Instructor’s Manual

for

MIND-BODY THERAPY
WITH
ERNEST ROSSI, PHD

from the series
PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS

with hosts
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psychotherapy.net
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# Instructor’s Manual for

MIND-BODY THERAPY
WITH ERNEST ROSSI, PHD

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**Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD**

1. **USE ROSSI’S COMMENTARIES ON THE TRANSCRIPTS**

Make notes in the video Transcript for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

Interspersed throughout the session transcript, you will find Rossi’s own Commentaries elucidating his interventions and responses at key moments in the session. You may copy the transcripts for student or group training purposes and pass them out to viewers for their own study and for use in a class.

2. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. **LET IT FLOW**

Allow the session to play out some so viewers can appreciate the work over time instead of stopping the video too often. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. **REFLECT ON ROSSI’S REFLECTIONS**

After showing the video, hand out copies of Rossi’s Reflections on the Session, giving participants an opportunity to read Rossi’s own summary of his intentions for the session and his reflections on how it went.
5. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL

Assign readings from Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites prior to viewing. You can also time the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER

See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

7. ROLE-PLAY IDEAS

After watching the video, organize participants into pairs. Assign each pair to role-play a therapy session using Rossi’s Mind-Body Therapy approach. The clients may resemble the client in the video, participants can play themselves, or you can create different scenarios, and you may even have players switch roles if time permits. As a basic instruction, suggest to the therapists that they begin by taking a brief history of the presenting problem. Then, they may ask the client to tune into the body with a certain amount of sensitivity by applying Rossi’s novel activity-dependent hand mirroring process. Remind therapists to avoid suggesting to the client any particular responses or experiences, but instead to encourage clients to notice their own, original body sensations and feelings that emerge during the exercise. See Rossi’s Approach to Mind-Body Therapy in this manual for a brief review of how he works. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss the exercise. First have the clients share their experiences and then have the therapists talk about what the session was like for them. What did participants find exciting and/or challenging about this way of working? Finally, open up a general discussion on what participants learned about Mind-Body Therapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what does and does not seem effective about Rossi’s approach.
8. WATCH THE EXPERTS SERIES

This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application. Each video in the series presents a master therapist working with a real client who has real problems. By showing several of the videos in this Experts series (See the More Videos section for a complete list of the videos in the series), you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.

More Videos with this Client: In this video, Dr. Rossi works with a client named Robin. Robin is featured as a client in several other videos in this Experts series:

- Integrative Therapy with Allen E. Ivey, EdD;
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with John Krumboltz, PhD;
- Person-Centered Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD; and
- Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW.

It can be particularly enlightening for viewers to watch some or all of these five therapists work with the same client to see how their styles, personalities and theoretical orientations play out differently. If you have viewers write a Reaction Paper – see the guidelines in this manual – you can ask them to address what differences they notice in how Berg, Krumboltz, Rossi, Rogers and Ivey work with Robin, and how these differences affect the outcomes of the sessions.

Other videos in the series use different therapeutic models. We can reflect upon the differences among these models by exploring the following questions:

- How does the model explain the therapeutic process?
- What assumptions does the model imply about the purpose of therapy?
- How is theory translated into practice in real-life situations?
- What is the role of the therapist?
- What outcomes are associated with successful therapy?
9. PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists or clients in videos may be nervous, putting their best foot forward, or trying to show mistakes and how to deal with them. Therapists may also move more quickly than is typical in everyday practice to demonstrate a technique. The personal style of a therapist is often as important as their techniques and theories. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, participants must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

*A NOTE ON PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client who has courageously shared her personal life with us.
Rossi’s Approach to Mind-Body Therapy


The basic premise of Ernest Rossi’s mind-body therapy is that the mind is always growing, and psychological problems are due to blocks or limitations in the learning process. His approach to therapy is influenced notably by Milton Erickson’s work on hypnosis and current scientific research that documents how the experience of *novelty* can optimize gene expression, brain plasticity (brain growth), and mind-body healing.

Rossi’s task as a mind-body therapist is to *evoke a sense of wonder* and to help patients explore their own creative, original experience so their brains can grow as they learn new patterns of behavior. Rossi describes his mind-body approach as *activity-dependent psychotherapy*, which he has found applicable to a wide range of human problems. He uses practical approaches to facilitating a *four stage creative cycle* (see below) to optimize these experiences in therapeutic hypnosis and psychotherapy.

Rossi’s primary therapeutic tools include what he calls *basic accessing questions* and *novel activity-dependent exercises*. These are a series of *implicit processing heuristics* or permissive indirect suggestions which frequently involve asking patients to tune into their own body in a new, original way. Through this process Rossi begins to facilitate brain growth by engaging the patient in an inner journey of creativity.

Typically, Rossi conducts his therapy sessions for one and a half to two hours at a time, taking full advantage of the patient’s *ultradian rhythm*. This is the mind-body’s natural cycle of activity and rest that goes on continually throughout the day, both during waking and sleeping.
THE FOUR-STAGE CREATIVE PROCESS

Stage One: Data Collection - The Recognition of a Problem
Therapist and patient seek to identify the problem and the patient sets forth on outer and inner journeys of discovery and self-creation. The therapist’s main job here is to recognize that therapy has already begun and simply facilitate it.

Stage Two: Incubation – Current Experience
Often the incubation stage is characterized by a mild state of confusion, stress, emotional conflict and psychosomatic symptoms. By looking at things from different perspectives and learning from mistakes, patients discover for themselves what they believe in. The therapist’s main job at this stage is to: 1) offer open-ended therapeutic questions designed to access the state-dependent memory and; 2) support the signs of arousal that are typical of creativity and problem solving. For the therapist, less is often more at this stage, respectful listening rather than giving advice.

Stage Three: Insight - “Aha” Experience
The patient discovers an initial resolution of the conflict, problems, and symptoms of Stage Two. The therapist’s task here is to help the person recognize and appreciate the value of the “new” that seems to emerge spontaneously and unheralded.

Stage Four: Reality Testing
In this final stage of the creative cycle the person evaluates and verifies the value of the new experiences of Stage Three by practicing them in the real world. The therapist facilitates a follow-up discussion to validate the patient’s constructive therapeutic process, reframing symptoms into signals and psychological problems into inner resources.

Note: Ernest Rossi’s psychosocial genomics research team, based in Italy, India and the USA, also includes Salvatore Iannotti, Mauro Cozzolino, Stefano Castiglione, Angela Cicatelli, Margaret Bullock, Ella Soleimany, Bhaskar Vyas, Rajni Vyas, Roxanna Erickson-Klein, and Kathryn Rossi.
Rossi’s Reflections on the Session

In the accompanying DVD I demonstrate many of Milton Erickson’s naturalistic approaches to therapeutic hypnosis to facilitate what he called the “neuro-psycho-physiology of therapeutic hypnosis. I utilize the 4-stage creative cycle: 1) Data Collection, 2) Incubation, 3) Insight and 4) Reality Testing to outline many innovative approaches for facilitating therapeutic hypnosis, psychotherapy, and rehabilitation somewhat as follows.

Stage One: Data Collection. I had absolutely no previous knowledge of Robin, the young woman (about 30-years old) who was a volunteer subject for this demonstration. Our first task in stage one of the creative cycle was to become mutually acquainted and explore what our agenda might be. Within the first few moments she mentioned her interest in dreams. I immediately picked up her theme to casually note that dreams are an experimental theater during which one can explore future life possibilities. This creates a framework within which she can begin to describe her issues and problems. In this first section I use metaphor, basic accessing questions, and implicit processing heuristics to access Robin’s individuality and begin to move the creative process forward. She is able to acknowledge her fear of the unknown and her need for psychological support in her marriage. As the therapist I immediately offer a bit of self-disclosure to strengthen our empathy, support her emotionally, and empower her to say, “No!” when the outside world threatens to overwhelm her.

Stage Two: Incubation—Private inner work and the inner journey seeking something new. The therapist experiences an Aha moment! During this very rich section of the creative cycle Robin presents a series of mild psychological impasses in her style of coping with domestic issues—everything seems prosaic in her life. At this point I am feeling rather discouraged; I stumble about searching for the numinosum, that which is inspiring in her life. I ask her a series of questions in desperate search! Is it spiritual experience? What was keeping this woman moving along in her life? Then a miracle happens! In response to my questions she finally mentions, “I loved
math, mathematics.” Wow, that suddenly woke me up! Here it was! I found it! This was the way out of her mundane impasses! I could facilitate and utilize her intelligence above all! I experienced this as a genuine breakthrough that inspired me to create a novel, activity-dependent hand mirroring process for her on the spot so she could discover, explore, and practice her own unique intelligence, imagination and creativity.

In hot pursuit of her intelligence and the personal growing edges of her consciousness and individuality, I now introduce one of my novel, activity-dependent hand mirroring processes in hopes of activating her imagination and the novelty-numinosum-neurogenesis effect to turn on activity-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity to facilitate mind-body therapy. This is my approach to facilitating an experience of creativity during the general waking trance and the fail-safe exploration of our modern approaches to therapeutic hypnosis.

The most innovative aspect of this session is a remarkable demonstration of ideodynamic communication and processing that she now experiences during her rather intense state of inner focusing and heightened creative expectation. This seemingly casual experience of ideodynamic communication enables her to uncover her problems with self assertion and hidden anger that may be the source of her impasses and feeling “stuck” in her life. This apparently spontaneous creative flow of her ideodynamic processing is the essence of what is most unique about modern therapeutic hypnosis and mind-body therapy.

**Stage Three: Insight and the Creative “Aha!” Moment.** The precarious climax of Robin’s creative breakout, her Aha! moment that takes place in this section is worthy of careful attention. The tragedy of the human condition is that usually there is no one there to support us during the critical creative moments when we teeter on the brink of recognizing the new that is emerging in consciousness as a guide for our adaptive future behavior. All too often we do not recognize, celebrate, and empower ourselves to take this new step in the joy of self creation—we fall back like Icarus into the ignominy of a prosaic life of depression, quiet crises, and ever festering frustration. In
this demonstration our subject was successful in experiencing the breakout heuristic—her creative ideodynamic flow is clearly evident in the positive transitions she now experiences in recognizing her need for “quiet time” to channel her negative “tension” into positive “energy” in her own unique “quiet” way. My main job in stage three of the creative cycle is to empathetically recognize and support this therapeutic reframe from frustration and lack of control to creative self-experiencing and self-empowerment.

Stage Four: Reality Testing, Self Care and the Ultradian Healing Response. In this closing section I demonstrate how I support her recognition of the qualities of her own natural ultradian healing response and how she will reality test them in her everyday life. I introduce another of my novel activity-dependent hand mirroring processes so she can learn to re-experience the general waking trance as a few quiet moments of peace, reflection and recovery whenever it is appropriate every few hours or so throughout the day. She then has a delightful classical experience of involuntariness in therapeutic hypnosis when she is “just learning how to let your inner nature do something it wants to do.” Aye, humble though it may seem, that’s the deep chronobiological secret of transforming the ultradian stress response into the ultradian healing response to optimize gene expression and brain plasticity on all levels from mind to gene in mind-body therapy in everyday life.
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Mind-Body Therapy with Ernest Rossi, PhD

• **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

• **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach the discussion. Respond to each question below.

• **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about Mind-Body Therapy? What stands out in how Rossi works?

2. **What I found most helpful:** What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working? Explore these questions.

