

Utilizing what is There

A Strategy for Psychotherapy and Hypnosis



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Tokyo, Japan
June 2016

A Purposeful Engagement of Available Energy

風



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“Mushin” is Similar to Utilization

- “*Mushin*” is like sailing, rather than rowing; it is seeking to go with the flow of energy, rather than struggling against it.
- If we allow ourselves to become an expression of the energy flow, then it is possible to experience effortless timely action that springs forth without thought. This is the proper mindset for utilization.



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Ericksonian Utilization

- Utilization: A purposeful engagement of available energy.
- Ericksonian Utilization: A psychotherapeutic strategy, developed by Milton H. Erickson, that engages established habits, beliefs, perceptions, symptoms, or resistances in service of problem resolution or trance induction.
- Utilization is considered one of the defining principles of Ericksonian therapy.



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What Should be Utilized in Therapy?

- The patient's strengths and the therapist's strengths.
- The patient's weaknesses or mistakes and the therapist's weaknesses or mistakes.
- Compliance should be utilized.
- Resistance should be utilized.
- Symptoms should be utilized.
- Evidence of progress should be utilized.
- Utilization is like a great harvest that takes in everything.



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What Utilization is Not

- Ignoring the patient's energy
 - Sometimes we ignore inappropriate or ignorant behavior, this allows the person to save face. But if there is too much ignoring, the patient will feel inconsequential.
- Confronting and opposing
 - Sometimes people need to have their thinking corrected. But resistance is contagious. The more you resist the ideas of the patient, the more they will resist your ideas.
- Seeking to conquer
 - While it is true that doing therapy can be a challenge, we should not think of the patient as a problem, rather we view the patient as an important partner.



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A Master of Utilization

- Acceptance
 - Is always optimistic: knowing there is unseen opportunity
- Flexibility of Means
 - Uses divergent problem solving: finding many solutions for every problem
- Flexibility of Outcome
 - Is opportunistic: finding good in all
- Inclusion
 - Is observant: seeing everything



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How to Move a River?



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ACCEPTANCE

Therapy of Acceptance

- Jay Haley (1967), “The analogy Erickson uses is that of a person who wants to change the course of a river. If he opposes the river by trying to block it, the river will merely go over and around him. But if he accepts the force of the river and diverts it in a new direction, the force of the river will cut a new channel.”
- Rather than seeking to change the patient’s way of speaking, manner of thought, beliefs, behaviors, values, ideas, or memories (i.e., the building blocks of identity), the therapist seeks to orchestrate meaningful outcomes by acting as a collaborator in achieving the patient’s goals.



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ACCEPTANCE

“Arugamama”

- Zen Arugamama: Accepting reality as it is.
- Prof. Ichikawa Hakugen, “Regardless of the situation, one greets and accepts it, without hating or avoiding it, and the way of peace of mind is the way of life in which one becomes one with that situation.” 3:101
- **Acceptance cannot be stopped if it is optimistic: always knowing there is unseen opportunity waiting around the corner.**



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ACCEPTANCE

Accept the patient's Beliefs

- *Tailored suggestion* is the communication of a therapeutic idea encased within a context which appeals to the logic and emotional investments of the patient.
- This requires a readiness to accept any and everything which the patient insists upon. These existing beliefs are then used to build a framework of support for the therapeutic suggestion.
- Example: An elderly woman who believed a priest was controlling her mind through hypnosis.
 - She brought her son, who did not believe in hypnosis. I told him that I would try to hypnotize her, and that if I failed, it would mean that she has learned how to resist hypnosis and is now immune to its effects. I told her that if she went into trance, my only suggestion would be that no one can control her mind, ever again.



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Accept the patient's Behavior

- Erickson (1959), "It is important to demonstrate to patients that they are *completely* acceptable and that the therapist can deal effectively with them regardless of their behavior." ... "The initial acceptance of the patient's behavior, and a ready cooperation, stimulate the patient into further effort."
- Rejection causes a person to lose energy. Criticism causes a person to lose ambition. Energy & ambition are the seeds of effort, and without effort, change cannot occur.
- Example: A teenage girl, who had attempted to kill herself, tells her mother that she will go to therapy but she will not speak to the therapist. She gives me the same warning. I let her know that her terms are acceptable.



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Learn the Patient's Secrets

- **In order for acceptance to be meaningful, the patient must know that the therapist is aware of the hidden parts of self** (parts which have become associated with shame or disgust).
 - Patient, “I have never told anyone this before..”
- When conducting a physical examination, the physician only asks the patient remove the clothing that covers the part of the body that needs to be seen or touched. The therapist should show the same respect for psychological privacy.
 - Therapist, “There will be some parts of your life that you want to keep private. Only tell me about the parts that you think are relevant to therapy.”



