

# Naturalistic

Video URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIwWulmUrB4>

Learn More about the Core Competencies:

<https://www.erickson-foundation.org/core-competencies>

28:35

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

unconscious mind, naturalistic, therapist, person, trance, shortcake, headed, clear, interacting, people, leftovers, called, milton erickson, optimists, life, change, happen, charge, healthy, experience

## SPEAKERS

Dan Short, Norma Barretta

**Norma Barretta** 00:36

Here we are.

**Dan Short** 00:37

Thank you. Thank you for coming to share with us your experience, all that you've learned in a lifetime of teaching and practicing Ericksonian therapy. And so what we want to know more about right now is this concept of being naturalistic. What does it mean for when a therapist is practicing as an Ericksonian therapist and their showing a competency of being naturalistic.

**Norma Barretta** 01:03

I'd start with saying that you're telling them what to do without telling them what to do.

**Dan Short** 01:12

Okay.

**Norma Barretta** 01:12

So the verbiage needs to be hidden inside of a longer container. So think in terms of a sentence, and you've got little portions of that sentence that are called phrases. And every once in a while, you'll stick in a phrase that literally is addressing the unconscious mind, and you slip in the message that you want that person to receive.

**Dan Short** 01:43

Okay, so right away, the first thing I noticed you saying is that we're hiding messages or we're slipping in messages and we're talking to the unconscious mind. So could you explain to me when you're being naturalistic, is there any role for talking to or interacting with a conscious mind or is it all strictly the unconscious mind?

**Norma Barretta** 02:02

I don't know. Because only that person could answer that question. I like to send the conscious mind out for coffee. And then focus on addressing the unconscious mind. So I presuppose that I've got contact, I call that stepping over a velvet edge to get in touch, in contact with that person's very creative, unconscious mind.

**Dan Short** 02:34

So when you're stepping over the velvet edge, you are starting to access resources that are within the unconscious mind rather than something somewhere...

**Norma Barretta** 02:43

That would be the ideal outcome. And if they don't have the resources, you have to help that person build those resources in some way. And if you tell them directly, you get this thing that's called resistance and there is no such thing as resistance there are only very inflexible therapists.

**Dan Short** 03:11

Okay. Okay. So when we're being naturalistic, we're stepping over this velvet, across the velvet line. William James said something similar. He didn't use the mind, the word conscious unconscious mind as much as he did beyond the margin. So we talked about going beyond the margin, which I guess is what you're saying. And if a therapist is willing and able to do that, then you're saying things should flow pretty easily and pretty automatically for the client?

**Norma Barretta** 03:40

Provided there's excellent rapport.

**Dan Short** 03:43

Provided there's excellent rapport.

**Norma Barretta** 03:45

If you don't have rapport, you're not going to be able to make contact. But once you've established a really solid rapport, you can get away with just about anything.

**Dan Short** 03:57

Okay? Okay. Okay with that solid rapport, the person feels safe, I assume. They feel like they can trust you. And so their guards come down, and they start to interact with you in a way that gets us a little more spontaneous, a little more automatic, or they're more free to discover.

**Norma Barretta** 04:16

No barriers.

**Dan Short** 04:17

No barriers. Okay.

**Norma Barretta** 04:20

That's exactly right.

**Dan Short** 04:21

Okay. So one of this, when we were developing this concept of naturalistic, one of the things that a lot of Ericksonian therapists report is that they'll have their clients come back to them and say, you know, I don't know how you did it, you know, or I don't know, I can't even say what's different in me or how it changed. I just know I'm different. And I know it has to do with this work I did here. Thank you. Can you speak to that?