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Rossi in the therapy session in the video? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Suggestions for Further Readings, Websites and Videos

BOOKS


WEB RESOURCES

Ernest Rossi’s website and free online book
www.ernestrossi.com

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation
www.erickson-foundation.org

Mind-Body Institute, San Lorenzo Maggiore, Italy
www.genomicamente.com

American Society of Clinical Hypnosis
www.asch.net

International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis
www.ijceh.com

International Society of Hypnosis (ISH)
www.ish-web.org

Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (SCEH)
www.sceh.us

RELATEDVideos AVAILABLE AT
WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy in Action, with James Bugental, PhD
Exploring Narradrama

Integrative Therapy with Allen E. Ivey, EdD*

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with John Krumboltz, PhD*

Person-Centered Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD*

Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW*

* additional videos that feature the same client and therapists from different theoretical orientations.
Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use a few or all of these discussion questions keyed to certain elements of the video or those issues most relevant to the viewers. On-screen minute markers are noted to highlight related sections in the video/transcript.

ROSSI’S APPROACH

1. **Brain Growth:** What do you think of Rossi’s ideas about genes, brain growth, creativity and psychotherapy? Within this model, what do you see as the purpose of psychotherapy and the role, responsibilities and possibilities for the psychotherapist? Do Rossi’s ideas challenge your assumptions and beliefs? How so?

2. **Sense of Wonder:** What do you think about Rossi’s emphasis on evoking a sense of wonder in the client and helping the client open up avenues to original experience? How does this fit with your approach to psychotherapy? How do you imagine this plays out with clients who seek therapy for a very serious and painful presenting problem? In what ways can this approach be useful in those cases?

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

STAGE ONE (2-1:2-18)

3. **Basic Accessing Questions:** What is your understanding of Rossi’s basic accessing questions? *Rossi states that the conscious mind does not know how to answer these questions.* What do you think of his idea that answers come by tuning into sensations and feelings in the body in a new, original kind of way? Are there moments in the therapy where you think Robin may be having a new, original experience? If so, how do Rossi’s accessing questions help her get there?

4. **Dreams:** What do you think about the way Rossi works with Robin and her dreams? In what ways is this exchange fruitful for the therapy? How would you describe your perspective on the use of dreams in psychotherapy?
STAGE TWO (2-19:2-30)

5. **Inner Work:** What initial reactions do you notice in yourself when Rossi brings in the idea of doing “inner work” with Robin? Does this technique seem to be useful in Robin’s therapy? In your own work, are you comfortable proposing this kind of inner work with a client like her? Are there times or clients where this approach seems contraindicated?

6. **Imagination:** What do you think of Rossi’s decision to focus on Robin’s self-reported limited imagination? Do you agree that this is a turning point in the therapy? In what ways do you think his work with Robin’s imagination is effective? Do you have any concerns that this work on imagination is outside the bounds of what Robin is seeking in therapy? How do you feel about the idea of Rossi picking out something to work on with Robin that she has not explicitly reported to be a concern?

STAGE THREE (2-31:2-37)

7. **Hands:** What do you think about Rossi’s hypnotic interventions with Robin? Does his directive to “tune into your hands with a certain amount of sensitivity” work for you? How do you think his way of working with Robin via her hands impacts the therapy? How comfortable do you feel making this kind of an intervention with a client?

8. **Control:** Robin states that she does not like to let go of control (2-33). What do you notice about the way Rossi uses this revelation in the therapy? In what ways are his interventions with Robin around the issue of control productive? Watching the session, do you feel yourself pulled to intervene differently with Robin here? How else might you have responded to Robin’s statement?

STAGE FOUR (2-38:2-49)

9. **Staying Connected:** What comes up for you when Robin talks about not losing her inner being while she lets other new things come in? What is it about Rossi’s work with her in this session that helps Robin get to this new place of openness?
GROUP DISCUSSION

10. Therapeutic Relationship: What did you think about the alliance Rossi created with Robin? What was it about Rossi that allowed Robin to engage in the therapy with him?

11. Cycles (Ultradian Rhythms): What do you think about Rossi’s emphasis on the importance of ultradian rhythms, or one-and-a-half to two hour cycles? Does this idea seem relevant and/or practical in your work? How so?

12. Mind-Body Therapy: How would you describe Rossi’s approach to mind-body therapy? Do you find his approach effective? What about Rossi’s way of working appeals to you? In what ways would you like to incorporate his approach into your own? For some therapists, this may be a new approach: Are there aspects of this kind of mind-body therapy that conflict with your style, personality or with the way you currently work?

13. Personal Reaction: How would you feel about being Rossi’s client? Do you think he could create an alliance with you and that the therapy would be effective? How so?
Complete Transcript of
Mind-Body Therapy with Ernest Rossi, PhD

Note to facilitators: Throughout the transcript below, we indicate on-screen minute markers that correspond with those that appear in the bottom right corner of the DVD on screen. You will find chapter markers on the DVD at five-minute intervals so that you may easily skip to desired points in the video.

Furthermore, we have inserted Dr. Rossi’s commentaries throughout the therapy session transcript to highlight certain aspects of his approach and technique.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

THE CREATIVE FOUR-STAGE CYCLE OF MIND-BODY THERAPY:
FACILITATING ACTIVITY-DEPENDENT GENE EXPRESSION
AND BRAIN PLASTICITY WITH THERAPEUTIC HYPNOSIS

Stage One of the Creative Cycle: Data Collection
Therapist and Client Become Acquainted and Explore Their Agenda

2–1

Dr. Rossi: Okay, Robin. I guess we’re on. Do you want to say anything about what you hope we can accomplish here today?

Robin: I guess maybe just get to know you a little bit and something that you might have that you could share with me that, you know, might help in some of my...

Rossi: Oh, about my background?

Robin: Yes.

Rossi: Well, it’s very mixed and rich. I was originally trained as a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst. First I was a Freudian analyst then I became a Jungian analyst. I studied how to become a hypnotherapist with a very famous hypnotherapist, and I’ve written a lot of books in the past 20, 25 years in the area of dreams, psychotherapy, hypnosis.
Also mind-body work. I’m very much interested in how mind and body communicate, and stuff like that.

2–2

Robin: That’s really, that’s some good stuff, though. Do you, do you think there’s a lot of importance in dreams?

Rossi: Oh, yes! My very first book was about dreams. Do you recall your dreams easily?

Robin: Sometimes I can. You know, sometimes I have dreams that I don’t like and I don’t know if they’re like, like telling me that something’s going to happen or… You know, I’ve had some, some strange dreams that, like if I look back on them, like I might be at a weird place, like I might be at the Sears Tower, and I might have visited the Sears Tower maybe a month prior, but it got put in and I’m with somebody else that I don’t have a clue who I’m with. And just, just strange, strange situations.

2–3

Rossi: Yes, dreams are like that. They bring parts of our life and usually there’s something new, and that’s what makes them interesting because often it’s the growing edge of our personality. Do you want to say more about that dream? Or is there another dream you’d like to share?

Robin: Well, how… Why is it that we remember some dreams and don’t remember other dreams? Like I can say, “Boy, I had a really good dream last night. I just can’t remember what it was.” You know. Is that to do with like the levels of…

Rossi: Yeah. It has to do with your level of sleep. But you know, it’s really a mystery. There’s a lot of theories, a lot of different opinions. I’m of the theory that in dreams—it’s like an experimental theater. We’re rehearsing or we’re looking, exploring possibilities for our life. And it’s just precisely those things that seem strange or bizarre or unusual, that’s the interesting thing. So if you have any strange, unusual dreams, those would be the ones that…

Rossi Commentary: There is much more to my casual comments than may be apparent here. Notice how quickly I pick up and utilize her
interest in dreams when she mentions her “strange, strange dreams.” Her interest in her “strange, strange dreams” immediately alerts me to the possibility that this may be the unrecognized reason for her to volunteer for this demonstration session: the essence of her individuality may be crying out for recognition and self-expression.

2–4

**Robin:** I’m trying to think. My husband has more strange ones than I do, to be quite honest. But I have had dreams in the past where, like I’m, I’m by myself. And it’s like I don’t know anybody around me. Trying to think. And I sometimes feel isolated. I’m like calling out to somebody and can’t find them and they’re nowhere to be found. I don’t like those kind of dreams.

**Rossi:** Right. Obviously, it’s like some part of you feels isolated and you’re trying to make connections, but you’re not.

**Robin:** No. No. It’s hard.

**Rossi:** Can you see this as the story of your life in any way? In any sense?

**Rossi Commentary:** Notice how casually I proffer this metaphorical question as an implicit processing heuristic, “Can you see this as the story of your life in any way?” I’m not presuming to interpret her dreams. I am not presuming to direct or program her cognition and behavior in any way. I am merely offering a question—a basic accessing question that may activate her creative implicit (unconscious) processing if it touches upon anything of interest to her. This is my fail-safe way of working. So what if my metaphorical question is wrong, the worst that can happen is that she will probably ignore it. As it turns out, my question does evoke something of essence about her individuality, which moves Stage One of our Creative Process forward as is evident in what follows.

2–5

**Robin:** If I had to relate that, I don’t like to be… I’m not a loner. I don’t like to be a loner. I like to be, I’ve been tested, diagnosed, whatever, as like a people-pleaser person. And I would say maybe that might be, that might be why those dreams are scary to me.

**Rossi:** Yeah, it’s like dreams are usually trying to solve a problem, but
sometimes we get stuck in the middle, like this dream is presenting
the problem to you, Robin, in some way, you want to make contact but
you’re alone among strangers. Now what would be a nice way for that
dream to continue? Suppose you…?

Robin: Well, if I could make it continue, I’d, you know, run into
somebody that would say, you know, “Here I am. Here I am.” I’d be
calling out to somebody and they would find me, and it’d be like,
okay, then we can continue on the path together, whatever, wherever
that might take us, you know.

Rossi: Why don’t you go with that right now, and see where you take
that path together, you and your newfound friend.

2–6

Robin: I guess it’d just be searching the unknown. If, if I could take
somebody with me, I’d, you know, I wouldn’t be afraid. I wouldn’t…
I’d have somebody there for support.

Rossi: To help you face the unknown.

Robin: Whatever might come, you know.

Rossi: Yes, that’s right. So really, that’s what you’re looking for: ideal
friends, partners, to give you the support for the unknown. And what
is…?

Robin: The unknown?

Rossi: Yeah, what would the unknown in your life be?

Robin: Oh, it could be just waking up tomorrow morning, because
I have a 2 year old and it’s like I can wake up and something new
happens. Like I’m a very organized person, and anything and
everything could happen. My whole day could be totally changed.

2–7

Rossi: A 2 year old. That’s your life with a 2 year old. I’ve raised a
couple kids myself, so I really know.

Rossi Commentary: This self-disclosure, “I’ve raised a couple kids
myself, so I really know,” casually touches bases between our mirror
neurons to facilitate our empathy and rapport.
Robin: So it’s like, you know, it could change. And I could get phone calls because I’m real involved in things and I, I might say, “Today, I’m staying home. I’m not going to do anything.” And then I get a phone call and it’s like, “Okay. I’ll go.” And then I’ll, you know, run errands all day and things like that, but… So it changes from day to day, so it’s like, can’t, the unknown… I never say “never” anymore.

Rossi: Right. The unexpected!

Robin: Because I usually eat those words. “I’m not going to do this. No, I’m not.” And then I end up doing it, so.

Rossi: In other words, there’s a part of you that wants a little shelter, a little time for yourself but you’re involved with people and there’s a lot of demands on you. You’ve got your own child to take care of and people are continually pulling on you for stuff. And that could be using up a lot of your energy, that maybe you really want to keep inside for your own development, what you really need.

2–8

Robin: Yeah, I… I probably… I guess when I get down and feel like I’m completely empty, it’s because I’m drained and I haven’t taken some time for myself.