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ACCEPTANCE

Welcome the Symptomatic Behavior

Erickson, “*The patient needs to show you his behavior.*”

- Whenever possible, you should welcome symptomatic behavior, you need to see it.
 - Getting into the car with the person who is fearful of driving to see what he does.
 - Allowing the couple that is fighting at home to fight in your office, to see how they start, and end it.
 - Inviting the person with panic attacks to intentionally induce a small panic attack in your office.
- **As you observe the symptomatic behavior, the patient will observe your reaction to determine if he or she should be hopeful for future outcomes.**



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Standing?



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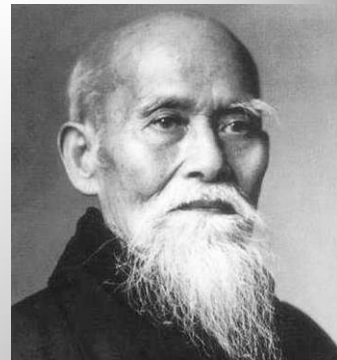
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FLEXIBILITY OF MEANS

"It is necessary to develop a strategy that utilizes all the physical conditions and elements that are directly at hand. The best strategy relies upon an unlimited set of responses."

Morihei Ueshiba



Flexibility: A willingness to explore the great variety of means by which the same objective can be achieved.

"There are four different limbs upon which we can stand, and that still does not include the head."



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Divergent Problem Solving

- All who come to therapy have some problem they cannot solve. **Most people are in therapy because they assume there is only one solution—and that solution is impossible.**
- Divergent thinking: A way of thinking in which a person generates many unique, creative responses to a single question or problem.
- Example: A man who is experiencing a psychotic episode insists that he must find Erickson, that Erickson is the only one who can help him. I find him in the front office of the Erickson Foundation. Erickson has been dead for 20 years now. But I find a way for him to have two sessions with Milton Erickson.



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Learning Confidence

- Short speaking to graduate students, *“When working with patients, there should never be a time when you do not know what to do. **If what you are doing is not working, then do something different.** If you do not know what else to do, then collect more information until a new idea comes, to either you or the patient.”*



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FLEXIBILITY OF MEANS

"You must understand that there is more than one path to the top of the mountain." Miyamoto Musashi

- In hypnosis, there are an unlimited number of ways for the patient to respond to suggestion.
- In therapy, there are an unlimited number of ways to solve the patient's problem.



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FLEXIBILITY OF MEANS

Become an Intrepid Explorer

- Critic, *"He was an intrepid explorer but a lousy map maker."*
- **To achieve flexibility of means, you must become an intrepid explorer, not a tourist following a map.**
- Erickson was not trying to tell us how to be competent at utilization. He was showing us how to do it.



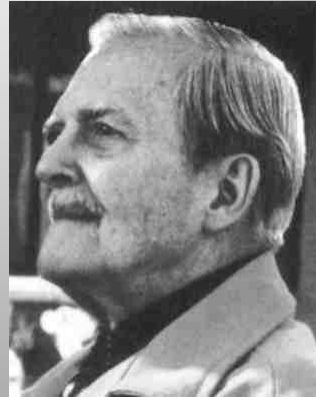
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Erickson's Quiz

- “How do you get from this room to that room?”
- “How do you give a patient hope?”
- “How do you tell a patient what to do?”



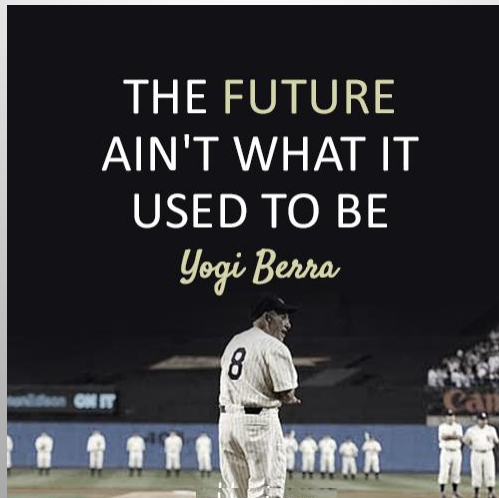
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THE FUTURE
 AIN'T WHAT IT
 USED TO BE

Yogi Berra



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It is a bad plan that
admits of no
modification.
- Publilius Syrus



- People make predictions so that they can better control their fate. Once a person formulates a plan for what should occur, it is difficult adjust to changing circumstances.
- As a therapist, you ought to plan to change your plans. (the remedy for implemental mindset)



