

# Bill O'Hanlon's Six New CDs

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Followers of Bill O'Hanlon will delight in the recent release of his six new CDs, all influenced by the work of Milton H. Erickson. If you don't know much about Milton Erickson, this set of CDs will serve as a good introduction to Ericksonian hypnosis.

The recordings demonstrate O'Hanlon's versatility with hypnosis, rapport, and story-telling. In each 40- to 60-minute presentation, his voice is friendly and comforting to listen to, with excellent inflection and pacing. Bill tells his stories in such a relaxed and casual manner that they seem spontaneous and fresh, as though you were hearing them over a mug of beer or a cup of coffee. Here is a brief review on each CD.

## **Meetings with a Remarkable Man: Personal Tales of Milton Erickson**

O'Hanlon begins this recording with an engaging story about how he came to meet and study with Milton Erickson. While in graduate school, O'Hanlon came across a fascinating story about Erickson in Life magazine and became determined to meet the man. He devised a plan to exchange gardening services for the opportunity to talk with Erickson and observe his work. Bill shares his own observations about Erickson's amazingly intuitive approach to therapy and teaching.

Next, Bill goes on to tell Erickson's story, describing several life-changing events in Erickson's life, in which Erickson coped with physical disabilities, pain, and hardship, to become a physician and legendary hypnotherapist. These stories show the shaping of Erickson's personality, as well as his brilliant mind and uncanny skills of communication and observation. These stories will touch listeners at both the conscious and the unconscious levels, with examples of individual strength and resilience.

## **Calm beneath the Waves: Help Relieve Panic, Anxiety and Desperation**

In the tradition of Milton Erickson, O'Hanlon crafts a series of stories about people facing anxiety and fear, and their ability to move beyond those experiences. Bill gets into rapport with listeners by telling of times in his own life when he felt anxious or panicked or hopeless. The admission is humanizing and levels the playing field between speaker and listener.

Bill then tells entrancing and uplifting stories about people who managed to confront and reframe debilitating fears and do something different to interrupt illogical patterns of thinking and behavior. Each story is engaging and easy to imagine, and all are ideal for anyone immobilized by irrational fear.

## **Moving On: Two Healing Trances for Resolving Sexual Abuse**

On the first track of this two-track recording, O'Hanlon creates a hypnotic induction that suggests flexibility and choice. He models Erickson's gentle permissiveness and application of metaphor. The themes in the trance-work explore how survival and reframing of a trauma can lead to a sense of life purpose, and to realizing a spiritual, core self. These stories speak about changing the meaning of one's life story, maintaining boundaries, and reaching self-acceptance and validation.

In the second track, O'Hanlon makes the point that recovery is a step-by-step process. He encourages listeners to take their own next step. He reframes the experience of sexual abuse so that listeners feel encouraged to reclaim a sense of self, redefine identity, and see a future of possibilities. The themes include suffering and recovery, perfection and imperfection, and redemption, all beautifully explored in Bill's kind and nurturing voice. I would definitely recommend this CD for survivors of sexual abuse.

## **Beside Yourself with Comfort: Hypnotic Help for Chronic or Acute Pain Relief**

On this CD, O'Hanlon hypnotically suggests and describes many methods for reducing pain. He invites readers to consider each one and choose those that work best. First, Bill discusses acute awareness of sensations, then distraction, and then reframing pain as a body signal that has served its purpose. He tells stories of people, such as Milton Erickson, who demonstrated nontraditional methods for overcoming pain.

O'Hanlon also helps listeners to alter pain's visual submodalities and dissociate from pain. He speaks of analogies that suggest habituation to pain. He tells of how people develop calluses, for example, to reduce skin sensitivity. He also recommends that listeners shift the habits that pain has brought into their daily living. He tells listeners to challenge their pain-related habits and find one small method to "win back some of your life from pain." Bill's message suggests imagination and flexibility in coping with pain, guiding people to find untapped resources within.

## **Keep Your Feet Moving: Favorite Teaching and Healing Tales**

Listen to this CD and you might feel the "narrative imperative" to document and record your own favorite teaching and healing tales. Here is a small collection of entertaining and heart-warming stories that showcase O'Hanlon's story-telling talents. Like

a series of audio Rorschach inkblots, Bill lets listeners derive their own meanings and reach their own conclusions. In these stories I found themes of resilience in adversity, refusal to be overwhelmed by fear, and making progress in small incremental steps.

What I like about this CD is Bill's easy-going way of relating tales of mythology, magic, personal experience, gifted people, and ordinary people doing extraordinary things. I was mesmerized by the story of how couples can remember how they fell in love. Bill tells the story of how Roger Bannister broke the four-minute-mile barrier. In the story of the African Violet Queen of Milwaukee, Bill relates how Milton Erickson helped a depressed woman find purpose and meaning. Each story is delivered skillfully, with a forceful ending.

Bill concludes with a stunning account of psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who survived the German concentration camps and took his message of life and meaning to the world. The message is that a compelling vision of the future gives one a reason to go on living, despite pain and tragedy. If you want to be amused, astonished, riveted, and emotionally moved, listen to this CD!

### **Let Your Soul be Your Pilot: Finding Your Direction in Life**

This CD takes a philosophical turn. Bill tells his listeners that they can find life purpose in three ways: through their wounds, through their anger, and through their bliss. Wounds, anger and bliss can be life's way of grabbing people by the lapels and shouting, "This is what you are supposed to do!"

Bill tells stories about people who found meaning in life by surviving suffering and tragedy. "Your wound is your opening to the world...You can close down, or you can go out and change the world."

What makes you angry? Bill reminds us that out of anger, people can acknowledge inequity and injustice. They can then transform their anger into energy, which provides the impetus to speak out, support a cause, and find a calling.

Bliss makes the heart pound and compels us to action. Bill asks us to examine our own sources of inspiration and happiness. Our soul's path can also be found in the friendship, love, and mentoring of others who have seen and admired our talents and potentials. To make the point, he includes his own stories of how he became fascinated with psychotherapy and solution-oriented therapy. For people who want to discover their life purpose, this CD is perfect!

### **Conclusion**

These CDs make for well-spent listening time. Throughout these teaching tales, O'Hanlon's warmth and charm shine through. Additionally, the CDs touch on themes that psychotherapists and coaches often encounter in their work: fear, pain, recovery, meeting a life challenge, and finding purpose. As a mental health therapist, I will certainly be recommending these recordings to my clients.

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