Rossi: Exactly. Exactly.

Robin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rossi: Very, very important we take that time for ourselves. As a matter of fact, that’s just what one of my books is about.

Robin: Oh, really?

Rossi: Yeah, the idea is that every hour and a half, we go through a natural mind-body cycle. For the first part of the hour and a half, the mind has energy, the body has energy. It wants to go out there; it wants to do something. And then you do something, and then other hormones flow and you need a quiet time, a 20-minute break, so to speak. So it’s like if this happens continuously, you know, throughout the day, every couple hours you have a chance to do a nice unit of work, you know, be with your child, do the shopping or do the cooking, but then you really need to take that time to take a break,
because that’s when the body heals itself.

2–9
So this could be… I’m just giving you ammunition so you can say “no” when you really need to.

Robin: Yeah. Well, I wouldn’t think that, I mean… I can understand it, because when my son takes his nap, that is like my time.

Rossi: Right.

Robin: I have to take that time for myself, because if I don’t… I mean, if I do work, fine. I’m doing work. It’s something that I want to do, but I make the decision if I’m going to or if I’m not because…

Rossi: Fantastic. That’s the best. Yes.

Robin: It gets hard.

Rossi: Yes. You have to be tough, because the outside world will just use you up, and you’ve been, you’ve been so put upon by a lot of people, that you tend to get used up that way. And the ideal circumstance, like now you’re learning how to say “no” appropriately, to take time for yourself.

2–10
That’s going to give you extra reserve time for, you know, things to be created within yourself.

Rossi Commentary: Having empowered her to say “No” when the outside world intrudes too much, I quickly move on toward another Stage One search for how this therapeutic session can help her future orientation with the following basic accessing question.

Do you have any idea, Robin, like where you’re headed, five, 10 years? What would your whole system like to do? What would you like to be in five, 10 years? In other words, what are you shooting for when you…?

Robin: I, you know, I can’t see five, 10 years down the road. I mean, I come up with ideas, you know, things that I’d like to do, like I like to work with crafts. I mean, I could go back to work. I had, I was real successful in the banking industry.
Rossi: Banking industry! Really?

Robin: I enjoyed that a lot, did that for 10 years. And it’s like, okay. There are options available to me, but after I had my son, all of the sudden, my mind changed there and said, “Okay, this is my first priority. This is what I want to do.”

2–11

Rossi: Right. Absolutely.

Robin: “And everything else then will revolve around that.” So, you know, who knows? Like if he does well in school, I might be able to go back to work. If he doesn’t, I might be real involved taking care of him and making sure, you know, he gets the proper education and stuff, so.

Rossi: Are you married?

Robin: Yes.

Rossi: Married. Okay.

Robin: My husband, he’s not real good at giving that good support. Actually, he’s in the doghouse right now.

Rossi: Ah, that’s the problem.

Robin: Well, I mean, he’s supportive in the fact of me staying at home, but far as, he happens to be one of those people that likes to take from me, too, and not give anything back sometimes.

Rossi: Oh, I see. Yeah. Wow. Wish he were here now!

Robin: And he’s glad he’s not.

Rossi: He knows what’s up here, maybe?

2–12

Robin: Oh, yeah. No, but it makes, it makes it difficult, but it’s sort of like if I can take myself out of the day-to-day and think about what the actual long-term goal is, you know, then it makes it a little bit easier. But sometimes, in that day-to-day, I can get really overwhelmed.

Rossi: Yeah, with a 2–year-old child, you’ve really got your hands full. But even if it’s only that when he goes down to take a nap there is some time for you, and I think you’re wise. You do have to just wonder
what’s, how’s life going to unfold.

**Robin:** Yeah. Yeah, looking ahead. Yeah, because we, I mean, we try to make plans, you know, as a family, where do we want to be, you know, far as, say, socially, economically. You know, what are our goals? What do we want to do?

**Rossi:** Talk about these things with your husband, okay. How’s that going?

2–13

**Robin:** He—Well, it’s one of those things, he, he doesn’t, you know, far as he’s concerned, all he wants to be is debt-free, and as soon as he’s debt-free then everything else is fine, you know. So I know he’s worried about financial and where… As long as I’m taking care of Cameron, he’s not, that’s not a problem. But far as some of the other things like getting stuff done around the house, he’s like, “Oh, it’ll get done when we get to it.” You know, he’s not… He’s a procrastinator with things like that, but where I want things done and want them done on a specific, a specific timetable, he doesn’t.

**Rossi:** So he’s worried about debt. Do you have unusual debts or is this just, you know, paying off your mortgage?

**Robin:** No, he… Well, it’s, all we really have is our mortgage, but he, his parents, when they were younger, did have financial problems and then got themselves completely out of debt themselves and now, you know…

**Rossi:** He’s got that same philosophy.

**Robin:** He’s got that same philosophy that, you know, he’s got to get himself, you know… I mean, and some, some economists say, you know, this is a goal that you should attain.

2–14

**Rossi:** Yeah. There’s some virtue in it. But still, there’s life to be lived now.

**Robin:** This is just a fact of life, yeah. You know, like you want to enjoy life now. You can’t wait until you’re, you know, so… But we struggle with that, but that, I think everybody does. You have one that’s a saver
and one that’s a spender, and you need to compromise.

**Rossi:** I see. He’s the saver, and you’re the spender. Is that…?

**Robin:** Well, yes and no.

**Rossi:** That’s really not a fair way to divide it up.

**Robin:** No. Not, well, it depends on, you know, what type of, what type it is, you know. Like I’m very conservative and make sure that I get my money’s worth, but I don’t hesitate spending a dollar if I’m going to get a dollar’s worth.

**Rossi:** Right. If it’s needed for your real life at this time.

**Robin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Rossi:** But he’s a little bit conservative that way, I suppose.

**Robin:** Unless it’s like for a bass boat or something. Then he’d be like, “Oh, but we need this. It’s important.” Those, those male toys that he needs sometimes.

**2–15**

**Rossi:** Right. That’s just what I was curious about. Are you able to find areas where you want to spend your money… Do you see eye to eye in the way you have fun together, the way you…?

**Robin:** We have differences there, far as, like, his idea of fun and my idea of fun are totally… Like I like the arts. I would like to go to a theater, to a play, where he’d prefer to go to a ballgame and… You know, things like that.

**Rossi:** Classic stereotype there.

**Robin:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Rossi:** Oh, wow.

**Robin:** I’d call him, you know, like an old jock or something, you know. He really likes all that but doesn’t get into any of the things I do. So there has to be an appreciation on both, so.

**Rossi:** That is, that’s the secret!

**Robin:** He’s learning. But…
Rossi: You can open up new areas for him. And you say he’s learning, he’s…? What areas have you got his interest in, if you will?

Robin: What have we done? Well, we’ve gone to, we have… Well, no, I’ve done that by myself. I was going to say, “We did this,” but no, I did that myself. Concerts! He doesn’t necessarily always like the kind of music I like to listen to, but he will go with me to a concert or something like that. And we’re at a different stage in our marriage. We’re really, I want to say, almost struggling right now because I think we need to have some couple time together where he thinks that, you know, we wanted children so therefore we should spend all our time with our son and not take that time for each other. So I’m trying to work on that right now.

Rossi Commentary: How delicate and profound is her consciousness here! Her mirror neurons are reflecting the vast gaps in consciousness, worldview and relatedness between her husband and herself. Music—that precarious, sensuous stream of communication between our inner and outer self, each other, and the world—is very different for them. She experiences an almost genius moment of awareness when she says, “we’re at a different stage in our marriage...almost struggling right now because I think we need to have some couple time together...” Indeed, at this moment she speaks to the truth of vast tragedies of the human condition: the need to communicate for our unique psychological existence and our lack of it. This is the profound existential tragedy of human consciousness and personal relatedness between man and wife stuck in stage two of a communication problem in their marriage. Yes, she is a “she-ro” (the feminine of “hero”) of this couple relatedness drama when she says, “So I’m trying to work on that right now.” She is trying to work on something he may not even be aware of yet!

Rossi: Right. Some good quality time together as a couple quite apart from your child being with you.

Robin: I see other mothers doing it and how much fun it’s been for them and it makes them enjoy their children more.
Rossi: Of course.

Robin: And then you appreciate your husband, too.

Rossi: I sense you’re a deeply romantic kind of a person.

Robin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rossi: Very, very important.

Robin: Not at important at all for him!

Rossi: Uh-oh. It’s too much take-me-out-to-the-ballgame with this guy.

Robin: Well, actually, now I have, I could make that a really fun time. I mean, we have gone…

Rossi: Going to the ballgame, that can be okay. It’s trying to find some of your quality time when it comes into your ballpark. I think this is the very important crux, because if you’re life’s going to continue happily together, it’s going to be very important that he learn to share with you and grow, just as you’ve shared his life.

Robin: Yeah. I’ve had different people give me different advice about either A) going and buying the tickets to a show and say, “Okay, I’ve arranged the babysitter. We’re going. End of discussion.” You know, “Here’s the tickets.” But I just don’t, you know… And then I thought, you know, what if it backfires on me and then I’m sitting here, and then I’m thinking, well, I can take somebody else that would enjoy it and I’d still, you know, enjoy the theater myself, you know. But…

Rossi: It’s something—

Robin: The thing, the thing, I guess the thing that I have the hardest time is, I can’t make him do something I want him to do. The only person I can change is me. But…

Stage Two of the Creative Process: Incubation

Private Inner Work for Problem Solving

Rossi: Yes. That’s true. So you’ve received a certain amount of advice
on how to handle it in an external kind of a way, buying tickets and so forth. I would like to take—since you’ve already gone that route and it’s left something to be desired—I’d like to explore another route where we’re, you know, you’re interested in arts. You’re interested in creativity.

2–19
I’d like to help that side of you develop today. That’d be okay?

Robin: Okay. Uh-huh.

Rossi: I call it “doing inner work,” you know. In other words, you get a focus inside. I would like to have you, right at this moment, just tune into this whole issue with your husband, how you’d really like it to be. And you know, a lot of this is private, by the way. You only share with me what’s appropriate to be shared publicly. But a lot of this work takes place privately within you, and I would like to see you really get a, go on an inner journey, so to speak. What’s your husband’s name?

Robin: Ed.

Rossi: Ed. Okay. What would be an ideal situation for you and Ed to be together? And I don’t want you to talk to me about it. I want you just to, you know, tune into yourself and, for a couple minutes, and see where your mind takes you.

2–20
Let’s see if a new fantasy is created, a new idea, a new possibility. Or is it maybe something you’ve had in mind for some time?

Robin: You mean take, go to a place that I would want to go?

Rossi: Yeah. Yeah. Go to that ideal situation with Ed, just you and Ed, romantically together. And just allow that to develop within you. That’s right. Really going with that.

2–21
Robin: You talk about the impossible! It could happen, but it’d take a lot of work. It’d take a lot of work.

Rossi Commentary: After a private moment of inner self-reflection characteristic of the General Waking Trance she appears to have found
something so I now quietly ask about it.

Rossi: But you found a nice...?

Robin: Mm-hmm.

Rossi Commentary: Note how I used a fail-safe positive implicit processing heuristic when I quietly asked, “But you found a nice...?” “Nice” is a nice word for facilitating the possibility of a positive movement toward stage three of the creative process that may help her realize “the impossible.”

Rossi: Is it something new or is it something that you’ve daydreamed about before?

Robin: Probably, yeah, I’ve daydreamed about it before.

Rossi: Okay. But I heard you use the word “impossible.” It seems like it would be impossible?

Robin: Mm-hmm.

