A VISUAL SUMMARY

The Milton Model

in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

Artfully vague language patterns modelled from the work of psychiatrist and hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson — what they are, how they work, and how to use them responsibly.

History · Principles · 23 language patterns · Scripts · Ethics · Practice

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SECTION 01

What Is the Milton Model?

The Milton Model is a set of language patterns that use deliberately general, permissive wording so that a listener fills in the meaning from their own experience. It was described by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in 1975 after studying the hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson.

Where most communication training teaches you to be **precise**, the Milton Model teaches you to be **artfully vague**. Instead of telling someone exactly what to experience, you offer a frame wide enough that they can step into it in their own way. Because the details come from the listener, the resulting thoughts, images and feelings tend to feel like *theirs* — and are therefore less likely to be resisted.

In NLP the model is usually presented as the mirror image of the **Meta Model**, the set of precision questions Bandler and Grinder had published earlier the same year. The Meta Model "chunks down" to recover missing detail; the Milton Model "chunks up", deliberately leaving detail out.

1975	Erickson	~23	Inverse
Year the model was first published	The hypnotherapist whose language was modelled	Core language patterns in common NLP teaching	Mirror image of the Meta Model

The same idea, expressed at five levels of specificity



Figure 1. Milton Model language sits toward the vague end of the spectrum; the Meta Model sits at the specific end.

Definition

In one sentence: **the Milton Model uses vague but well-structured language to pace a person's current experience and lead them toward helpful internal states, without telling them exactly what to think.**

SECTION 02

Milton H. Erickson: The Source

Milton Hyland Erickson (1901–1980) was an American psychiatrist and psychologist who became one of the most influential figures in clinical hypnosis and brief therapy.

Fact	Detail
Born / died	5 December 1901, Aurum, Nevada · 25 March 1980, Phoenix, Arizona
Profession	Psychiatrist, psychologist, hypnotherapist
Formative experience	Paralysed by polio at 17; relearned movement by closely observing others and his own body
Institution building	Founding president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (1957) and founding editor of its journal
Known for	Indirect suggestion, storytelling, utilization, and tailoring every intervention to the individual

Hallmarks of the Ericksonian approach

- **Indirection** — suggestions embedded in stories, metaphors and casual conversation rather than given as orders.
- **Permissiveness** — "you *can*…", "you *may*…" instead of "you *will*…".
- **Utilization** — whatever the client brings (resistance, symptoms, noises in the room) is used as part of the process.
- **Trust in the unconscious** — the belief that people already hold the resources they need.

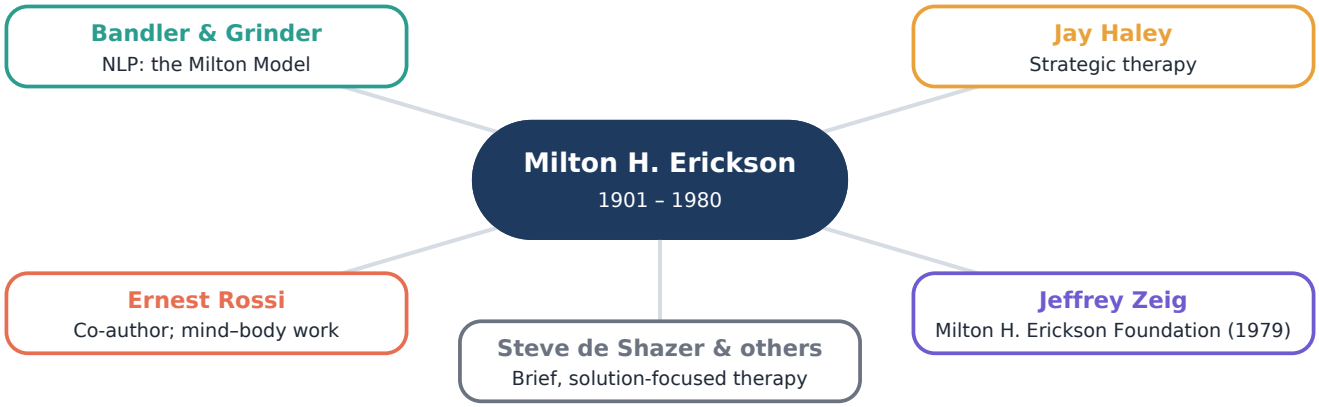


Figure 2. Erickson's influence spread through several later schools of brief therapy and communication.

SECTION 03

Origins: How the Model Was Built

In the early 1970s, Richard Bandler and John Grinder were developing NLP by "modelling" exceptional communicators. On the suggestion of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, they turned their attention to Erickson.

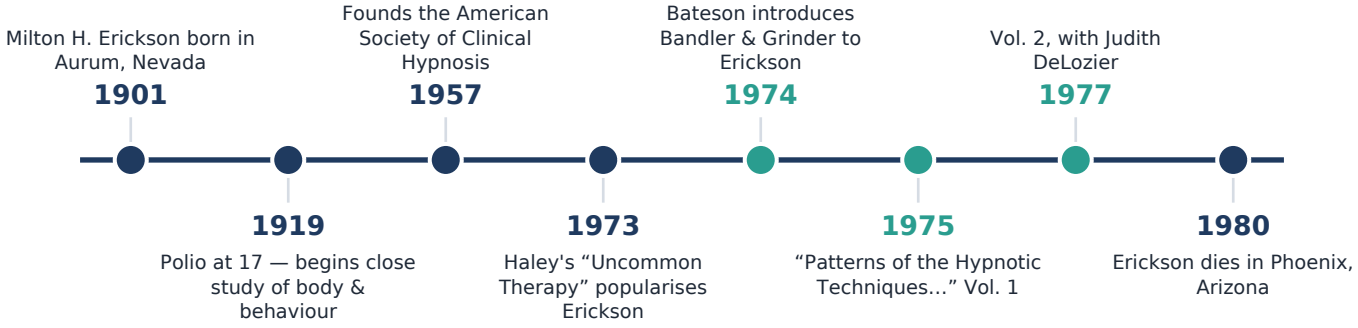


Figure 3. Key dates (spacing not to scale). The model was codified in two volumes, 1975 and 1977.

