

an easy guide


CREATING EXCELLENCE IN
THERAPY

BY REVIEWING THE PAST, BEING PRESENT, AND
LEARNING INTO THE FUTURE




WITH ROB MCNEILLY

PREFACE



This book is offered as a humble gesture of appreciation of the continuation of Milton Erickson's heritage into the future.



Rob

cover image by Gabrielle Peacock

PREFACE



“Those that speak do not know. Those that know do not speak.”

Lao Tzu.

Hello and welcome to this easy guide to creating excellence in therapy

My name is Rob McNeilly. I come from a medical background, and had the privilege of learning from Milton Erickson.

Over the last 35 years I have been using and teaching my version of what I learnt from that remarkable human being.

This series guide is offered so that anyone interested can join me in these experiences, take what is useful, alter anything so you can find your own approach to hypnosis as a wonderful way of assisting clients to resolve their dilemmas and continue with a more satisfying life.

Let the learning continue ...

Chapter 1



AN INTRODUCTION



We all want to do our best to assist our clients to relieve their suffering, but how can we do this?

Erickson said "Just do good work" but how?

Scott Miller's inspiring exploration of excellence draws on Ericsson's study of a range of endeavors, not just therapy, and recommends returning to the basics and deliberate practice. Returning to the basics is clear enough - we can all do that - but deliberate practice?

Deliberately practice what? He hints at exploring any difficulty we have with a client as a source of deliberate practice - "our learning edge".

In these short writings I am exploring some specific topics, all of them foundational to any effective therapy

in my view, to have as a possible map for us to guide us to what we can deliberately practice and move towards excellence.

These topics include the gentle art of listening, restoring adult trust, creating expectancy, generating rapport, accessing resources, becoming genuinely confident, and self care.

I'm glad to have your company as we explore together.

Rob McNeilly

Chapter 2



THE GENTLE ART OF LISTENING



We all know how important listening is in our work. We have witnessed clients' relief when they experience our listening to them, sometimes even discovering that this was all that was needed.

I was never taught **HOW** to listen, just that it is important.

There are ways that we can intentionally practice that will improve this essential ability, but first I want to make some general observations.

We are always listening for something - a cause, an explanation, an understanding, resistance, a diagnosis ... and we can also listen for resources and solutions.

We are always listening from a position - as an expert, being right, classifying ... and we can also listen from a position of humility, curiosity and expectancy.

We are always listening with a style - of intellect, empathy or intuition.

There is a lot more to explore about listening and for the moment, I invite us all to play with listening for solutions, from expectancy and with intuition ... and ... any time we are out of sync with a client to reflect on our listening experience.

Chapter 3

RESTORING ADULT TRUST

world - and yet to simply decide to trust something or someone where trust was damaged is an act of foolhardiness.

If we live in a mood of naive trust, betrayal is inevitable.

If we live in a mood of complete distrust, we will live a small and shrinking life.

The question becomes “How can we restore genuine trust?”

Fernando Flores coauthored a wonderful book “Building Trust” where he shifts the focus from “You can trust me” to “I will trust you” and he outlines two possibilities for creating this process.

The first is prudence. Prudence is a mood which honours the legitimacy of distrust in the past while creating a window of trust so that it can then emerge genuinely. The fall of the Berlin Wall is a spectacular example of prudence and led to the demise of the Cold War.

The second is adult trust. Fernando writes about adult trust as an emotion where we run the risk of trusting with full appreciation of the possibility of betrayal. If there is a problem, we are ready to accept it without complaint.

I have found these descriptions to be very helpful in many cases.

What do you think?

Chapter 4



CREATING EXPECTANCY



Whenever a client comes for therapy, they always bring a mood of resignation - no possibility. I've never had a client tell me that they had a problem and knew that at any moment it could be resolved.

There is a danger of us catching the client's resignation and becoming resigned ourselves - hardly helpful to the client or us!