Rossi: Okay. So. Obviously it’s going to take a little preparation, somehow, for that to happen. Would you be willing to go back inside again and what would be the circumstances that could possibly lead to this nice outcome?

Rossi Commentary: I am exploring the possibility that she may now be ready to have a corrective emotional experience by transforming her cynical “impossible” into a positive life realization.

2–22

Robin: It’d have to be a lot of me, me doing a lot of the work and me being patient when Ed said, “Well, I don’t really want to do that,” and basically stroking him to agree to do something like that. And I have a problem with that because sometimes when he puts up a front, instead of trying to looking at it in a positive, and keep, you know, stroking him, it’s like...

Rossi: You’ve had too much of this. You’ve been doing too much stroking of other people. This is...

Robin: Uh-huh. And it’s like, I can let loose with him and, and then it gets nowhere.
Rossi: Yeah. It gets to be just hard work. Okay, so it seems like on the outside there’s something that’s stuck in your relationship. Now, you’ve tried and I’m sure he’s trying in his way. So we have to go to another level. Are you a spiritual person in any…?

Rossi Commentary: My mirror neurons resonate with her difficulties in stroking others but getting nowhere with them. I recognize this as an impasse in the possibility of her having a corrective emotional experience. But I as the therapist feel stuck, for a moment too. Yes, poor me, I’m supposed to be doing an expert demonstration of psychotherapy and I suddenly recognize I am stuck along with her in stage two of our supposedly creative process.

So what do I do? So I take as shot in the dark! I try to break the impasse by asking very tentatively, “Are you a spiritual person in any…?” I did not know at that time that she was the daughter of a minister.


2–23

Rossi: Very much so. Okay. That’s where I’d like to have you take another inner journey and commune with your spirit in whatever way that happens and let’s see…

Robin: Well, see then… You hit the nail right on the head because that’s one thing that, that I, I go back to the scriptures where it says, “Nothing is impossible with God.” And so I shouldn’t be sitting here saying, “Oh, it’s impossible. Ed will never change.” That’s not true. I know that that’s not true. If I have enough faith, if I believe enough, it will happen. But it’s sort of like I, the phrase we’ve coined is, “It will happen in God’s time.” Well, it’s sort of like, you know, God’s moving awful slow right now.

Rossi: Yes. Too slow.

Robin: Just not, you know… But it does, it does make it difficult at times, but I know that it, that it’s, that it’s not impossible but it takes a lot of prayer, dedication on my part and steadfastness.

2–24

Rossi: Yeah. Yeah, I’m, I’m… want to explore something a little bit
different. I would like to have you commune with your spirit in a way that’s… You’ve tried prayer. You’ve tried, you know, strong faith. Somehow another way of relating to your inner spirit, go into your inner spirit just with what you’ve just told me right now, saying, “Look, in God’s time or is it going to be possible now? Come on, Spirit, you’re supposed to be so great. What can you tell me?” Why don’t you take a little journey with that? Let’s see if anything new develops.

2–25

Robin: Still go back… Not that it’s new, but that I have, that I have to be patient, that I have to be understanding.

Rossi: Yeah. Yeah. Those are very good conventional virtues, but something more intriguing, something more interesting. Let me ask you this: were you one of those kids that was fascinated with fairy tales when you were a kid? What fascinated you when you were a kid? What was intriguing?

Rossi Commentary: Another impasse! She says she is a spiritual person, but from my perspective it sounds like a “conventional spirituality” that simply prays and practices the virtue of being patient. Somehow that does not seem to be working in her relationship with her husband right now. My neuroscience approach implies that she needs something more. What would be more? Neuroscience would say she needs to experience the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect to turn on activity-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity to transcend her perceived self-limitations.

So in sheer desperation I stumble about asking her if she was the kind of kid fascinated with fairy tales. I ask the all-important question, “What was intriguing?” I’m wondering what can turn on the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect within her? What can I do to help her turn on activity-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity at this prosaic moment of impasse? Aye, there’s the rub! And then a miracle happens and she says...

Robin: Well, I loved math, mathematics.

Rossi: Really!? Mathematics! Wow!
Robin: Analytical thinking, the processes.
Rossi: I see. That’s probably how you got into banking. Fantastic! So that’s…?
Robin: So… I analyze things.
Rossi: You like to analyze things!
Robin: Mm-hmm.
Rossi: Are you using that talent in any way in your current life?

2–26
Robin: Oh, I do. Mm-hmm. A lot. You know, like this is the situation I’m in. What are my options? What are ways, you know, that I can do things to make it better, you know, or get things accomplished, you know?
Rossi: Yeah.
Robin: I do use it a lot.
Rossi: Yeah!
Robin: But sometimes I do think in, in my spiritual life and things like that, that can hinder you sometimes because you’re not letting God work. In other words, you’re trying to analyze God and you can’t do that.
Rossi: Yeah. That’s like two different universes. They don’t always mix.

Introducing Novel Activity–Dependent Hand Mirroring to Access Imagination and Turn On the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect
Rossi: Yeah.
Robin: I can analyze this to death. And I guess that’s the thing that bothers me the most, is I can talk about it till I’m blue in the face but I’m not getting anything accomplished if I keep talking about it.
Rossi: Yes, that’s…
Robin: It takes action.
Rossi: Right! Action and imagination, you know. It’s like…
Robin: I… Imagination is very low on my ability or skills.

2-27
Rossi Commentary: *Oops! Another impasse! But I like to believe I am never at a loss for more than a moment or two, so in the face of this impasse I now bravely move forward with a positive approach to one of my novel activity-dependent hand mirroring exercises with these words that may evoke the General Waking Trance so she can use her “analytical mind” to turn on her imagination and the dynamics of the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect.*

Rossi: Ah, okay. Then maybe that’s how I can best help you today, help you find the access to your imagination, the intuitive. Because you’ve obviously got a very bright, analytical mind. You’ve obviously got a wonderful spiritual connection. You’ve got all the human virtues of patience and all this. But we’ve finally found the developmental point: you need to evolve with your imagination. Would you like to explore some…?
Robin: Sure.
Rossi: … new conventional approaches that…
Robin: Sure.
Rossi: Place your hands about like so.
Robin: Okay.

A Positive, Permissive and Mildly Dissociative Suggestion that May Evoke the General Waking Trance and an Implicit Processing Heuristic that may Access Curiosity, Imagination, and the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect.

Rossi: That’s right. And now, Robin, look at your hands almost as if you’ve never seen them before and tune into your hands with a certain amount of sensitivity. And in a moment or two, just share with me a sentence or two of what you’re actually experiencing in your hands. The same or different or what?
Rossi Commentary: “Look at your hands almost as if you’ve never seen them before” is a permissive, positive and mildly dissociative suggestion that tends to evoke the General Waking Trance. “Tune into your hands with a certain amount of sensitivity” is an Implicit Processing Heuristic: a very permissive positive suggestion that is never used to directly program a specific cognition or behavior. Rather, implicit processing heuristics are designed to facilitate curiosity, wonder, awe and heightened expectation by focusing consciousness on original, private inner experience that may turn on the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis effect. This is the desiratum that may facilitate a significant shift from a “stuck” state in stage two of the creative cycle to stage three when new insights are experienced with an appreciative, compassionate and positive attitude.

2–28
Robin: I’m bad. See, I… There’s a warmth that it’s picking up from the lights.
Rossi: Yeah?
Robin: They can feel the warmth.
Rossi: Good! Go with that warmth.

Let’s say like the, If the warmth is a messenger coming from your body, I wonder where the warmth is going to lead you next? Remember, this is an exercise in sensitivity and just letting your imagination go.

Rossi Commentary: This basic accessing question, “I wonder where the warmth is going to lead you next?” is an implicit processing heuristic that may facilitate an apparently spontaneous ideodynamic flow of mind-body communication to the next level she needs to experience for further insight and healing somewhat as follows via the unique matrix of her unique personality.

Robin: It causes, it causes the hand to almost tingle.
Rossi: Tingle! Yes, that’s good! That’s even more intriguing. Go with that tingling now!
Robin: It’s like, you know, how, the… the blood flows through and, and goes back out and it’s like you can, you can feel that. You can sense. And it’s intriguing sometimes to know that, you know, you have four fingers and a thumb.

Rossi: Yes. Go with those intriguing things!

Robin: That they’re important. They all serve a function.

Rossi: Yes!

Robin: You take it for granted sometimes.

Rossi: Yes, maybe we take it too much for granted.

Robin: Yeah, because I sometimes see people with, with a missing finger and, you know. They’ve had to learn things differently to be able to function, so. There’s…

Rossi: Stay with your hands for a little while yet. And again, we’re… I’m asking you to tune in with great sensitivity. You felt warmth. You felt tingling. I wonder if any other experiences, sensations or feeling?

The Spontaneous Creative Flow of Ideodynamic Signaling: The General Waking Trance and the Novelty-Numinosum-Neurogenesis Effect (NNNE)

Rossi Commentary: The “warmth” and “tingling” are the beginning of spontaneous ideodynamic communication within her mind-body. They gain their validity as indicators that she is beginning to tune into her own creative original psychological experiencing characteristic of the General Waking Trance precisely because they were NOT suggested by the therapist! If I had suggested them they would be worthless from my perspective – they would merely be a manifestation of her compliance.

Robin: Well, being like this, they can almost, by looking at them, they can become stiff.

Rossi: Yeah. Go with that. Explore that stiffness. Yes!

Robin: Because you have to be able, you know, just holding them like this, there’s a stiffness and it’s like they want to have a tendency to
want to curl in.

**Rossi:** Good. Let them curl in. That’s it. Now go with that.

**Robin:** Then you can like make your fist.

**Rossi Commentary:** There now! She finally comes up with the word “fist”! This is a very welcome dénouement of much needed aggression in a woman who appears to have a history of passivity.

Yet, was her conscious mind aware of this latent aggression a moment ago when her spontaneous ideodynamic creative flow first began with “warmth” and “tingling” and finally came to “stiffness” and “a tendency to want to curl in” and “make your fist”?

This is an excellent example of what creative ideodynamic processing really means in mind-body therapy. This is the fine line of differentiating between classical authoritative direct suggestion (programming) versus implicit processing heuristics in therapeutic hypnosis, psychotherapy and rehabilitation. When she began this creative process of ideodynamic signaling with “warmth” and “tingling” I did not have any idea that it would end up with a fist. By focusing her attention and positive expectation with the General Waking Trance she was able to find, discover, and create her own stage three insight by making a fist. Of course, I now quickly jump in to strongly support her fist and appropriately assertive responsiveness. This is one of the most important tasks of the psychotherapist in stage three of the creative process: recognizing and supporting the patient’s tentative new insights and behaviors as they emerge from the novelty-numinosum-neurogenesis effect.

**Rossi:** Now, you’ve got a fist now. Go with that fist!

**Robin:** It uses energy. It stretches them.

**Rossi:** Yes, express that energy, Robin, with nice fists. Really enjoy that for a moment and let’s see where it leads you to next!

**Robin:** It gives you that, it gives you a release, you know, when you hold it.

**Rossi:** Sure it does.

**Robin:** You hold it nice and tight.
Rossi: Yeah. Yeah. Hold it nice and tight. And let that tightness take you someplace now, holding it nice and tight.

Rossi Commentary: Note how Robin is now beginning to report on her own flow of original psychological experiencing of “warmth... tingling... stiffness... curling in... make a fist... use energy... stretches them... gives you release... hold it nice and tight.” She is learning to receive her own original psychological experience! She is beginning to learn how to experience the Breakout Heuristic. Note carefully how I recognize and strongly reinforce every step of her own original and creative experience of her own ideodynamic path! I never tried to suggest, program, or control her cognition, emotions or behavior. That would be a travesty of the creative therapeutic process.