The modelling process

1 Observe
Watch & record Erickson working with clients

→

2 Imitate
Reproduce his language and behaviour until results match

→

3 Codify
Strip out what's unnecessary; name the patterns

→

4 Teach
Package as a learnable model: the Milton Model

Bandler and Grinder observed Erickson in person and on recordings, then reproduced his language until they could get similar responses. Rather than explaining *why* Erickson's methods worked in theoretical terms, they described *what* he did, using categories borrowed from transformational grammar — the same linguistic framework behind the Meta Model.

The result was published as *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.* (Volume 1, 1975; Volume 2, 1977, with Judith DeLozier). Erickson himself wrote a short foreword to the first volume. Later books, such as *Trance-formations* (1981), presented the patterns in a training format.

> **Worth knowing**
> The Milton Model is a **description** of one practitioner's style, filtered through NLP's own categories. It is not the same as Ericksonian hypnotherapy as taught by Erickson's direct clinical successors, who often emphasise different aspects of his work.

SECTION 04

Meta Model vs. Milton Model

The two models use the same map of language — deletions, distortions and generalisations — but move in opposite directions.

Dimension	Meta Model	Milton Model
Direction	Chunks **down** to specifics	Chunks **up** to generalities
Purpose	Recover missing information; clarify meaning	Leave space for the listener to supply meaning
Mind addressed	Conscious, analytical attention	Unconscious associations and imagination
Typical form	Questions: “How specifically?” “Who says?”	Statements and suggestions: “You can…” “People notice…”
Use of the patterns	Identifies and *challenges* them	Deliberately *uses* them
Result	Precision, a fuller map of experience	Rapport, trance, new associations
Published	*The Structure of Magic I* (1975)	*Patterns … of Milton H. Erickson* (1975)

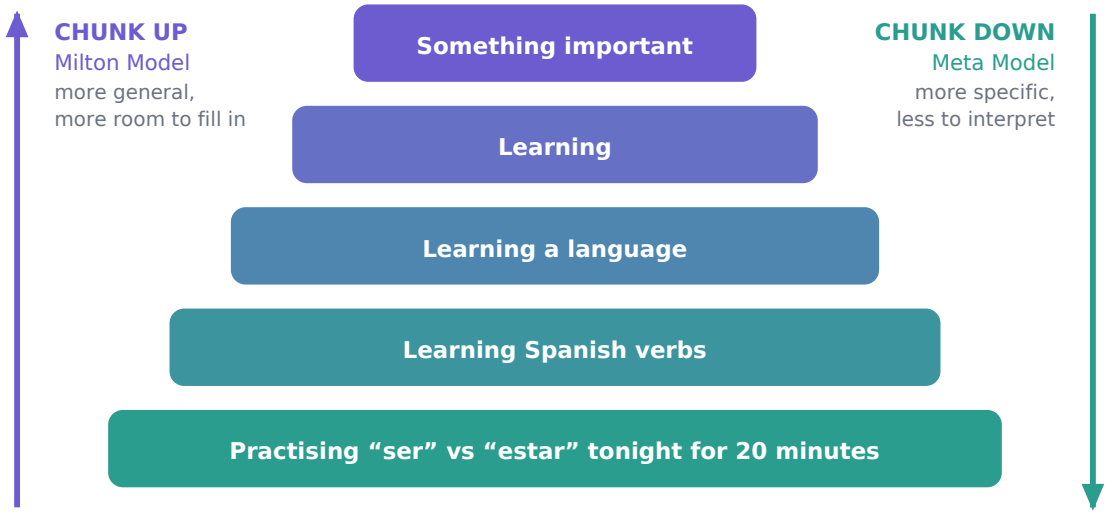


Figure 4. Chunking. Each level up removes detail; the Milton Model works at the top of this ladder, the Meta Model at the bottom.

Using both together

Skilled communicators move both ways: chunk up to build agreement (“we all want this project to succeed”), then chunk down to agree specifics (“so who will send the draft by Friday?”).

SECTION 05

Core Principles

Behind the individual patterns sit a handful of ideas that explain how and why Milton-style language is used.

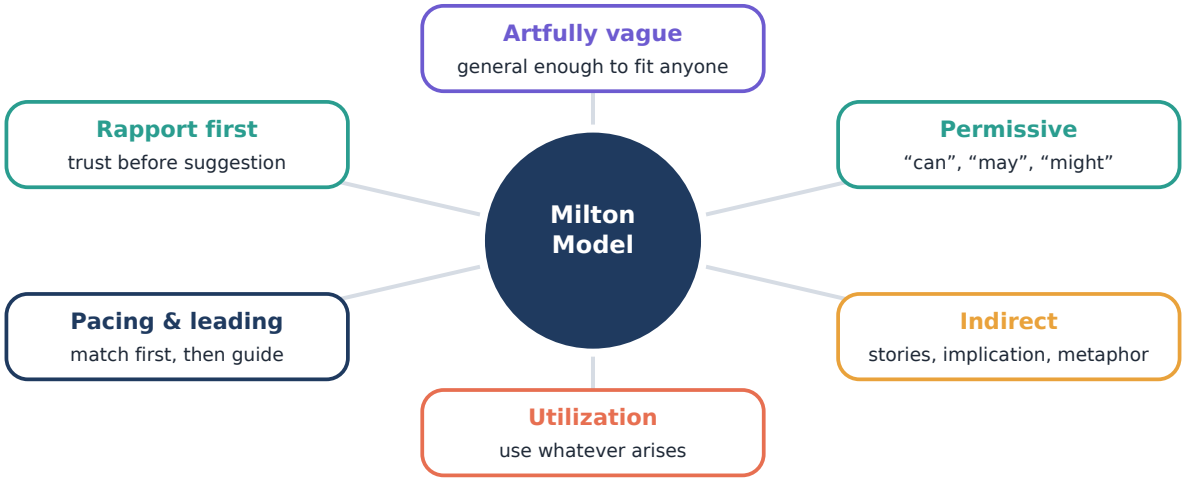


Figure 5. Six principles that underpin the language patterns.

Principle	What it means in practice
Artful vagueness	Choose words that are true for almost anyone, so the listener's own experience supplies the detail.
Permissiveness	Offer possibilities rather than commands; there is nothing to resist when nothing is demanded.
Indirection	Let suggestions arrive through stories, questions and implication instead of direct instruction.
Utilization	Treat every response, including doubt or distraction, as useful material and weave it in.
Pacing & leading	Describe what is already true, then gently add the direction you want to go.
Rapport	Patterns work through trust; without rapport they tend to sound manipulative or odd.