**Norma Barretta** 04:48

Often, often. In fact, I brought a note that was sent to me just before I came. This is a patient that I saw probably 30 years ago when her therapist, who is a student of mine, got stuck. And so Karen, the therapist, sent her into me. She writes, I woke up this morning The Shenandoah playing in my head. I looked

it up and it's an old song, a sea chantey possibly sung while the sailors worked, I sang it as a child at school. I believe that as I rested, I was working to clear and maneuver the rivers in my lungs. She has clots in her lungs. The correlation would seem crazy to most or silly, but I know that you would understand. Then I began to think 118 years ago a man was born and now is directly affecting my life. Who is his man, Milton Erickson? How has the universe worked at all out? I was led to Karen. She was led to you Dr. Barretta, you were led to Milton Erickson. And now I directly benefit from the work skill of three people. Me, an average person with a fifth grade reading level. She's way beyond a fifth grade reading level as you can tell from her language. That's the sort of thing that I just love. This was a very, very difficult case. I saw her probably, as I say, probably 30 or more years ago, then she was okay for a long time. She came back recently because she found me on Google. And she said I just have some things that are left over. So guess what I said?

**Dan Short** 07:03

What do you say?

**Norma Barretta** 07:04

What do you do with leftovers? You can only keep them maybe two, three days...

**Dan Short** 07:10

...then you have to throw them out. So you were calling on her years and years of experience because she's had leftovers for years and years. She knew at a deep level, unconsciously, exactly what to do with leftovers, you throw them out. Right? And so that is something that would happen within her. She would grasp that knowledge without even having to think about it.

**Norma Barretta** 07:35

Yes, because it's implied leftovers don't last more than a few days. That's why they're called leftovers. Yes. And if you want to do right by them, you toss them away when they're no longer useful.

**Dan Short** 07:49

Okay. Okay, so for those people who are watching this, who aren't trained in Ericksonian therapy, if they want to be able to do this thing called being naturalistic, there's going to be the use of implication The use of story, or some metaphors. Is there other ways that you're able to kind of cross this velvet line and

**Norma Barretta** 08:08

I'd say build your vocabulary. I think Dr. Erickson probably read an unabridged dictionary from cover to cover and memorized it. The more words you know, especially ambiguous words ambiguity is the key to being naturalistic.

**Dan Short** 08:28

Interesting.

**Norma Barretta** 08:28

Really important.

**Dan Short** 08:29

Ambiguity is the key to being naturalistic. If you could explain that just a little bit.

**Norma Barretta** 08:34

Yeah, we'll take the word run. Okay. R U N. Three letters. Would you believe that there are 142 meanings for that word in an unabridged dictionary?

**Dan Short** 08:48

Because you say it, I believe it but I would not have guessed.

**Norma Barretta** 08:51

Well take a look. You know, I keep the dictionary when I'm teaching there's a unabridged Oxford English Dictionary in my office. And if the students don't believe me, I say open it up.

**Dan Short** 09:03

Yes.

**Norma Barretta** 09:04

It's been open so many times it just opens naturally to that page, but it goes on for a couple of pages.

**Dan Short** 09:10

Okay. Okay, so, you know, to me it seems like people who do hypnosis in a traditional way classical hypnosis, they do post hypnotic suggestion. Most everybody knows to use that. But when you're going to have something change in the person automatically without them having to think about it or make it happen. Usually posthypnotic suggestion is the only vehicle or means you know you're going to when the persons in trance you suggest this thing can happen automatically. And then it does. So there's been...

**Norma Barretta** 09:43

You just used the word that I love - change. Well, if you have \$100 bill, you're going to get a lot of change when you change it. If you make a little purchase, maybe four bucks, you're going to get 96 pieces of change, that's a lot of change. If you make a large purchase, maybe it'll be just a little change. Now from that very ambiguous group of words, the person can make a decision all by themselves. Do I want a big change? Or do I want a little change?

**Dan Short** 10:23

Exactly. And then you're creating the freedom for them to do that, because you haven't stated exactly...

**Norma Barretta** 10:30

We're opening their possibilities. We're opening up more choice.

**Dan Short** 10:35

You haven't told them what they should do, or you haven't made any demands of them. You haven't even told them what they will do. You're just opening up possibilities for choice and opportunity.