Robin: It’s like you can’t let go.

Rossi: Good! Stay with that. You can’t let go. And really going with that: something you can’t let go of...?

2–31

Robin: I can’t let go of control. I...?

Rossi: You can’t let go of control. Okay, go with that now: you can’t let go of control!

Robin: I like to be in control.

Stage Three of the Creative Process: Illumination, Insight, The Aha! Moment

Rossi Commentary: Let all who aspire to become creative psychotherapists now bow down with humility in the face of Robin’s breakthrough moment of insight here, “I like to be in control.” Her previous spontaneous ideodynamic flow leads her out of momentarily being stuck between letting go, making a fist, and control. This is a mini example of the client’s creative insight that leads to genuine therapeutic change from mind to gene. If we believe Freud invented “psychoanalysis and Jung invented psycho-synthesis, then we are here learning to recognize and facilitate the client’s own original creative processing, which invariably turns on the novelty-numinosum-neurogenesis effect, which activates gene expression and brain plasticity.
We are now on a roll – the desiratum of all creatively oriented psychotherapy and therapeutic hypnosis. Note carefully how her creative ideodynamic flow of insight continues as I summarize and support her with an interpretative metaphor “the story of your life.” In the same moment I quickly hand the lead back to her with an implicit processing heuristic in the form of a question: “I don’t know if your mind wants to take you to where you learned that or what you need to control or just what?

Rossi: Yeah. Yeah. Continue with that. This is like a metaphor, story of your life. You like to be in control, and go with it now. I don’t know if your mind wants to take you to where you learned that or what you need to control or just what?

Robin: Well, it’s a sign of frustration. It’s a sign of, you know, the tightness is a sign of anger. It creates pain.

Rossi: Yes. Really receive that: anger, pain, frustration. Let yourself experience all those things for a moment and then where they take you next.

Robin: They want release.

2–32

Rossi: Yeah, they want release.

Robin: I mean, I dug the nails into the side of my hand.

Rossi: Yeah, I noticed they’re actually red.

Robin: So. Sometimes I have a tendency to do that with my teeth. I clench my teeth.

Rossi: I see. Grit your teeth. But, so it feels good to stop, so to speak. They want release.

Robin: Mm-hmm.

Rossi: Okay, tune into yourself now, Robin, and let yourself experience to what extent… are you still feeling release? And if so, going with that release.

Robin: Well, it’s like it wants release, and my hands can make it do it but I don’t know that I can make it do that.
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Rossi Commentary: Notice how she is learning to recognize the difference between 1) her creative and spontaneous ideodynamic processing feeling her hands want release versus 2) her sense of a lack of conscious control when she says, “but I don’t know that I can make it do that.” This kind of “I don’t know” uncertainty typically occurs between stages two and three of the creative cycle when consciousness hovers on an edge between confusion, crisis and chaos. She is precariously balanced between a sense of free will and control versus going along with implicit (unconscious), automatic, sleep-walking or the somnambulistic, dissociated behavior well described in the folklore of classical hypnosis. I hypothesize she may be experiencing the creative edge where the mathematical theory of chaos maintains that creative computing, that is activity-dependent gene expression and brain plasticity, is most intense on an unconscious level. This intense inner processing is characteristic of the general waking trance. Some people describe this as an intuition, inspiration, creative moment, Aha! or breakout experience. Some people call it, “spiritual guidance.” Since she has acknowledged the importance of the spiritual in her life, I utilize her own worldview as follows.

Rossi: That’s right. You don’t know how yet, but something in your hands is guiding you, that tension, the fists.

Robin: So you can clench them, you can let it go.

Rossi: Yeah.

2–33

Robin: But… It’s letting go of control. I don’t like to do that.

A Therapeutic Reframe Supporting Positive Insights

Rossi: Oh. That’s why we’re creating a safe little therapy situation. It’s like a little experimental theater where you can explore control and letting go and that’s, that’s the kind of exercise we’re starting to create. So yes, so continue that for a… Get that tight control, and then when you get it really tight, hold as tight as you can for a moment or two, and then let yourself fully experience what’s it like to release… actually?

Robin: Oh, the pressure’s gone! Almost feels like a letdown.
Rossi: Really? Go with that. A letdown… Let’s see what that…?

2–34

Robin: Because the pressure, the pressure was all there and it built up and then as soon as you release, it’s all gone, and it was like for nothing. You know, so…?

Rossi: You might have been building up pressure for nothing, you mean?

Robin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Like you build up to a point, you’re like this and then you explode, and then you’re left with nothing.

Rossi: Yeah. Unfortunately.

Robin: That’s where I get to be…?

Rossi: Yeah. Okay, so this is the point where you need to learn something new. You feel that… see that tension coming, that’s like an energy coming up in your system. It wants to do something creative. It wants to break out of the box you’re in. It wants to, you to break out of your frustrations. But then, the energy’s used up and it doesn’t get channeled into…?

Rossi Commentary: Study this very important therapeutic reframe of her experience: from frustration, anger and a lack of control to a possibly positive experience of something new. This is also an important “Aha” moment for me as the therapist when I momentarily, empathetically agree with her negative perspective when she says “you’re like this and then you explode, and then you’re left with nothing.” My therapist mirror neurons are probably functioning well when I momentarily feel myself in immediate empathetic resonance with her negative evaluation of her tension experience. But note how I then quickly recover my professional objectivity and take the initiative by reframing her negative perspective into a potentially positive creative experience. I am attempting to reframe her negative body language of “tension” into a positive “energy” that can help her breakout of her hopeless doldrums.

Robin: Into anything?

Rossi: That’s the, now, that’s the point where I’d really like to be able to help you.
Robin: Okay.

**2–35**

Rossi: Because in everyday life you’ve learned this habit of just the tension building up, and then nothing happening. How are we going to channel this energy into a creative process that, you know, that’s really one of your talents, whether it’s mathematics or art. So I’d like to have you just go with that, go within yourself. This energy that builds up...

Robin: It’s just letting go of some of that control. Letting go, not letting it build up.

Rossi: Okay. Let yourself experience what it’s like to let go of control, not let it build up so much. And just let yourself really explore and really feel in your body. What’s that like? Is it a good feeling or is it a scary feeling or what?

Robin: It’s a good feeling!

Rossi: Good! Now go with that good feeling, Robin. This is what we’re looking for.

**2–36**

Robin: Because it’s a calmness. And if I stay in tune with that, then it keeps the energy level on an even keel. In other words, it doesn’t get too tense, but I can hold a fist to have the energy without holding tight.

Rossi: That’s right. Bring up your energy and then…

Robin: And then that way it’s free to release, but there doesn’t feel like there’s a big letdown.

Supporting a Therapeutic Moment, Taking Time for Gene Expression and Brain Plasticity, and Integrating Insight and Positive Experiencing

Rossi: Yes. You let the energy build up and it’s free now to explore. And you mentioned that it felt good. I’d like to have you enjoy that good feeling for a couple minutes right now, Robin. Really… If there’s anything you deserve, Robin, if anyone deserves to feel good, certainly you do. And you know that. You’ve done so much for so many people.
Now it’s time for you to really appreciate…

2–37
Robin: The quietness is what I enjoy. The stillness.
Rossi: Let yourself experience that.
Robin: The quietness, the stillness, the things that…
Rossi: So your nature deeply craves, needs quietness in this hurly burly of a 2–year-old kid and all these people calling you and stuff. So you really… It’s nurturing. It’s going to be healing for you to have that quietness.
Robin: Quiet. Mm-hmm.

2–38
Stage Four of the Creative Process: Reality Testing, Self-Care and Behavioral Self-Prescriptions
Rossi: Okay. Stay with the quietness for another moment or two. And just wondering is it really going to be possible to have an even deeper appreciation of the quietness? Find some ways of bringing it into your life.
Robin: The only way I see bringing it in is, is setting that time.
Rossi: When your child’s asleep. That’s one very good time. And…?
Robin: And even, I guess, maybe, I think, more of like a morning… Or being able to even, I guess… We… I’ve talked about this before. People can sometimes daydream in the middle of everything going around.
Rossi: Yes.
Robin: I can’t.
Rossi: You can’t?

2–39
Robin: But I think that would be wonderful if I could just take myself away for a little while. You know, just a…?
Rossi Commentary: My mirror neurons certainly resonate with the implications of her wistful words, “I think that would be wonderful if I
could just take myself away for a little while.” I recognize that these words mean she needs some rest, healing and recovery time right now as well as in appropriate time in her everyday life. After almost an hour of this rather intense therapeutic inner work she is approaching the low end of her natural basic-rest activity cycle in this session. Chronobiologically she needs to “take myself away” to enjoy a natural ultradian healing response “for a little while.”

I immediately recognize and strongly support this entirely natural psychobiological need for “quietness” and “stillness” in her life. I now channel it into a therapeutic opportunity by allowing her to experience her natural ultradian healing response with some very specific Implicit Processing Heuristics for facilitating “inner peace and creative imagination” for mind-body healing as follows.

**Dreams and a Brief, Novel Hand Mirroring Experience**

**Learning Body Language, Reality Testing and Self-Care**

**Rossi:** Again, it’s like the outside world grabs you. So you really need some quietness and some retreat to be able to enjoy the inner peace and inner creative imagination and stuff. Yeah. That’s… And it’s out of this that the new idea is going to come, the new feeling is going to come, the other transformations are going to happen. Like you said yourself, you know you can only change yourself. Of course, that’s only partially true. I think you might be hooked on the idea that you’re supposed to direct those changes. And you know, you’re a very bright woman and you have, you know, you’ve been properly brought up, and so you have a certain ideology, a certain belief of how you should make yourself change, how you… I want to explode that myth, and I want, I want to explore the idea that there’s something that’s growing in you autonomously, all by itself.

2–40

I think that’s what’s happening in some of these dreams when they’re a little bit frightening to you. Something wants to happen, but you don’t, you’re not used to doing this. You’re used to being hypnotized by the outside world, so you don’t know what to do with the new that is spontaneously being generated in you. So I wonder if there’s another
way in which we can help create that. Are you willing to explore another path and now, we’re… Because I just got a cue, by the way, we only have 10 minutes left, but let’s use it to the best, okay?

Robin: Okay. Okay.

Rossi: Place your hands up like this, this time, Robin...

And again, tune in with great sensitivity. And you know, the human body really does have a magnetic field, whether you’re experiencing, whether you can experience that or whether this is a metaphor, I don’t know...

Robin: No. Mm-hmm.

Rossi: You can experience that magnetic field in some way?

Robin: It’s, it’s wanting to draw its hands together.

Rossi Commentary: Her words, “it’s wanting to draw its hands together” indicate that she is experiencing the classical hypnotic phenomenon of involuntariness (or mild therapeutic dissociation) in response to my hand mirroring approach. This is highly characteristic of the general waking trance. Notice how carefully I now therapeutically reframe this as “You’re just learning how to let your inner nature do something it wants to do.”

2–41

Rossi: Okay. Allow it to draw the hands together so you’re allowing it, but you’re not directing it. You’re not controlling it. You’re just learning how to let your inner nature do something it wants to do. That’s it. Nice and slowly. And as those hands continue coming more and more together, I’m going to ask your deep inner nature if it’s going to be okay for the next five minutes to simply—that’s right—experience allowing something to happen to you from within. And you watch it and you nurture it and you help it. That’s it. And allowing your hands to remain there for a moment.