If on the other hand we can be in a mood of possibility, of expectancy, there is a possibility of the client catching

our mood to everyone's benefit.

Next time you're with a client, I invite you to intentionally create in yourself a mood of expectancy - where at any moment, for no good reason, a solution can appear - and see what happens.

Chapter 5

GENERATING RAPPORT

We know instinctively, and research confirms, the contribution of the therapeutic relationship to effectiveness in our work.

This creates the question “How can we create this relationship?”

Clients have a good nose for sniffing out pretense, so any technique is likely to fall flat.

I have found that if I put aside my personal judgements and prejudices, the relationship becomes one of

genuine mutual respect, naturally and helpfully.

Another experience I have found helpful is to coordinate my experience with each client. I can breathe in sync with them, or blink, or subtly place my body in a mirroring of their body position. Maturana claims that communication IS coordination of action so coordinating our actions with a client can create an experience of communication, of rapport, of mutual trust.

A third process is noting and using a client’s key words and expressions, even pronunciations. This can create an experience within a client that we are speaking their language, which we are.

If you’re interested, I invite you to explore ways that you can play with these ideas.

Chapter 6

ACCESSING RESOURCES

The solution approach builds on Erickson's beautiful starting point that everyone has more resources than they realise.

We can have a seemingly impossible situation, and after it is resolved, we can discover that the solution was something that we had, and had overlooked.

Erickson told me "When a client comes to see you, they always bring their solution with them although they don't know it, so have a very nice time, talking with your clients

helping them to discover the solution they brought that they didn't know that they brought".

I found this inspiring and yet daunting - how can we do this? When any of us is engaged in some experience that we like, we have all the resources we could need right at our fingertips otherwise we would hardly like the experience.

Asking a client what they like, what they like to do, and what it is that they like about this experience predictably shifts the mood from a heavy problem-soaked one to a lighter, resource-soaked one.

Also I noticed an exquisite relationship here - the experience which is present in the likes, will be absent in the problem [that's why it's a problem] and the resource that is missing in the problem is ALWAYS present in they likes.

Next time you're with a client, I invite you to start with a conversation where you explore their experience of being absorbed in something they like, and be willing to be pleasantly surprised with what follows.

Chapter 7



BECOMING GENUINELY CONFIDENT



Fernando Flores writes that confidence comes from knowing our competes and our incompetences.

There is nothing more terrifying that someone who is incompetent behaving confidently. If a toddler wants to cross a busy street by themselves ...

If we want to be confident, it follows that becoming competent is required, so all we need to do is explore or incompetences - any skills we don't have - and find a way of learning, by intentional practice, from a trusted

teacher, or any way that learning can happen.

It can be that simple.

Here's a question for you ... Is there any area of your work where you would like to increase your competence? How could you learn to be more competent?

Chapter 8

SELF CARE

On every plane flight, in the safety demonstration, we are told “In the unlikely event of an emergency, a mask will fall from a panel above your head. Place your own mask on first and then attend to others around you”. In “The House of God”, a book for newly graduated doctors, the advice is “In an emergency, first take your own pulse”.

We are not going to be of much help to a client if we are overwhelmed, resigned, or pretending to more confident than we are.

of the previous posts can contribute to us doing good work, and so to caring for ourselves.

The Dalai Lama says that the secret of happiness is to discover what make us happy and do more of that and to find what makes us unhappy and do less of that.

If we do more things that we like, spend more time in these experiences, we can inoculate ourselves against any unwanted experiences we could otherwise be left with in our work with people.

Inevitably some people will sneak under the radar, and leave us feeling heavy or burdened in some unhelpful way, and many people have told me that they have found that some ritual is helpful to get back into their own skin. Some have a glass of water, go for a walk, offload to a colleague, meditate ...

Here is something for you to try if you're interested.

Sit for a moment, and notice your own breathing, your own sensations of your body in contact with the chair, the air on your skin, the sounds around you, the physical objects in the room if your eyes are open.

What do you notice that's helpful after this experience?

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