its own right, and those who see hypnosis as a special form of therapy reflected in the self-defining term “hypnotherapy.” Regardless of one’s position, the salient research questions have been, “Does hypnosis enhance treatment results?” and, “Can hypnosis correctly be considered an ‘empirically supported’ style of intervention?”

The second force re-shaping clinical hypnosis in recent years directly and explosively collided with the first. I’m referring to the so-called repressed memory controversy. In the mid 1990s, the controversy reached its zenith, bitterly dividing the mental health profession over the presumed role of repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse as the underlying cause of a client’s current symptoms. Extreme positions by “experts” dominated the field, encouraging clinicians to either believe all memories excavated in treatment through hypnosis and other suggestive memory retrieval techniques or to disbelieve all such memories as fabrications in response to untoward influence by therapists or others. (The controversy has since quieted as evidence for both/all points of view helped define an informed clinical practice.) Suddenly, hypnosis and the phenomenon of human suggestibility was in the center spotlight as experts in persuasion, interrogation, memory, trauma, and hypnosis squared off against each other, both in the journals and the tabloids, further confusing an already confused public about what it all meant. Meanwhile, each day’s headlines blared a new story of some trusted figure being accused of abuse on the basis of memories recovered in hypnosis. The field of clinical hypnosis was forced to redefine itself more scientifically while directly addressing and correcting many of the common myths held about the nature of human memory and how it is affected by hypnotic procedures.

The third major force reshaping the field has been the advances in cognitive neuroscience. There is something about the experience of hypnosis that invites careful neurophysiological inquiry. After all, unusual things happen: A person has normal bodily perceptions one minute, then focuses on suggestions for experiencing a dramatic change in bodily sensations, and the next minute the person actually experiences those suggested changes. How does the mind influence the brain in hypnosis, and vice versa? Newer scanning technologies, such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), have made it possible to begin investigating the brain during hypnotic procedures in ways that simply

were not possible years ago. The possibilities in this new domain of research are very exciting and may eventually help us focus our clinical efforts.

## **RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE**

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Has a state of hypnosis, what used to popularly be called a “trance state,” been identified? No, nor do people in hypnosis generally think of themselves in some unique altered state of consciousness. The use of the term “trance” to characterize the experience of hypnosis is not particularly descriptive of anything either scientifically precise or clinically relevant, and so I have dropped it from the body of this volume. Instead, I will talk about the subjective experiences of hypnosis from the standpoint of the person in hypnosis, and the processes of hypnosis from the standpoint of the person conducting the hypnosis session. I will generally use the term “client” to refer to the former, and either “clinician” or “therapist” to refer to the latter.

With data being the new currency in the field, researchers have taken a newly ascendant position, and clinicians a largely defensive one, struggling to continue to do what they feel works, even if the evidence is not yet there to validate them. Clinicians understand that no matter how much scientific data are generated, clinical practice will always require a high level of artistry. Consequently, I think it is imperative to provide you with some exposure to the scientific side of hypnosis, citing many (but only a small percentage of) the good research studies available. And, I think it even more imperative to highlight the actual skills that go into developing and delivering effective hypnotic processes. After all, no matter how much data and scientifically supported rationales you might have for a specific intervention, it means next to nothing if the client doesn’t benefit from it. (Frankly, it’s why I’d prefer we “validate” *therapists* rather than *therapies*.) As you can tell, I’m a pragmatist. My emphasis throughout this book will reflect that orientation, highlighting what is practical and effective.

Helping you evolve the artistry in both conceptualizing and applying clinical hypnosis is a primary goal of this volume, especially in light of recent clinical controversies and the demands of modern clinical practice in an age of accountability. I hope you will enjoy learning both the art and science of clinical hypnosis. And, I especially hope you will discover both the personal and professional enrichments as well as the many benefits to your clients when you integrate clinical hypnosis into your practice.

—Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE 4TH EDITION**

It is my privilege to introduce to you this new 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Trancework*. When I first wrote *Trancework* almost 30 years ago, I hoped it would be an enduring textbook to guide professionals in learning hypnosis, one that would be regularly updated to stay current with the dynamic field of hypnosis. That aspiration has been fulfilled. *Trancework* has been translated into other languages, and is widely used in clinical hypnosis training programs around the world.

Almost three decades later, my life is still powerfully shaped by my dedication to the field of clinical hypnosis. It was not difficult to imagine even back then that hypnosis would grow from primarily being a therapeutic art into a broader science that would offer much to the health care professions. It has been exciting to watch this gradual transition as hypnosis matured in developing its scientific foundation, and its list of meaningful contributions across many health care disciplines is ever-expanding. Keeping abreast of the goings-on in this fascinating field as it continues to evolve has been a challenge and a delight.

If you are new to the field of clinical hypnosis, I hope you will be impressed and motivated by the many possibilities it offers. To practice and promote a sense of empowerment in people is a core component of effective treatment, and it is inherent in the use of hypnosis. When you utilize hypnosis and your clients find beneficial resources in themselves they never knew were there, the effect is profound. You'll likely discover this relatively quickly once you start working with hypnosis.

If you aren't new to the field, then you have already come to know the merits of hypnosis in clinical practice. What this book will offer you is a comprehensive overview of what's currently going on in the domain of hypnosis, an in-depth consideration of issues associated with the use of hypnosis, a greater appreciation for the diverse ways in which hypnosis can be applied, and a more detailed description of hypnotic methods and characteristics.

This 4<sup>th</sup> edition provides a timely update to the field. The previous third edition is now almost a decade old, and enough things have changed to warrant this new edition. You'll note the addition of 5 entirely new chapters, new sections added to many other chapters, new research citations and updated references, and other changes as well. Carried over from the previous edition but modified in form is *The Case of Vicki*, a dramatic hypnosis session with a 42-year-old woman with terminal cancer. However, to make room for the new chapters without making the book too cumbersome, the transcript of Vicki's session with commentary and analysis was taken from the text and moved to a CD provided with this book. Also new to this edition is the inclusion of the DVD of the session with Vicki so readers can watch the session and follow along with the transcript as they watch. As you will see, this powerful example of hypnosis applied in one of the most vulnerable of situations warrants the special attention it receives here.

This book is meant to serve as a guide to formal training in clinical hypnosis. As before, at the end of each chapter there are suggestions for things to consider and things to do. These are provided to encourage you to be an active student. After all, the best learning of hypnotic skills



comes from doing things proactively to help develop them. I hope you will find these exercises interesting and helpful to your learning process.

I hope you will be inspired by all that I have written here to make hypnosis a core dimension of your clinical work. There is a world of people out there who desperately need the skills you'll be acquiring.

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

May, 2011

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