**Norma Barretta** 10:45

What do you suppose would happen if I told somebody what they should do?

**Dan Short** 10:50

They're going to be set up for failure or performance anxiety...

**Norma Barretta** 10:53

That's when the resistance comes in. All kinds of horrible things, actually. Oh, yes. Okay, so there's this freedom for the person to decide what they will do, what they're able to do, what they're may be surprised to do because with a

naturalistic trance, I assume there's some people sometimes are surprised by what they've done. Well, I, you know, I wrote this down because I wanted to remember it. But look, it can be a surprise that you never expected to be such a delight. And that's a recognition that you're really in charge of all your choices. And that's tapping into your personal power. Most people don't know that they have personal power.

**Dan Short** 11:39

They've lost touch with their personal power, for whatever reasons. And what you're doing when you're working with them is you're helping them get back in touch with their ability to change, to grow, to learn, to become something new, something more.

**Norma Barretta** 11:54

I want them to see it. I want them to hear it. I want them to feel it. I want a total sensory adaptation of whatever those changes are going to be.

**Dan Short** 12:08

A total sensory adaptation. So this goes outside of the realm of words and thoughts. It's much more than

**Norma Barretta** 12:14

It's a sensory experience sensory, see it, hear it, feel it, maybe even taste it and smell it.

**Dan Short** 12:21

Okay. As a growing living organism that's capable of this kind of changes, that's the most natural thing that can happen. You're helping guide the person back to this essentially.

**Norma Barretta** 12:34

It's as if they... there are no maps, okay? They have to make their own map, but it's as if I'm help. I'm the cartographer who's instructing them on map making skills, but it's up to them to create their own maps.

**Dan Short** 12:51

Okay, as they say, as self organizing creatures, human beings are made to problem solve independently and what meaning there going to have in life or how much or little they're going to do

**Norma Barretta** 13:03

Dan, it's a do it yourself inside job.

**Dan Short** 13:05

It's a do it yourself inside job. I really like that. Okay, any last few things you have to say either about maybe how you see people not quite doing this right or can you know things that we should be concerned about or? Or is it?

**Norma Barretta** 13:23

Well, when a person walks into my office, they know what I do. It's no secret. Do I do a formal trance induction? Only if they demand it, and they hardly ever demand it because by the fourth or fifth sentence, they're already in a trance state.

**Dan Short** 13:43

Okay. And it's understood that that's the experience they're coming to you for. And when I was contrasting earlier, the idea of a classically trained hypnotist, they might use posthypnotic suggestion to say something will happen

automatically. What you're doing is it's throughout the entirety of the therapy as you're interacting with the person, maybe even outside of trance, you're interacting with them in such a way that you communicate the idea that you expect them to be able to change and to be able to have things happen for them automatically...

**Norma Barretta** 14:17

I am the ultimate optimist. And we start with you know, optimists are healthier. Optimists are happier. The third component blew the researchers away. Optimists are luckier.

**Dan Short** 14:33

Oh, that's blowing me away. Optimists are luckier.

**Norma Barretta** 14:36

Luckier! Pessimists, on the other hand, are very unhappy. They're very unhealthy, or extremely unlucky.

**Dan Short** 14:43

I've met these individuals, and they have the worst luck, their house catches on fire, they're caught in a rainstorm...

**Norma Barretta** 14:49

Everything goes wrong.

**Dan Short** 14:50

Everything goes wrong.

**Norma Barretta** 14:52

Around our house when something goes wrong, say well, just another thing that we got to get rid of and have to get done. So life goes on. If you allow those things to interfere with your own progress, you're sabotaging yourself.

**Dan Short** 15:09

So as a therapist, we're working with people, if we're optimistic that something good will come of our meeting and talking to this person, you're saying we're going to be luckier, get better outcomes.

**Norma Barretta** 15:19

Better believe that.

