



# NYSEPH NEWSLETTER

The New York Milton H. Erickson Society for Psychotherapy and Hypnosis  
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Milton Erickson taught us that language can heal or hurt, perhaps even kill or cure. Who in this world can teach that better than Kay Thompson?

We take pride in announcing that Kay Thompson, D.D.S. will join the faculty of our NYSEPH Training program and will begin Friday evening, March 4th to teach an advanced advanced course for NYSEPH students and graduates. This is in keeping with our commitment to excellence and to our belief that integrating Ericksonian hypnotherapeutic techniques takes consistent daily practice over a relatively long period of time. Learning a way of thinking that is attunement to process permeates everything we do. It is the ongoing awareness of the interfacing of language, the sensory motor system and states of consciousness. This is the awareness of what Feldenkrais called "The Elusive Obvious."

Use of language is a particularly poignant topic for me at this moment. Recently my husband came down with pneumonia and spent seventeen days in the intensive care unit of a large New York City hospital. The initial comfort and security of the machines and

monitors, the endless chartings and the split-second staff teamwork is soon counteracted by the absence of the human connection. That "special relationship" that Erickson spoke of, so important to the healing process is non-existent. There is constant time distortion, pattern interruption, confusion, as days and nights blend together, staff rotates, as lights stay on and people wordlessly with consummate depersonalized skill pierce one vein after another, braiding and unbraiding the bottles and IV's to the steady beep-beep-beeping of the monitors. Experiencing this I was reminded of Ritterman's vigorous and thoughtful exploration of the methods of torture so carefully designed to separate people from their sense of their own identity, their families, their connection with life. The torturers design it that way; we do it unintentionally, with little awareness.

For seventeen days he sat in bed facing a closet full of hospital supplies and a nursing station where harried nurses, students, and residents only had time to talk to him when he needed something, where he watched stretchers being wheeled in, and in one

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## INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE RITTERMAN, Ph.D.

**Michelle Ritterman** received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Temple University and completed her training at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. She began studying with Erickson in 1975 and has published numerous articles on the use of Ericksonian hypnotherapy techniques in family therapy. Dr. Ritterman authored *Using Hypnosis in Family Therapy, the first comprehensive integration of Ericksonian hypnosis and family therapy*, and she has also written on problems of forced exiles and victims of torture. This is the second part of the interview we did last year.

**MR:** I think people can be entranced by any number of forces, not all of them positive. I think people can be influenced by their context to behave automatically in very destructive ways. Look at the paper called "The Inhumanity of Ordinary People," that Erickson

wrote which reviewed the Milgrim studies where people without anything other than a laboratory context were willing to give very severe electric shocks to people that they saw in another room expressing increasing pain. They did so without any trance induction process or pressure to do so. There's good and evil in every person and there are good and evil trances as well. In other words, the trance state I see is a neutral state that can be occupied by anything.

**JP:** You mean it's like a space?

**MR:** I see it like a space that can get filled up by bad or good. It's not an inherently moral state: it's a state whose morality would have to be determined. Certainly there is morality to be attached to these states. Are people dissociated if they know that they're sending money to Latin America that's being used to kill

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**KAY THOMPSON, D.D.S.**  
Advanced NYSEPH Course  
Spring 1988  
**DOROTHY LARKIN, M.A., R.N.**  
Nurses Hypnosis Training Course  
Spring 1988  
**AMNON NADAV, M.A.**  
and **DOROTHY LARKIN, M.A., R.N.**  
Physicians Hypnosis Training Course  
Spring 1988

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