SECTION 06

The Conscious and the Unconscious

NLP describes Milton language as speaking past the critical, conscious mind to the larger store of unconscious experience. This is a working metaphor rather than a precise scientific model, but it explains how the patterns are meant to function.

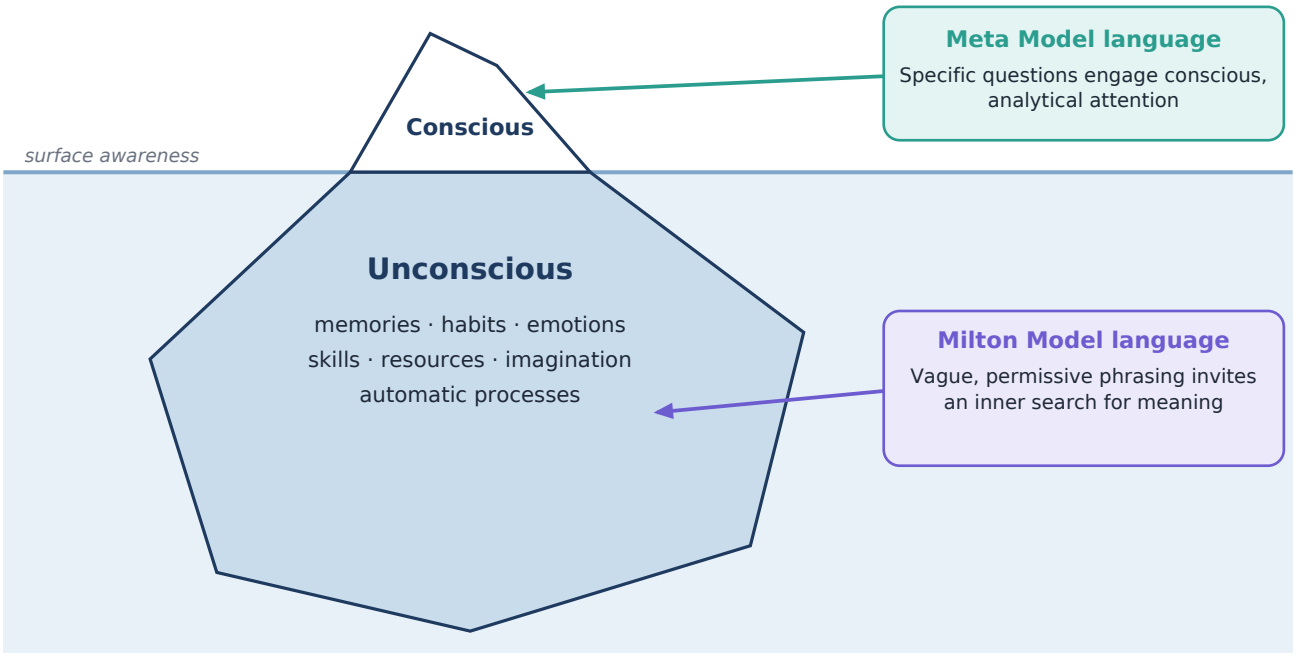
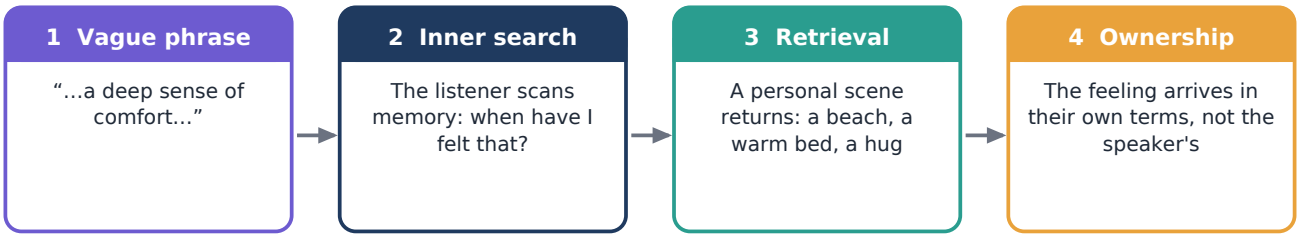


Figure 6. The iceberg metaphor used in NLP training.

Transderivational search: how vague words become personal

When a phrase is too general to have one fixed meaning, listeners automatically search their own memories to make sense of it. NLP calls this a **transderivational search**. The meaning that comes back is built from the listener's experience, so it fits them better than anything the speaker could have described.



The key idea

The more specific the speaker, the more the listener has to compare and possibly reject ("that's not what comfort is for me"). The more general the speaker, the more the listener simply fills in.

SECTION 07

Rapport, Pacing and Leading

Milton Model patterns are delivered inside a relationship. Before leading anyone anywhere, the speaker first paces — reflecting the listener's present reality so that agreement builds.

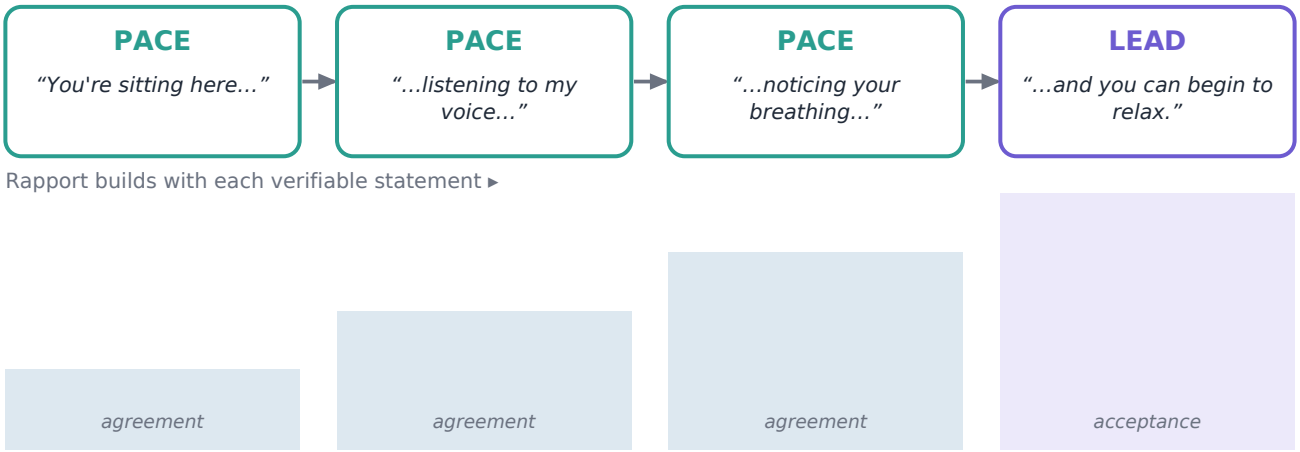


Figure 7. A common rule of thumb: several verifiable pacing statements, then one leading suggestion.