2–42

And if it’s going to be okay, Robin, to take another step and begin to explore some possibilities for how you’re going to continue this kind of learning, allowing yourself to receive your dreams, your intuition, your imagination, if that’s going to be okay, will one of those hands,
just one, though, Robin, begin drifting down more or less by itself, just to signal “yes.” It’s really going to be okay to take some time for yourself. That’s right. And in that time you’re going to take for yourself, you’re going to be sensitive, you’re going to be receptive to any feelings, any images.

**Rossi Commentary:** *This is a series of positive naturalistic implicit processing heuristics that could function as post-hypnotic suggestions to recognize and facilitate her own natural healing cycles in dreams and appropriate ultradian healing response periods throughout the day.*

**Robin:** It still is connected. In other words, it’s still, I’m still me.

2–43

**Rossi:** Oh, yes! You’re always still you. Yes.

**Robin:** But I’m allowing… I haven’t lost the inner being, but I’m allowing other things to come in.

**Rossi:** Yes. Did you say you lost the inner me?

**Robin:** No. I haven’t lost it.

**Rossi:** You haven’t lost it. That’s right! But you’re allowing new things to grow…

**Robin:** To come in.

**Rossi:** …in your inner garden, so to speak. Stay with it now.

**Robin:** Because it stays connected.

**Rossi:** Yes. Oh, yeah. You’re always aware of yourself. You’re just opening up, you might say a new little garden plot, a new little addition to the garden of your soul, so to speak. And you wonder what kind of flowers will come up here, or will there be veggies or what.

2–44

**Robin:** It’s sort of like saying that if I don’t change, it’s still going to be okay. You know, in other words, if I don’t become the person that makes Ed necessarily happy, it’s going to be okay because I’m going to be the person that I’m going to be.

**Rossi:** Yes, that’s right. And this is a way of allowing yourself to
become a person in a way that’s going to surprise even you, rather than you directing and trying to control yourself. Because if you’re trying to control yourself, you’re just following an ideology, something you learned 10 years ago from childhood. But if there’s going to be a chance to break through this kind of a stalemate, you know, with you and your husband, something truly new has to be created, and we know that’s happening in you, as I said, every hour and a half or two. You know, at night, we dream every hour and a half, so that cycle continues. And most people have the wrong idea about psychotherapy. They think that the therapist is supposed to be an expert that’s going to tell them what to do.

2–45
I mean, you’ve had a lot of experiences on this ride. I’m not presuming to know what you’ve got to do, but I go exactly where you brought me today. You said, “Oh, that’s, that’s where I’m missing something: imagination.” And suddenly it became very clear that, exactly. Here we have an extremely intelligent woman. You know, from the outside it looks like you’ve got a nice marriage, nice child, mortgage; what else do you want? It’s that inner garden, your imagination, your creativity that wants evolution. And out of that’s going to come a change in your manner without you even knowing it, that your husband’s going to pick up in some way that he doesn’t even know, and he’s going to be curious about it. And it’s that curiosity that’s going to light the flame, so to speak, that can bring you closer together.

2–46
So it’s not anything you can tell him to do, and further, it’s not anything you can tell yourself to do. But rather, with these exercises today I’m trying to help you open up a space where you can welcome, “Where is the new? Where is the creative? How is that going to come in?” And it usually comes in with your dreams, with your fantasies, with little exercises like…

Robin: The hands.

Rossi: Would that be a nice thing for you to do by the way?

Robin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Rossi: Occasionally, you know, to…?

Robin: Sit there and think about that.

Rossi: Yeah. And today your fists are tight. Maybe tomorrow they’re not. But you know, allow that body language, in other words, you’re learning how to let your body speak to you. Because, you know, the right hand doesn’t often know what the left hand is doing and so on and so forth. So you’re getting your deeper nature as well as a deeper evolving spirit nature come to you. So you need an open garden, so to speak, or create some new plots.

2–47

Any of this new to you or this…?

Robin: It’s all new to me.

Rossi: Okay. Very good. That’s what I hope to be able to bring, something really new.

Robin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rossi: Yeah, your life, frankly, has gotten in a stale box, so to speak, but you’re obviously a creative person, so now you’ve got to create, take the time out, steal time so you can do this inner work.

Robin: To create within.

Rossi: Have you ever kept a dream journal?

Robin: Uh-uh.

Rossi: I would start doing that. And over, you know, usually don’t know what a dream means, but next month, you look back and see, “Oh, that’s what my dream meant.” And who knows? Sometimes, you might even see in the dream where your soul is going or what you’re struggling with... So it becomes like a little record, and you don’t have to try to analyze. But over time, it’ll be obvious. If you have to try, sit down and figure it out, you know, it’s just an intellectual game. But over time, you look at your notes. “Gee, there’s a series of dreams. They all have this theme.” It becomes obvious to you.

2–48

In other words, this is like a mathematics of the fantasy, of the inner
mind, you know. You’ve really got to, you know, mathematic equation, you have to write them out.

**Robin:** Right. Right.

**Rossi:** So long as you don’t write them out, they can rattle around in your head forever, and you never, they never go to a conclusion. By writing the stuff out, you’re going to get over this…?

**Robin:** Frustration. Not knowing.

**Rossi:** Frustration, yeah. You feel the energy build up. That energy buildup is your health; it’s your creativity. But it doesn’t know where to go. We’ve got to create a field for it to go, and dreams, fancies, these private moments, times of your life. So this is a secret place. And you know, you don’t necessarily share this with your husband or… Unless it’s appropriate, you know. So what else can I do for you today?

**Robin:** That gives me a lot to think about.

2–49

**Rossi:** Okay. See, if I were continuing to see you, this is exactly where we would set it for: Okay, between now and the next time when I see you again, let’s see what happens with this. So you come in next time, and I see what you’ve done and we talk about it, you know. So that gradually you become more and more of an expert in your own mind-body, how your own fantasy works, where your soul really is going. You’ll find yourself getting more sensitive even to your husband and your child as well as yourself. So this is like a growth process we’re just starting. Do you think you’ll actually continue it even though we’re not going to meet again?

**Robin:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. It’s definitely!

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

3–1

**Carlson:** That was a very interesting interview, Ernie. Can you talk about what you saw going on? What you saw happened?

**Rossi:** I see the problem of humankind in general portrayed here. I spoke earlier about the contrast between the constraining forces on
human nature and the original creative impulses. I saw this client as someone who, like most of us, is experiencing an overwhelming amount of the constraining forces. So the thrust of my work was trying to open up a series of avenues, to open up the possibility of some of her own original experience. And, for example, I would give her the inner journey. That’s, you might say, the most gentle, elementary approach. And she would close her eyes and go inside for a couple of minutes, then pop right out and laugh a little bit self-consciously.

3–2
She never was able to go too far. So this would be an example of someone who has experienced a lot of constraint, a lot of “shoulds,” a lot of how-to-be’s, poured out her heart to be good, and yet she was left, she was being left unsatisfied inside. In other words, her own original experience is so constrained that there’s no joy there, because joy comes with your own original psychological experience. So she’s caught in a classic box with conventional masculine/feminine division of roles in the family. So this is the general problem of humankind. How can we fit into a society, give the society what it needs, and yet have our own garden, our own creative experience; the things that give us joy and make life worth living.

3–3
Carlson: Well, that was the problem and that was what she needs to work on. How were you working? What process were you using to get her to that realization or that point?

Rossi: In every possible, even to the point of giving her almost a lecture, you know, about the creative, about the new, how every hour and a half we have a new creative cycle. In whatever way possible, opening up a channel for original psychological experience. As I say, it began with a fantasy, inner journey, the hand work so she could project. Each time she ventured forth bravely into this new possibility, stayed with it for a couple of minutes but then immediately broke up.

3–4
I would say on a scale of 1 to 10, where a 10 would be a very high
degree of receptivity going into your fantasy, 5 would be average, 0 would be nothing, I would say she would be on the low end of the scale right now. A 1 or a 2, 1 or 2 percent access to her inner world. What gives me hope with this client is that, by the end, I asked her something to the effect of, was there anything new in this for her? And she said, oh, yes. She really learned a lot. She would like to practice these things. But it also made me a little sad. Does she really, sincerely mean no one has really taught her, talked to her about the world of dream, about original experience? I mean, I see her as a very intelligent, potentially… She’s got a lot of inner richness, but very little is trickling out. This is the tragedy of her life, but this is the hope, the possibility. She got it, and now the next session, I would hope… I’d be very eager to see what she came back the second session.

3–5
There’s going to be 90 percent, I would expect, is going to be the same humdrum stuck-in-this-place, but does she come out with 5 or 10 percent of giving herself a little bit more time? Did she find a new fantasy? Did she find a new hope, a new possibility? That’s what I’d be looking for.

Carlson: And that’s her mathematical equation that she needs to rework. With yours, did you use something I notice in your writing, the basic accessing questions? Can you talk about how that might apply here?

Rossi: Yes. A basic accessing question goes something like this: If, or when—that’s step one—your inner mind, your unconscious, or your spirit is able to do such-and-such, whatever therapy is, explore this issue—that’s two. Will those hands more or less come together all by themselves? That’s an involuntary response, where the mind-body says “Yes, I want to do this,” or, “No, I don’t want to do this.”

Carlson: And hers came together…

3–6
Rossi: Yeah, they came together, and we actually got to a second step. Now will one of those hands go down to signal another stage of the process? And her hands separated and she got about this much. So this
is like a 10 or 20 percent responsiveness.

**Kjos:** And then she pulled out.

**Rossi:** Yes, she pulls out. So, from the classical hypnotherapeutic point of view, we would say this person is not hypnotizable. She’s very low on hypnotizability. On the other hand, my intuition is that it’s because of her social training, the constraints. I sense inside there is a great inner richness. For example, that little… My first approach to her individuality toward the beginning was, “I gather you’re really a romantic person, aren’t you?” And wow, she really received that. Yes, she is a romantic person. However, how little of her romance can she experience in her life?

**Kjos:** One of the things I noticed about her was that she started out being very, uh, talking fast and sort of, almost a nervous sort of voice tone…

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Kjos:** …and toward the end she really calmed down. I also noticed that when she was really kind of going very fast, you were doing these… kind of breathing. Is that a conscious…

**Rossi:** No, no.

**Kjos:** Oh, it was like you needed to take a breath.

**Rossi:** Sorry to disappoint you. You know, a lot of people who have studied with Erickson, they believe they can control their body responses and give minimal cues to clients. Well, I studied all of that, Diane. I wrote books about that. I made very good indices in the books so I could go back and access it because I knew I was going to learn, wanted to learn how to do this someday. I never learned. I’m an introvert. I don’t have those extraverted skills. I don’t do certain things to anchor people. I am really Ernie Rossi there. So when you heard these sighs, I am “Phew, it’s a little bit of relief in me.”

**3–8**

Is she going to go into herself and do some inner work? Can I take a little break now? Because I was working so hard with her.
**Kjos:** You were working... Yes, that was clear that you were working very hard.

**Carlson:** You were nodding your head, and you were rolling your eyes, and, uh, breathing loudly, and, uh...

**Rossi:** You know, when I was a kid, people thought I was goofy. You know, I believe it was in the fourth grade, they actually put me in the dumb room, the room for the retarded kids, and they thought I was, you know, there was something wrong with me. Actually it’s because I came from a bilingual home, and I was taught to be ashamed of myself. Fortunately, in Connecticut they had reading exams at the end of each year, and at the end of the year, I was reading at a grade level higher than mine. So they realized I was an idiot savant and they passed me on.

**Carlson:** So you’ve learned how to make a living out of being goofy.

**Rossi:** Yeah. My father called me a jerk, my father called me goofy. So you see how and why I became a therapist? It’s really for me.