**Dan Short** 15:20

Great. Now Norma, you'd offer to demonstrate this for so we can kind of see what it looks like and demonstrate with your daughter.

**Norma Barretta** 15:26

I happen to have a very good subject right here.

**Dan Short** 15:29

I'm going to move off camera and just let her come on here and you can do the work with.

**Norma Barretta** 15:35

So Jolie, you remember, I know you remember all those times when we get home from Phoenix. And we would go right to you before we even unpacked our bags. And I would say maybe sometimes it would take you as long as 98 seconds to go into a trance. And I would really appreciate If you just remember to remember how you do that and allow yourself to step over that

velvet edge into that wonderful, creative, unconscious mind of yours that's been kind of holding on to something that really is becoming irrelevant. Unserviceable and actually, probably gets in the way of your good, healthy, healthful, ecological balance. And so I'm going to suggest that you think about what that might be and figure out with the help of your creative, unconscious mind what to do to resolve it. So that instead of having to view it through watery understanding eyes, you're able to think about it in a different way. Clearly, clear headed in a brand new direction. Kind of changing that old map into a different one. Allowing yourself to forget in a positive way. Put it in the past. It's just part of your history. Just part of your history, part of experience that you've experienced. And it's been, what, four years and seven months and six days but who's counting? And so, it really is the right time. Maybe even the right moment to say kiss today. Good bye and point me to tomorrow. Because today is going to be tomorrow tomorrow. And every tomorrow after that can be free and clear, breathing easy, free and clear, clear headed. Clear headed in a very useful new direction. Take charge of this. Stay in charge of it. You know how that goes. All those externals are just externals. You can't control them but you can ignore them. And you know what you're in charge of that internal self. You're in charge of how you respond. So change that old response. Change it. That's right point the way point the way into being clear headed. Clear, headed, bright, shiny eyes. Looking ahead to a wonderfully, remarkably happy, contented, healthy, healthful, ecologically balanced life. For giving yourself options possibilities, new ways interacting with old experiences. It's a golden opportunity, a golden opportunity for giving yourself a chance to reach up to face any challenge that comes along. Most especially that old now irrelevant one that goes into the archives. Just part of your history. Just part of your history. So here is an opportunity. Being able to look forward in a different way. For giving yourself new options, new choices new ways of thinking about those old times. And I think we'd have to agree. It was

a great run. You shared 60 years of it. Was great. So let it be what it was. And what it was, was indeed unforgettable. And let's leave it with that. A delightfully wonderful, humorous, funny time in our lives. And you can even think about those crazy jokes he liked to tell. Remember the one about shortcake. Chief shortcake the head of a tribe and he dies. And the tribe wants to honor him with a great burial service. But his wife says no. Squaw berry shortcake. And when you think about that, and you can laugh about it and all those places where you used to grieve, you can think about chief shortcake and tickle yourself pink. Take a moment to notice the deep comfort that comes with this experience. And get the maximum benefit. Most especially that part about being clear, headed, bright, shiny, eyes clear headed, really clear headed and integrate that, integrate it at the deepest level. Make sure you can see that integration. Hear that integration and most importantly, feel that integration at the deepest, deepest level. That's right. The deepest level, a little bit like giving yourself a hand up to integrate it totally, completely fully from this moment forward. And that's a very different perspective. That's interesting about perspectives. You know what Epictetus said. I think he was an old Greek guy, Epictetus. He said, it's not the thing itself that affects us. It's our perception of that thing. And our perception is in our charge and therefore we get to choose our response. And then that great Italian guy, Marcus Aurelius. He said it again in a different way. You remember that it's just part of your history. So you can step forward before long. Maybe even before tomorrow and all the tomorrow's to follow will have you clear headed integrate deeply, clear headed, clear eyed, clarity of thought in every possible good way. Health healthy, healthful, ecological balance. Thank you very much Jolie. Whenever you're ready just open your eyes.