Channels for building rapport

Channel	How to pace it	Example
Words	Use the listener's own key words and phrases	They say “stuck”; you say “stuck”, not “blocked”
Voice	Match tempo, volume and rhythm, then slow gradually	Start at their pace; slow down as they relax
Body	Broadly mirror posture and gesture, never mimic	Lean back when they lean back
Breathing	Time your phrases to their out-breath	Each suggestion lands as they exhale
Experience	Describe what they can verify right now	“...the sound of my voice, the weight of your hands...”
Beliefs & values	Acknowledge what matters to them	“Because your family matters to you...”

Test your rapport

If the listener does not follow a lead, return to pacing. Leading only works when it feels like a natural next step from where they already are.

SECTION 08

Map of the Patterns

Bandler and Grinder organised Erickson's language using the same three categories as the Meta Model, plus a group of additional patterns specific to hypnotic language.

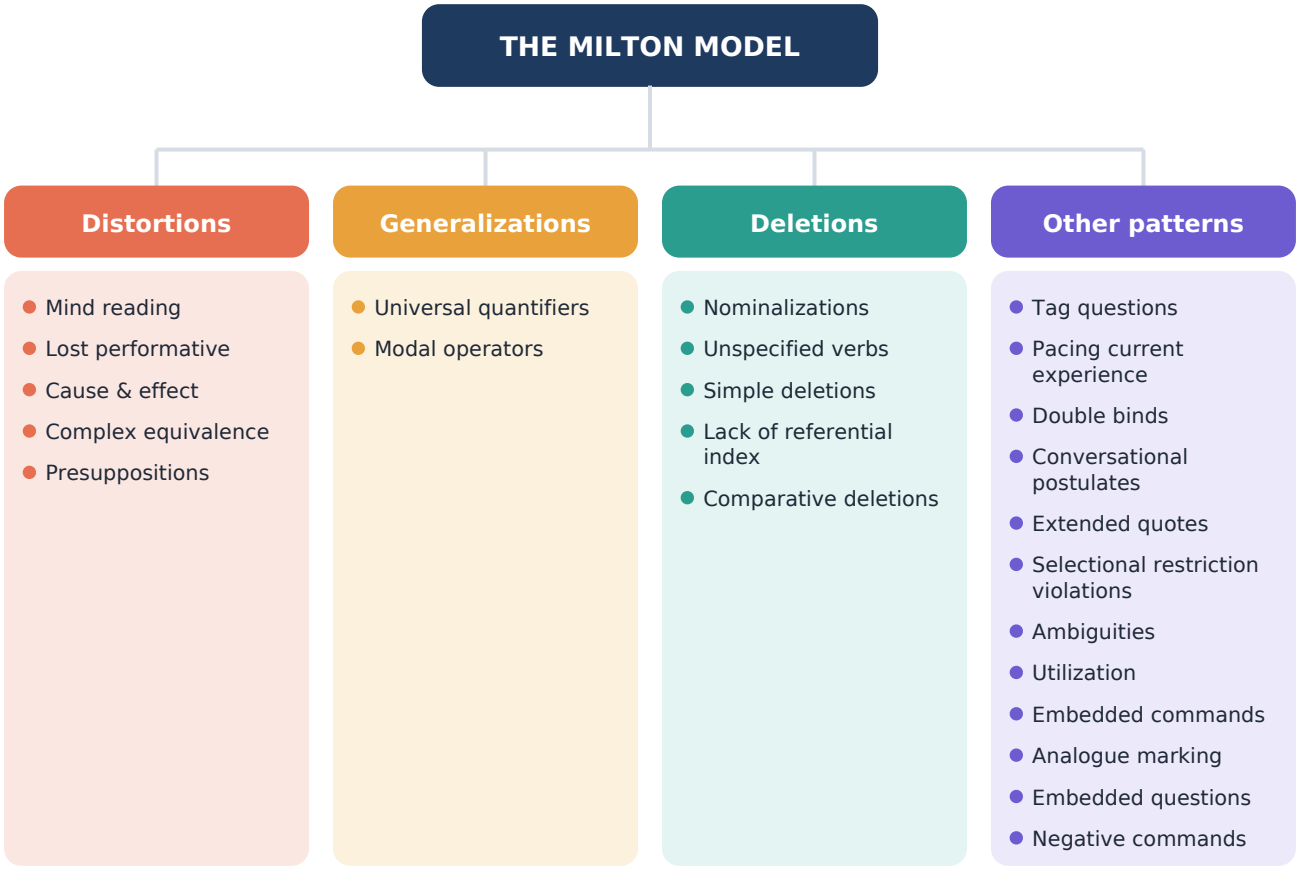


Figure 8. The Milton Model patterns grouped by category (as commonly taught in NLP).

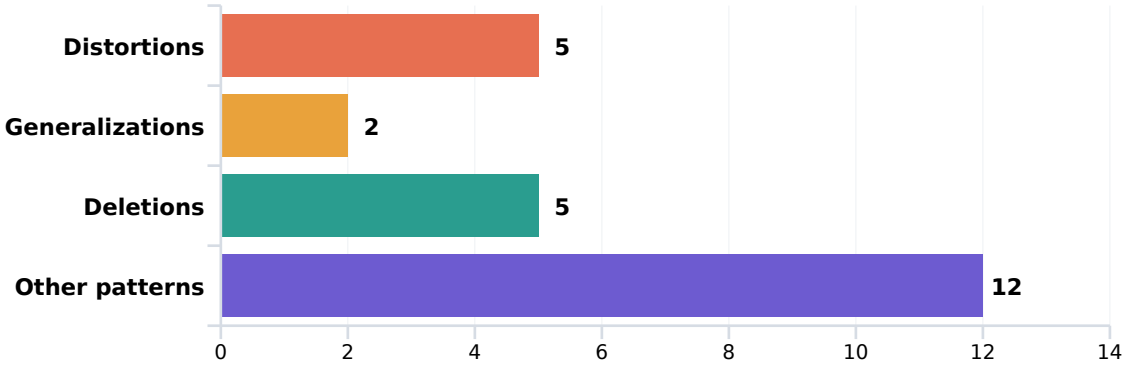


Figure 9. Number of patterns in each category on this map.