3–9

**Carlson:** How about your language you use, the verbal language? I mean, this was a nonverbal language, but there’s really verbal language, where you use words like, “Yes, that’s right,” and “That’s right,” and “Yes,” and “Fantastic,” and “Okay,” and “Of course.”

**Rossi:** That’s one thing I learned from Erickson. Try to develop a yes set. I was doing everything I could to give her support, approval. So maybe she’s going to tiptoe out of the conventional and reveal a little bit more of her romantic-ness, a little bit more of her interest in art. Everything I could to support, and she came forth, but just a little, tiny bit.

**Carlson:** That’s a deliberate way, then, to create a context for learning? A very supportive, accepting...

3–10

**Rossi:** A yes set. The very first thing I talked about in my first book with Erickson, Hypnotic Realities... The book was about the indirect forms of facilitating people, indirect forms of suggestion. The very
first form was the yes set. “Yes, it’s okay.” Because most of the people are here with us because their experience is too constrained. They don’t know how to utilize their potential. They don’t know how to have their own original experiences and get away with it, bringing them into the world. Like in this university, you have all these interesting art objects. These artists, who are they? They’re people. By golly, they got their massive steel beams out, they got their self-expression out. Most of our clients have a serious problem with that.

Carlson: So you’re giving them permission to do the…

Rossi: Above all, permission. And let’s see, when you give them permission, what’s going to happen.

Kjos: Another thing I noticed is that when you do the yes, then you give... You kind of often give a very reflective response. You reflect back what you said to her, and sometimes you’ll add a little bit of meaning to that.

Rossi: Um-hmm.

Kjos: And then she’ll say yes.

Rossi: Yes, and how did that go?

Kjos: I thought that was probably very helpful.

Rossi: And when I do that, it’s a way of, first of all, Ernie Rossi anchoring himself in reality. She really did this. I want feedback from her because, you know, I could be looking at you very sincerely and yet my mind will be 50 miles away. So I’m a fantasy-prone person, so it’s almost methodological. It’s a way of bringing me back. It’s also Rogerian, and so forth. Then I would expect, since I gave her positive reinforcement, she gave me positive reinforcement back, and then she would go into it further. And most people do that.

Kjos: But not Robin,

Rossi: But here poor Robin had to come back again with, “Ah, now what, doctor?” You see? And that’s... this is the effort to encourage this nature that’s obviously got so much inner richness in her. It’s because it’s not coming out that, you know, there’s this anger, and there’s this
frustration that she talks about.

3–12
She needs a lot of support, and I would give her that support. I would also give her homework like I did at the end of the session. “Now you do this and let’s see what comes out.” So next week we would look at her dream journals, we would look at some of her thoughts. Did she give herself more time to herself? Did she steal more time for herself? And what is the new that comes up?

Carlson: Uh-hmm. There were a lot of suggestions that you were giving her, too.

Rossi: Oh, I was throwing everything in, including the kitchen sink, the spirit, everything.

Carlson: Okay.

Rossi: Do you... I was speaking with Barbara during the intermission, and she came up with a very interesting thing that I think is relevant here. As I spoke with Barbara about the spirit, Barbara immediately said, “Oh, yes. When I go to a spirit, I go into…” And she began talking about herself, her personal life. Spirit for Barbara is freedom to explore her individuality, her idiosyncrasy. Where her soul is going next.

3–13
Spirit for Robin is something very different. Spirit for Robin seems to be praying, reading the Bible. In other words, it’s spirit in the sense of a creed, a belief system. I use the word, a constrained and sort of a rigid…

Kjos: A control system.

Carlson: Restricted, very restrictive.

Rossi: So the word spirit… It’s interesting: All the very important words—and Freud commented on this—all the really important words have a dual meaning that often comes out as opposites.

Kjos: One of the things I noticed when you had her doing the hands…

Rossi: That’s what the hands thing is all about.
Kjos: …but she said, “I’m bad,” at one point, you know? Because she was reflecting... She said, “I’m bad,” and then she reflected on the warmth of the lights.

Rossi: Yes.

Kjos: And I thought that was an interesting kind of a...

3–14

Rossi: Yes. This is what I’m doing with the duality of the hands. Place the problem, your symptom, your problem, part of your nature, in one hand, and what do you experience in the other hand by contrast? And she did a nice bad and light. Maybe I didn’t pick that up and go with it as much as I could have. But that is the object, that is the wonder of this. It’s like a way of saying, people have problems because they dissociate different parts of their personality. I say experience one side here, experience the other side here, both simultaneously, and let’s see what happens between them. And what happens between them usually is a dialogue, an interaction. And we saw just the beginnings of the interaction with her; say about 10 percent. So this would be an example of using many, many approaches to the inner world to start to try to free up the inner nature from the outer constraints. And we got 10, 20 percent in our first session, which wasn’t too bad, really.

Carlson: Like managed care gives you 10 visits, you’re right on track.

Rossi: All right. I needed to hear that.

Carlson: Why don’t we move and get some questions from our audience. Maybe specifically about the interview that Dr. Rossi just completed, and then a little later on, generally about his theory.

3–15

Audience Member #1: I was wondering, the first half of the session was not mind-body. It was a more traditional kind of thing.

Rossi: Yes. I was looking for an orientation. Who is this person?

Audience Member #1: And I was getting a little bit impatient inside myself.

Rossi: So was I, watching the tape, believe me. I thought, “Oh my
goodness, did things really go on this long?”

**Audience Member #1:** Uh-hmm. And I was wondering whether it could be shortcut (sic).

**Rossi:** Oh, of course. On the other hand, this is a teaching institution, and I was being conservative. I wanted to explore very gingerly. I even asked, “Are you married?” I didn’t even take that for granted, because of the way she presented herself: her and her child.

3–16

Her husband? She never even gave me a hint. So I was trying to be very conservative. It’s only when she mentioned the lack of imagination that suddenly I said, “Okay, What else do I need?” She obviously needs some inner world approaches more potent than “Go on an inner journey.” So I began one of my classic hand approaches.

**Carlson:** How would you shorten that if you were in a different setting?

**Rossi:** I might have… toward the beginning when she revealed the difficulties between her and her husband, I might have said, “Oh, great, Rob. I tell you what. Place your hands like so and let’s see. Which hand is more you, and which hand is more your husband?

**Carlson:** Ah.

3–17

**Rossi:** And she would laugh and… And as soon as a person says, “Well, this is more my husband and this is more me,” you know they’ve left the ordinary reality orientation behind, because this is ridiculous. This isn’t your husband. This really isn’t you. But I do believe people can project their personality out in this way, and in this way make the unconscious visible, in a visible form. So I might have made a more direct approach. As soon as I see a duality, I have my cue to begin an exploration. I let many dualities go by because I wanted to see who this person was.

**Carlson:** So then once that occurs, then accessibility is the... Then suggestion can occur? Learning can occur?

**Rossi:** Uh, I agree with everything except suggestion. I don’t want to
put suggestion in there.

**Carlson:** Okay.

**Rossi:** I’m doing suggestion a lot. My basic suggestion is that the brain is growing, we are creative individuals. That’s my basic premise and my basic suggestion. But if you agree with that, then I pull back. I don’t want to suggest anything else. I want to find that originality of the personality. I create settings where people project… have an opportunity to project, their inner process.

**3–18**

So it’s like a Rorschach except that it’s a moving, process-oriented Rorschach. It isn’t just something to take a snapshot of the personality, but it’s an opportunity to allow the personality to relate to itself in ways that are almost like a dream. And usually people will say, “Oh, that’s weird. That’s a little strange. My hand’s getting numb.” All these indications that, to a certain degree, they’re leaving their ordinary reality orientation behind. And you immediately get a sense of what kind of access they’ve got for themselves.

**Audience Member #2:** If it’s important to take a person to their growing edge, which is where you brought her so expertly, is there no hope for the Marlboro man to become healthy, then?

**3–19**

**Rossi:** Oh, yes. Yes. For example, in my early days when I was developing these approaches, uh, you know, I was just being a scientist there. Sometimes a guy would stay there for 5, 10, 15 minutes, 20 minutes. Finally they look up at you. “My shoulder’s getting a little... I’m getting a little pain in my shoulder, doctor.” And I’d say, “Oh, you’re getting a pain in your shoulder?” “Are you saying I’m doing this to myself?” “Is it possible you are doing that to yourself?” And so forth. As I say, I would never let it go that long today. I’d rather move on to another beat, so to speak. Another unit, another possibility.

**3–20**

**Audience Member #3:** I’m a little bit confused, because in the beginning, before the tape, you had said that you don’t use direct
suggestion, as traditional hypnosis does. And I happen to practice, uh... And I use traditional hypnosis, so I was keenly aware of that. And then you did use a lot of direct suggestion. So could you elaborate on that?

**Rossi:** Yes. As I say, my major suggestion is always in the direction of, Can you allow? Can you be sensitive? Can you receive? So in a sense, I’m only making one suggestion: access, tune in, allow, relate to, receive. Outside of that, though, I’m not making any suggestions. I do not make a suggestion in the sense, “And now this week you’re going to find yourself being more sensitive to your husband.” I will not use that, because that would be contraindicated in this case, you might say. Even though, of course, it’s implied that she needs to continue whatever sensitivity she can develop with her husband.

3–21

So I don’t introduce any content suggestion other than the basic premise, which is human beings need to find that creative equilibrium between too much constraint, on the one hand, and total chaos on the other. Always my suggestions are trying to help them find that creative edge.

**Carlson:** It’s like teaching and guiding the process.

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Carlson:** And not the content, in terms of…

**Rossi:** That’s right, the process of relating to oneself. So I do... As I say, sometimes I’ll even give a little lecture to that effect, but that’s my only lecture, that’s my only suggestion. I do not direct the content of what she’s to do with her life.

**Carlson:** Sure.

**Rossi:** My creativity is in, What process can I facilitate that’s going to help her find an answer to this issue?

**Carlson:** Okay.

**Kjos:** I noticed you used a lot of metaphors throughout the whole process, and I was particularly impressed that after she talked about the spiritual, that you began to pull in some biblical.
Rossi: Right. Why? Because she took the turn toward the biblical in the traditional sense, so I saw immediately this was a big part of her inner world, so I’m starting to talk in terms of her language. I’m utilizing her own world view, of the right hand often doesn’t know what the left hand is doing, coming from the Bible. That is my way of hoping to evoke a yes set in her. So now she says yes, that’s right. As long as we’ve got “yes” going on, rather than constraint “no’s,” we’re moving in a therapeutic direction.

Audience Member #4: I was very interested to see how she connected with her body and how excited she got about that. In working with cancer patients, though, many of them feel as if their body has let them down in some way. How would you work around that constraint to get them to go inside and help them use their mind to heal their body?

Rossi: Yeah, okay, so here’s a classic duality. The body has let them down and yet there’s another part of themselves that’s hoping for something more. If I felt this was the opportune moment, “Okay, I’d like to have you tune in to those two hands, and let me know which hand seems to experience or represent that part of your body that’s let you down.” And she says, “This one.” And I say, “Okay, wonderful. While you’re still hanging onto that, tune into the other hand for a moment and what do you experience there by contrast?” Usually what they will put in the other hand will be something that is the opposite of the problem. And if it’s the opposite of the problem, you’re automatically constellating a therapeutic process in the other hand. This is an indirect approach. If you say, “Okay, you feel your body has let you down, I want you to tune into the healing self.” That might work with a lot of people. But you can see how, as with Robin, she’ll try to create a healing set, a healing idea, out of the analyzing part of her mind, rather than allowing the creative to come in.