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Opportunistic Growth

*"There is nothing more delightful than
planting flower seeds and not knowing what
kind of flowers are going to come up."*

Milton Erickson



- When asked about his patient's remarkable responses to therapy, Erickson would often confess, "I did not know he would respond that way, I just knew that he would respond."
- **A person who is opportunistic recognizes that every outcome has value, even when there are shortcomings and mistakes.**



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Implemental Agility

- **Implemental Agility: Requires a readiness to suddenly abandon short-term objectives in favor of a new plan that takes full advantage of immediate circumstance.**
- “Flexibility of outcome” does not imply purposeless behavior, without external objectives. Rather, you use long-term objectives to serve as a distant beacon, something that allows you to circumnavigate obstacles and still remain on course. For example, *“Losing a battle to win the war.”*



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Resistance & Insufficient Flexibility

- **Resistance is any discrepancy between the needs of the patient and the expectations of the therapist.**
 - If the therapist expects the patient to talk, but the patient needs to sit in silence and collect his thoughts, then pressure from the therapist will likely create resistance.
- Thus, there are two possible solutions for resistance in therapy:
 - 1) Alter the needs of the patient
 - 2) Alter the expectations of the therapist
- Unwise therapists seek to alter the needs of the patient by using their position of dominance. This creates more resistance. Using the second approach, resistance is eliminated by the therapist altering his/her expectations.
 - "I am willing to do therapy in any way that best meets your needs as an individual."



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Failure is no longer Failure

With utilization there is full acceptance of what has occurred, and increased expectancy for the good that can follow.

- If the patient only has a “partial” response, then whatever gain is achieved, no matter how small, is interpreted as evidence of progress and future success (i.e., “snowball effect”).
- If the patient sees only failure, then he can be congratulated on his courage to take on such a formidable challenge. He can be told that failure is as much a part of life as success, and that learning to cope with it is vital to future progress.
- When relapse is probable, it can be predicted and interpreted as a necessary component of learning, thus each relapse increases the readiness for future success (i.e., “expectancy effect”).



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Everything?



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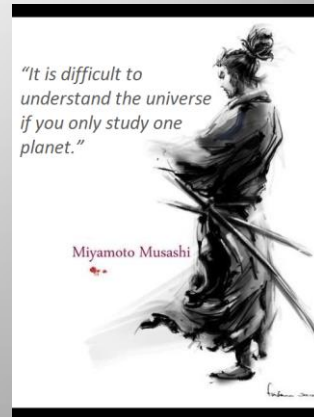
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Being Observant

INCLUSION

- **Being observant means seeing everything from a distance, so that a larger context of understanding is achieved, and paying attention to the smallest detail, so that greater precision is achieved.**
- Utilization includes a universe of possibility, all events, all people—including yourself.



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Absolute Inclusion

INCLUSION

- Exclusion: A failure to recognize possibility.
- **Absolute inclusion means that nothing is wrong or bad, it is merely incomplete or under developed.**
- Rather than coming to the conclusion that something is “wrong” or “useless,” you seek to find its use.
- By framing our experiences this way, it frees up creativity and focuses attention on opportunity.



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Making Mistakes Part of the Therapy

INCLUSION

“It is good for the patient to see you make mistakes.”

Carl Whitaker

- Assume there is a useful purpose behind every action. With a mistake, we simply do not see the purpose, yet.
- If the patient becomes angry at you, know that this has a use. If you call the patient by the wrong name, assume there is a good reason, that will become apparent soon enough.
- If you feel that you have made a mistake, ask yourself, “How can this be used to meet the needs of the patient?”



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Symptoms Are a Part of Life

INCLUSION

- In Japan, Morita psychotherapy does not seek to eliminate symptoms, rather, emphasis is placed on living productively in spite of them. The same is true of Ericksonian psychotherapy.
- As a person becomes more successful in day-to-day problem solving, using the identity which has developed over a lifetime, there is less distress, less tension within the mind and body, resulting in a natural reduction in symptoms.
 - Example: The woman who came to Erickson for help with vomiting. She had an overly intrusive mother-in-law.



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Breakaway Groups

- Gather into groups, with 5 in each group.
- 1 person will take the role of therapist, 1 the role of patient, and the other 3 will take the role of “creative unconscious.”
- It is the job of the patient to say something provocative or do something that is crazy. It is the job of the “creative unconscious” to speak to the therapist, give him ideas for how to utilize this behavior.
- The therapist will pick on of the many possible responses, perhaps mixing or modifying what he was told. Continue to interact. The “creative unconscious” should deliver ideas continuously.



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