Distortions change how relationships between things are represented · **Generalizations** stretch one case to all cases · **Deletions** leave information out · **Other patterns** are hypnotic structures with no direct Meta Model equivalent.

SECTION 09

Mind Reading & Lost Performative

DISTORTION

Mind Reading

Claiming to know another person's thoughts or feelings without saying how you know. In Milton language the claim is kept general enough that it is very likely to be true, which builds rapport.

> *“You may be wondering what you'll learn next.”*
>
> *“I know you're curious about how this works.”*
>
> *“You're probably already starting to notice a change.”*

Why it works
A well-chosen mind read feels like being understood. Using “may” or “probably” keeps it safe even if it misses.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“How do you know what I'm wondering?”

DISTORTION

Lost Performative

A value judgement stated as a fact, with the person making the judgement left out. Without a source, there is no one to argue with.

> *“It's good to take time for yourself.”*
>
> *“It's right to trust your own learning.”*
>
> *“Relaxing deeply is a wonderful thing to do.”*

Why it works
The statement sounds like common sense. Because it has no author, the listener tends to accept it rather than evaluate it.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Who says it's good? Good according to whom?”

SECTION 10

Cause & Effect and Complex Equivalence

DISTORTION

Cause & Effect

Linking one thing to another as if the first causes the second. Typically, something already happening is linked to something you want to happen.

Form: X **and** Y (weakest) → **as / while / during** X, Y → X **makes / causes / forces** Y (strongest)

> *“As you listen to my voice, you can relax more deeply.”*
>
> *“Each breath you take makes you more comfortable.”*
>
> *“Sitting there allows you to notice how calm you can become.”*

Why it works
The current, undeniable experience (listening, breathing) “carries” the suggestion with it. Softer links (“as”, “while”) are gentler than hard links (“makes”, “causes”).

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“How exactly does listening cause relaxation?”

DISTORTION

Complex Equivalence

Treating two different things as meaning the same thing: “X means Y”. An observable fact is equated with an interpretation.

> *“Being here means you're ready to change.”*
>
> *“The fact that you're curious means your unconscious is already learning.”*
>
> *“Your eyes blinking means you're going deeper.”*

Why it works
It turns ordinary behaviour into evidence for the desired state, so whatever the listener does confirms progress.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“How does being here mean I'm ready?”

SECTION 11

Presuppositions

A presupposition is what must already be true for a sentence to make sense. It is the most powerful pattern in the model because the listener has to accept the assumption in order to process the sentence at all.

Type	Signal words	Example — what is presupposed
Subordinate clauses of time	before, after, during, while, as, since, when	“Before you relax completely…” — *you will relax completely*
Ordinal numbers	first, second, another, last	“Which change will you notice first?” — *there will be several*
Use of “or”	or	“Would you like to begin now or in a moment?” — *you will begin*
Awareness predicates	know, notice, realise, aware, discover	“Do you notice how comfortable you are?” — *you are comfortable*
Adverbs & adjectives	deeply, easily, quickly, curious	“How easily will you learn this?” — *you will learn it*
Change-of-time words	begin, continue, stop, still, already, yet	“You can continue to relax.” — *you are already relaxing*
Commentary words	fortunately, luckily, happily, naturally	“Fortunately, you've already started.” — *you've started*

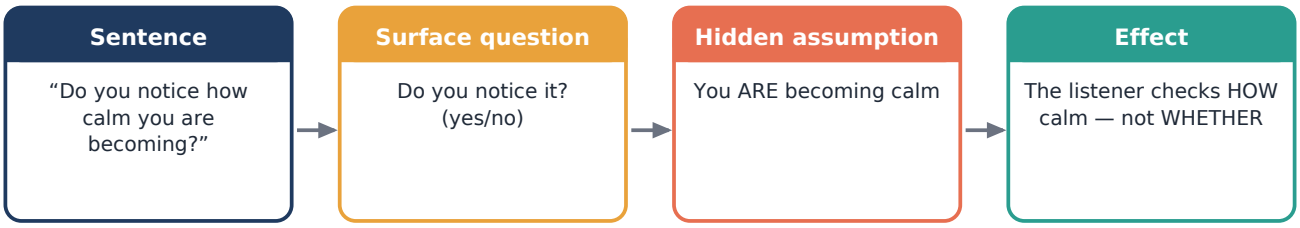


Figure 10. A presupposition shifts attention from “is it true?” to “how is it true?”.

> Meta Model challenge: *“What leads you to assume I'm becoming calm?”* Asking this exposes the presupposition — which is exactly what Milton language avoids.

SECTION 12

Universal Quantifiers & Modal Operators

GENERALIZATION

Universal Quantifiers

Words that make a statement apply to everything or nothing — with no exceptions and no specific reference.

Form: all, every, everyone, always, never, nobody, each, any

> *“Every breath you take helps you relax.”*
>
> *“All the things you've learned are available to you now.”*
>
> *“Everyone can enter a comfortable trance.”*

Why it works
They create a sweeping, confident frame. Applied to positive resources, they widen the sense of what is possible.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Every breath? Is there any breath that doesn't?”

GENERALIZATION

Modal Operators

Words of possibility or necessity that set the rules for what can, may, should or must happen.

Form: possibility: can, may, might, could, able · necessity: must, should, have to, need

> *“You can let your eyes close whenever you're ready.”*
>
> *“You may find yourself feeling lighter.”*
>
> *“You might begin to notice a change.”*

Why it works
Modal operators of **possibility** (can, may, might) are permissive: they suggest without demanding, so there is nothing to push against.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“What would happen if you couldn't?”
“What stops you?”

SECTION 13

Nominalizations & Unspecified Verbs

DELETION

Nominalizations

Process words (verbs) turned into abstract nouns. The action, who does it and how are all deleted, so the listener supplies them.