So once we have those two opposite sides, now we have an experimental theater. And I say, “Wonderful. Now, while experiencing
both sides, let yourself just wonder what’s going to begin happening next. And here’s where my voice is methodologically slowed down—many pauses, many gaps—for their inner world to rush in. So my suggestion—I am giving a direct suggestion—but I’m giving it in a very open-ended way. So that is a mind-body approach. This is a classic. Human beings fall into dualities: I want to do this but my body has let me down there.

3–25
As soon as you see a duality, you know that that is a stuck point in the personality. The thing is how to get those two dualities, how to get those two sides working together. Traditionally, with psychoanalysis, the analyst comes down with an interpretation, and the interpretation is supposed to heal. And I’ve worked with that modality, and it’s interesting, but not quite as exciting as this approach that allows the patient’s own creativity to come in. Because as clever as the therapist’s interpretation might be, as clever as their… as worthy as their suggestions might be, they never quite fit the individuality of the client as well as when the client finds their own words to do it. So that is the shift from my earlier psychoanalytic training, those very careful interpretations. It assumed that the locus of control and expertise was in the therapist. This approach is almost a reverse.

3–26
It’s assuming that the expertise, the uniqueness of the healing function that’s different in each one of us, is in the client. The therapist’s job is something different. It’s not to analyze, it’s not to be Mr. Answer-person, but rather to create a situation where the patient’s own resources can come forth.

Carlson: It sounds very Rogerian, then, very person-focused, person-centered.

Rossi: Yes.

Carlson: And it’s a way to really heighten the meaning, though.

Rossi: I wonder if I can tell you an anecdote about that.

Carlson: Sure.
Rossi: You know, I worked with Erickson the last eight years of his life, and all throughout that period I finally... I had a continual series of epiphanies where I found, “Now I understand what you’re doing.”

Carlson: Sounds spiritual to me.

3–27
Rossi: One of my first epiphanies—I’d been working with him for about six months, and Erickson was in a wheelchair, he was mostly paralyzed, he could move the fingers on one hand, he could use the other hand to move it to write and so forth. The poor man was really locked in this body, had polio twice. So every morning we would get together around 10:00. He’d still be trying to wake up, you know. I’d rush in with my eager stuff. So one day I was just bursting, “Dr. Erickson, I understand now, really, what you’re doing.” Poor man looked up, you know. “Okay, what is it?” “You know, you call your approach nondirective. Rather, Rogers calls his approach nondirective. You call your approach indirective. But you know, really, they’re the same thing.” Oh, that poor man. He couldn’t move much of his body, but I saw visible stiffening, a tilting of the chin. And finally he stumbled out with, “Carl Rogers calls his approach nondirective, and it is nondirective. I call my approach indirect, but I’m very directive in my indirection.”

3–28
What do you do with someone... So in other words, it’s really not... There’s a strong assumption. And my strong assumption is, “Hey, I know it’s fact. Those brain cells are growing. When do they grow? When there’s novelty, when there’s something new. When there’s pain, or when there’s what Jung would call the numinosum: that which is tremendous and mysterious. That’s the continual fascination of the general public, with fascinating rituals or exotic remedies. Or an exotic doctor coming from a foreign land. I mean, aren’t we overwhelmed with that in America here today? It’s like…

Kjos: Here’s the cure.

3–29
Rossi: Here’s the cure. Here’s a new snake oil. And we have to be
careful that we don’t fall into that. What makes our new mind-body approaches not snake oil, if you wish, is the fact that we know that there’s growth happening. We know that with the growth—actually a 15 percent increase in brain growth—hippocampus can take place, with the novelty. And that’s not just with immature rats. That’s with middle-aged mice, by the way. Us, right? So there’s hope for us.

**Carlson:** So we do need to fall into some of that, that creative part.

**Rossi:** Yes, yes. I see the answer to most human problems getting that appropriate balance between the new coming out, the new solutions, because every generation is new and different, and the constraints that you mentioned. There has to be always a creative integration.

**Audience Member #5:** Can I ask a question about theory now?

**Carlson:** Sure.

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Carlson:** That’s called something.

**Rossi:** Yes, that’s called the ultradian rhythms. You know, circadian rhythm means about every 24 hours. Ultradian means any mind-body rhythm that’s less than 20 hours, but technically I really use it for what Kleitman calls the basic rest activity cycle. Every hour and a half or two, we go through a natural period of activity and rest, even at night in our dreams. For every hour and a half, we hit high activity during the REM, dream sleep. Then we go back deeper into sleep. I’ve studied this. I’ve edited books on this. Why these cycles? Why these rhythms? To the best of my knowledge, it’s because it takes about an hour and a half for those immediate early genes to turn on in the brain and start a pattern of turning on other genes that are going to make the proteins to adapt to that outer demand.
That process takes about an hour and a half or two hours. So we’re continually going through a pattern of psychological growth, development, and rest. How I use it, right in the beginning of the session I tune into “Where’s my client in the cycle?” Sometimes, especially if you’re a hypnotherapist, people are waiting in the waiting room and they start going into trance automatically. They start getting into inner work. Other people, they’re up, their energy’s out, they’ve got something important to tell you. They’re in the top part of the cycle. So I go with it. I prefer to see my clients for about an hour and a half or two hours so that I can be with them throughout an entire cycle. But the cycle isn’t that rhythmical, uh, isn’t that regular, like a clock. Rather, it changes as a function of outer world demands. Because I’m working very intensively now, I’m going to rest a little bit later.

Or I mean I’ll rest before. In other words the mind-body, when it’s absorbed in an interesting task to the degree that I was able to help Robin find an interesting growing edge, to that very degree will she be able to turn on and come alert, start working on her growing edge. In other words, an interesting problem awakens us, gets those stress hormones going. When we’re bored, on the other hand, the brain endorphins come in and tend to quiet the system down. Not that the system is really quiet, because it often goes into other healing processes. So it’s a mixture of what I’m seeing and what we are doing. But again, I don’t try to manipulate it. I allow... I’m only manipulating one thing: helping a person get access, open space, so they can possibly have a new experience that’s going to allow the new proteins, the new brain cells, so they can create their own solution.

So does the time of day that you see a client affect the level of work they’ll be able to do?

I think so. My pattern is to save the first five hours of the day, usually the morning, for myself. I tend to be very intense in my study, in my writing. I don’t think I can be that good a therapist, because
I’m too selfish. I want stuff for my creativity. I start seeing clients usually around 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon and I might go to 5:00 or 6:00. At this time of day… it’s what the chronobiologists call the breaking points. We reach the low points of the day where we’re closer to the unconscious. And interestingly enough, it’s also a time of day when, research has shown, certain cells start dividing. It’s almost like tomorrow begins later in the afternoon. There are certain religious traditions that say the new day really begins with the sunset.

3–34

So I find that, in afternoon, early evening, I have a softer kind of consciousness. I can be much more available to my clients. I’ve done my stuff; my ego, my narcissism has had its gratification. Now I am truly a little bit softer, and I’m much more available to them. As a matter of fact, they feed me, so to speak. It gets to be a creative interaction. I get energy when a client’s going through a creative process. So that might be a kind of idiosyncratic answer to your question. I’ve done research that documents that people tend to have two or three different peaks throughout the day. At about 11:00 the larks tend to be highly hypnotizable, and there is more access to the inner world. The owls, the people who are more awake in the evening, they tend to have more accessibility around 4:00 or 5:00. So there’s all kinds of things, but for me, it’s easier in the afternoon, both personally and what I seem to be getting from my clients.

3–35

Audience Member #5: I just wanted to comment that I really had an “aha” experience when I read about the cycle of the cells, and thinking about how each cell has its own cycle and then layering it into the systems. That really got some cogs going there for me.

Rossi: Right. Each cell has its own memory. That is, a certain number of so-called memory molecules. There are proteins that are made in response to previous life circumstances so that if that circumstance comes up again, they can go right into the bloodstream, flow up to the brain, and start turning on certain brain mental sets. It’s just incredible. This is called the decade of the brain, the 1990s. It’s said that we’ve learned more in the past 10 years about the brain than
in all of previous human history. That might be a little bit of an exaggeration, but not much. It’s profound what we’re learning today, and how do we integrate this into our practical work? That’s what I hope to be able to demonstrate.

3–36

**Audience Member #7:** I noticed when you asked the question about whether Robin was a spiritual person. I think there was a momentary look on her face of some confusion or surprise, perhaps, by that question. And then she proceeded to interpret that as a religious kind of question.

**Rossi:** Yes. Notice I didn’t say, “Are you a religious person?” because that would bring me into the… I used the more neutral “spiritual.”

**Audience Member #7:** I’m thinking that there would be many clients for whom that concept of spirituality would be even more remote than it might have been for Robin.

**Rossi:** Yes. It’s also what Erickson would call a shock and surprise technique. In other words, she’s not expecting this. That momentary confusion, that’s part of trying to open up a gap in the habitual patterns of consciousness. So I will introduce a number of shocks like that.

**Audience Member #7:** Would you explain to the client who was totally thrown by that question something about spirituality, or would you let them…

3–37

**Rossi:** Yes, sometimes we might get into a discussion of what spirituality is; what is it for you? And very often we’ll come to this point that I came to with Barbara. It’s paradoxical. Some people believe spirit is how you’re supposed to be. They identify it with prayer, as in a relationship to a personal god and a cultural set of conditions. What it is to be a good person. For other people, spirit means just the opposite: freedom, the unknown that’s evolving in them. And that’s the spirit, I’ve heard said, the spirit of the scientist. The scientist reveres the unknown, the growing edge. But yes, all kinds of discussion. Hopefully not to suggest or program, but always
to try to open up the possibilities.

3–38

Carlson: We’ve covered a lot of topics and a lot of ground here in the last few minutes, and we’re nearing the end of our time. Are there any concluding remarks that you’d like to make to our group? Anything, maybe, that we haven’t covered, or some ideas that may need further exploration?

Rossi: I can say nothing other than the sense of wonder I have about the possibilities that open up to all of us, how I try to lead my own life that way everyday. I try to leave open space. Being in California, you know, we’re subject to all the gurus. All the people come and try out this stuff in California, and for many years, I really participated in that scene. Many different forms of meditation I’ve experienced, you know: the Kundalini, Zen. And they always work on me. I always get a wonderful response to them. They’ve added wonderful dimensions to my personality.

3–39

And yet as I go on, I see in all I, why didn’t I stay with any one? Because as you go on, invariably there comes to be a point where that particular belief system finds its own ceiling, and then the group starts placing constraints on you. So I have to move on to another group. So that’s become my life philosophy, the best of my wisdom. That is what the human condition is. This is the human journey. We’re continually outgrowing the limitations that have helped us up to this point, but then you have to go on. Believe it or not, that even goes between me and Erickson. He helped me a lot, but I want to really go on now. And in a sense I can say I’m very faithful to Freud, Jung, Erickson, all... Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls; all of my teachers.

3–40

But geez, if they were around now, wouldn’t they be amazed at how much more we’ve gone in the direction that they could only intuit. So I think we’re all in a profound journey, and...

Carlson: And maybe someday people will go on beyond Rossi.

Rossi: Oh I hope the hell so right now.
Carlson: Thank you, thank you very much, Ernie, for sharing your pioneering spirit with us. You’ve really gone far beyond the snake oil of Grandpa Rossi and really have helped us to learn a lot about mind-body therapy.

Rossi: Yes.

Carlson: Thank you.

Kjos: Thank you.

Video Credits

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Dr. Rossi’s online book, The New Neuroscience of Psychotherapy, Therapeutic Hypnosis and Rehabilitation: A Creative Dialogue with Our Genes written with Kathryn Rossi, PhD, explores their research

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