> *“You can gain new understandings and insights.”*
>
> *“There is a growing sense of comfort and confidence.”*
>
> *“Your learning can continue at its own pace.”*

Why it works
Abstract nouns are like empty containers: everyone fills “confidence” or “understanding” with their own content.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“What, specifically, will you understand? Understand how?”

The wheelbarrow test

Can you put it in a wheelbarrow? A *chair* — yes, it's a real noun. *Relaxation*, *learning*, *confidence* — no; they're processes dressed up as things.

DELETION

Unspecified Verbs

Verbs that say an action happens but not how. The listener decides the details of what doing it involves.

> *“You can learn this easily.”*
>
> *“And you can begin to change.”*
>
> *“Your mind can discover new possibilities.”*

Why it works
“Change” or “discover” could mean anything; each listener chooses the version that fits them.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“How, specifically, will I change?”

SECTION 14

Deletions: Simple, Referential & Comparative

Three further ways of leaving information out. Each one invites the listener to supply what is missing.

DELETION

Simple Deletion

A key part of the sentence is simply missing.

> *“You are ready.”*
>
> *“I know you're curious.”*

Why it works
Ready for what? Curious about what? The listener completes the sentence with whatever is most relevant to them.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Ready for what, exactly?”

DELETION

Lack of Referential Index

The person or thing the sentence refers to is unspecified.

> *“People can relax quite easily, you know.”*
>
> *“One can learn a great deal in a short time.”*

Why it works
Talking about “people” or “one” lets the listener apply it to themselves without feeling directly told.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Which people, specifically?”

DELETION

Comparative Deletion

A comparison in which what is being compared with is left out.

> *“And it's better to let that happen at its own pace.”*
>
> *“You'll find this more comfortable.”*

Why it works
Better or more than what? The implied comparison makes the suggested option sound like the obvious improvement.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Better compared to what?”

SECTION 15

Tag Questions & Pacing Current Experience

OTHER PATTERN

Tag Questions

A short question added to the end of a statement to soften it and invite agreement.

Form: ...isn't it? · ...can't you? · ...won't you? · ...didn't you? · ...right?

> *“You can relax, can't you?”*
>
> *“That's an interesting thought, isn't it?”*
>
> *“You're learning a great deal, aren't you?”*

Why it works
The tag turns a statement into a shared view and tends to draw a small, often unconscious, “yes”. It also distracts attention from the suggestion just made.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
Not a Meta Model category; simply notice the request for agreement.

OTHER PATTERN

Pacing Current Experience

Describing the listener's ongoing, verifiable experience — what they can see, hear and feel right now.

> *“You're sitting here, reading these words...”*
>
> *“...aware of the weight of your hands...”*
>
> *“...and you can hear the sounds in the room around you.”*

Why it works
Every statement is undeniably true, so the listener's internal response is a steady series of “yes”. That agreement then extends to the lead that follows.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
Not a Meta Model category; the statements are fully verifiable by design.

Building a “yes set”

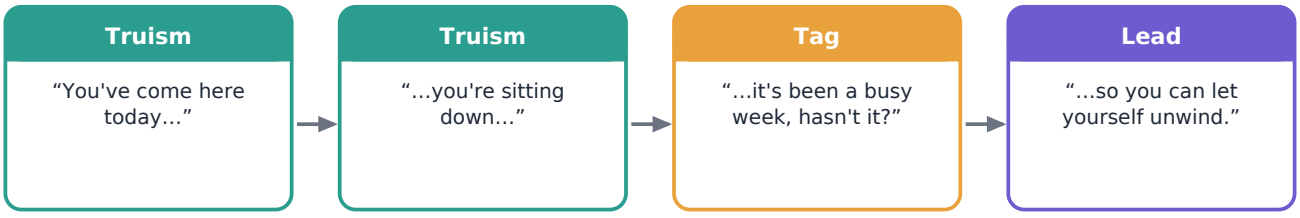


Figure 11a. Truisms and tag questions stack up small agreements before the lead.

SECTION 16

Double Binds

A double bind offers a choice in which every option leads to the same outcome. The listener feels free to choose while the important thing — that the outcome happens — is already presupposed.

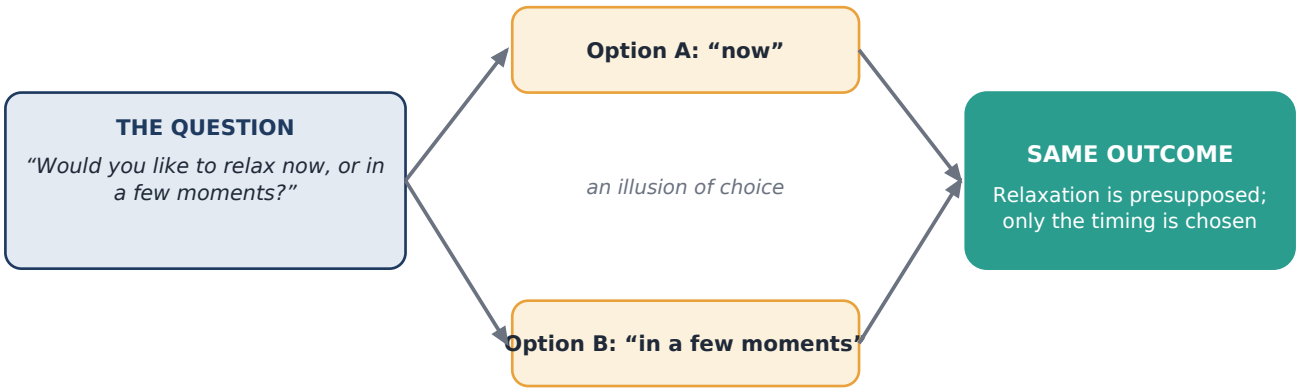


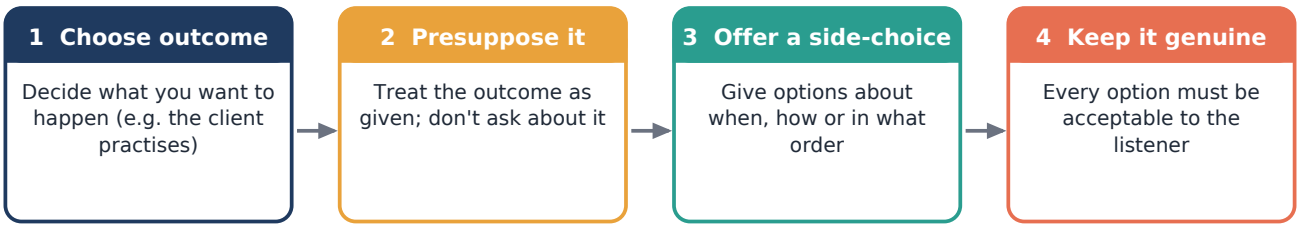
Figure 11. Both branches of a double bind arrive at the same result.

Type	How it works	Example
Time bind	Choice about when, not whether	“Do you want to start now or after you've settled in?”
Method bind	Choice about how, not whether	“Will you relax by focusing on your breath or by letting your mind wander?”
Sequence bind	Choice about order	“Which will you notice first, the heaviness or the warmth?”
Conscious / unconscious bind	Both conscious and unconscious responses count as success	“Your conscious mind may wonder about this, while your unconscious mind simply learns.”
Reverse bind	Doing or not doing both serve the goal	“You don't need to close your eyes to go into trance.”

Use with care

Erickson used double binds to **reduce pressure**, not to trap. A good bind feels like a genuine, respectful choice. If the listener feels cornered, the bind has become manipulation and rapport is lost.

Build your own double bind



SECTION 17

Embedded Commands & Analogue Marking

An embedded command is a direct instruction placed inside a longer, softer sentence. Analogue marking is the subtle change in voice or gesture that sets the command apart.

The command is a complete instruction hidden inside a longer sentence

I don't know how quickly you'll **begin to feel more confident** as we talk.



Figure 12. The embedded command is “marked” by a small shift in tone, pace or gesture.

Full sentence	Embedded command
“I wonder if you'll **allow yourself to relax** as we go through this.”	Allow yourself to relax
“You don't have to **decide right now**.”	Decide right now
“A person can **feel good**, you know, when they **learn something new**.”	Feel good · learn something new
“I'm not going to tell you to **notice how calm you feel**.”	Notice how calm you feel
“Some people **find this easy** when they first try it.”	Find this easy

Ways to mark the command

Tone
Drop the pitch slightly, as at the end of a statement

Tempo
Slow down a fraction

Pause
A brief pause before the command

Gesture
A small nod or hand movement, in person

Text
Line breaks or emphasis in written copy

Three steps to write an embedded command

1 Write the command
Start with a short, positive action: “feel at ease”

→

2 Wrap it
Add a softener: “I wonder whether you'll…”, “You might…”, “A person can…”

→

3 Mark it
Deliver the command portion with a subtle shift in tone or pace

SECTION 18

Conversational Postulates, Embedded Questions & Negative Commands

OTHER PATTERN

Conversational Postulates

Yes/no questions that literally ask about ability or willingness, but which people naturally answer by doing the thing.

> *“Can you imagine what it would be like to feel completely at ease?”*
>
> *“Could you let your shoulders soften a little?”*

Why it works
Nobody hears “Can you close the door?” as a question about ability. The request is made without being a command.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
Answer it literally: “Yes, I can.” (and do nothing)

OTHER PATTERN

Embedded Questions

A question placed inside a statement. It is not asked directly, yet the listener tends to answer it internally.

> *“I'm curious which part of you will relax first.”*
>
> *“I wonder what you'll find most useful about today.”*

Why it works
Because no direct answer is expected, the listener processes the question privately, often generating the very experience it describes.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Why are you curious?”

OTHER PATTERN

Negative Commands

Telling someone not to do something. To understand the sentence, the listener must first represent the very thing they are told not to do.

> *“Don't relax too quickly.”*
>
> *“You don't need to feel completely comfortable yet.”*

Why it works
Try not to think of a blue elephant: the image has to appear before it can be negated.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“What would I do instead?”

SECTION 19

Ambiguities

Ambiguous language has more than one possible meaning. Processing several meanings at once occupies the conscious mind and can deepen absorption, while the intended meaning reaches the listener anyway.

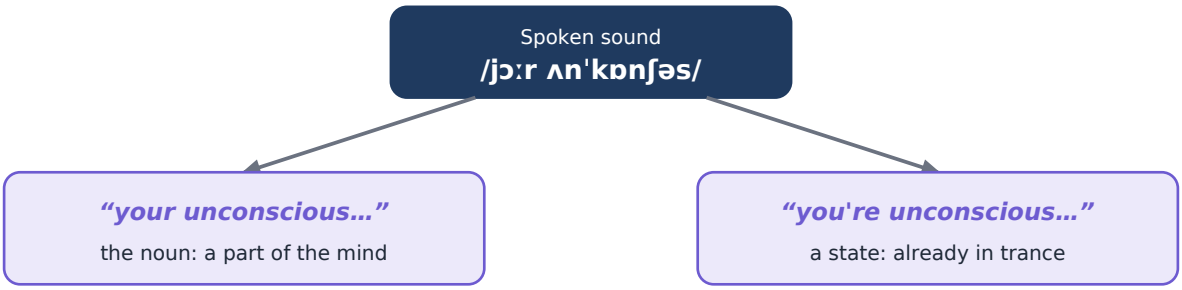


Figure 13. A phonological ambiguity: one sound, two meanings, both useful in a hypnotic context.

Type	What creates the ambiguity	Example
Phonological	Words that sound the same but mean different things	here / hear · your / you're · right / write · nose / knows · weight / wait
Syntactic	Grammar that allows two readings of the same words	“Hypnotizing hypnotists can be tricky.” (doing it, or the hypnotists themselves?)
Scope	Unclear how far a word or phrase applies	“Speaking to you as a person who wants to change…” (who wants to change: you or me?)
Punctuation	Two sentences fused around a shared word	“I notice you're wearing a watch carefully what I'm saying.” (watch = timepiece / pay attention)

Why confusion can help

Punctuation ambiguities in particular can create a brief moment of confusion. Erickson used such moments deliberately: while the conscious mind briefly searches for order, the listener becomes more receptive to the next clear suggestion.

Useful phonological pairs

here / hear
“…as you hear / here, now…”

nose / knows
“Your nose / knows the way to breathe easily”

weight / wait
“Feel the weight / wait…”

right / write
“…that's right / write it in your memory”

whole / hole
“…the whole / hole experience”

SECTION 20

Extended Quotes & Selectional Restriction Violations

OTHER PATTERN

Extended Quotes

A suggestion delivered inside a quotation, inside a story, often several layers deep. By the end, it is unclear who said it — and therefore who to argue with.

> *“I was talking to a colleague last week who told me about a teacher she once had, who used to say to her students, ‘You can learn anything easily.’”*

Why it works
The listener follows the story and receives the final line as a direct statement, while the speaker is only “reporting” it.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“Who, specifically, said that? How do you know they were right?”

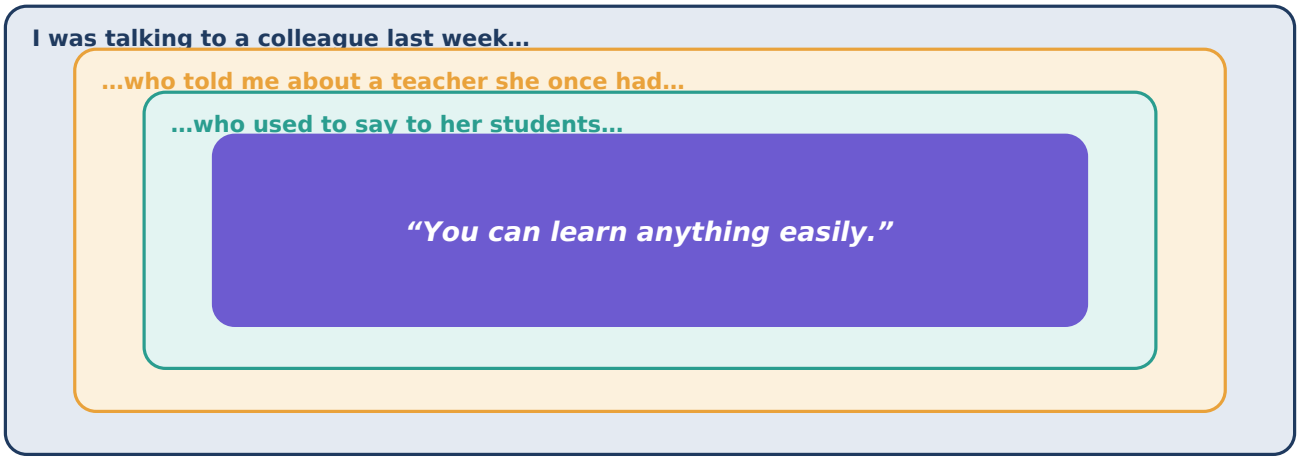


Figure 14. Layers of quotation: the suggestion at the centre is cushioned by the story around it.

OTHER PATTERN

Selectional Restriction Violations

Giving feelings, intentions or awareness to things that cannot have them — objects, plants, body parts.

> *“Your chair can support you completely.”*
>
> *“Your hands might know just what to do.”*
>
> *“That old oak tree has seen a lot of changes.”*

Why it works
To make sense of the sentence, the listener has to take a metaphorical leap, often projecting their own meaning onto it.

Meta Model challenge (the reverse move)
“How can a chair support me ‘completely’?”

SECTION 21

Utilization

Utilization means incorporating whatever happens — sounds, movements, objections, even resistance — into the communication, so that nothing becomes an obstacle.

What happens	Without utilization	With utilization
A door slams outside	“Ignore that noise.”	“…and that sound can remind you how far away everything else can seem.”
The client fidgets	“Try to keep still.”	“…and you can move around until you find the position that's just right.”
The client says “It's not working”	“Just give it time.”	“That's right — and you can notice exactly what isn't happening yet.”
The client laughs	“Let's stay focused.”	“…and enjoy that lightness, because learning can be enjoyable.”
The client's mind wanders	“Bring your attention back.”	“…and your mind can wander wherever it needs to, while you keep relaxing.”

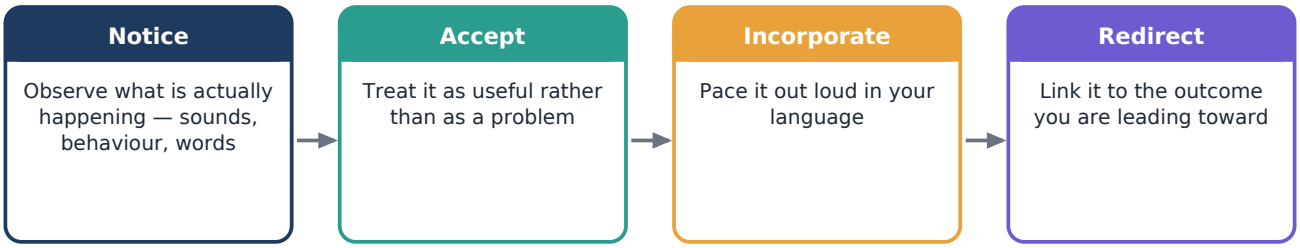


Figure 15. The four moves of utilization.

Ericksonian view of resistance

Erickson famously regarded resistance as information about how a person wanted to be helped. Rather than fighting it, he would often encourage it (“…and you can hold on to that doubt for as long as you need to…”) until it no longer had anything to push against.

SECTION 22

Stacking Patterns

In practice, Milton Model patterns are rarely used one at a time. A single sentence can combine several, each reinforcing the others.

One sentence, many patterns

*“And as you sit there, listening to my voice, you may already be wondering how easily you'll **discover new understandings** — and that's right, isn't it?”*

Fragment	Pattern(s)	Category
“And as you sit there…”	Pacing current experience · cause & effect (“as”)	Other / Distortion
“…listening to my voice…”	Pacing current experience	Other
“…you may already be wondering…”	Mind reading · modal operator · change-of-time presupposition (“already”)	Distortion / Generalization
“…how easily you'll…”	Presupposition (adverb) — you will	Distortion
“…discover new understandings…”	Unspecified verb · nominalization · embedded command	Deletion / Other
“…and that's right…”	Lost performative	Distortion
“…isn't it?”	Tag question	Other



12 pattern instances in a single sentence

Figure 16. Pattern instances in the example sentence, by category.

Why stacking is effective

Stacking works because the conscious mind can only track a little at once. By the time one presupposition might be noticed, two more suggestions have already been accepted. Beginners should still learn each pattern separately before combining them.

SECTION 23

Structure of a Milton-Style Induction

A hypnotic induction using Milton language usually follows a recognisable arc: establish rapport, pace, gradually lead inward, give suggestions, then bring the person back.

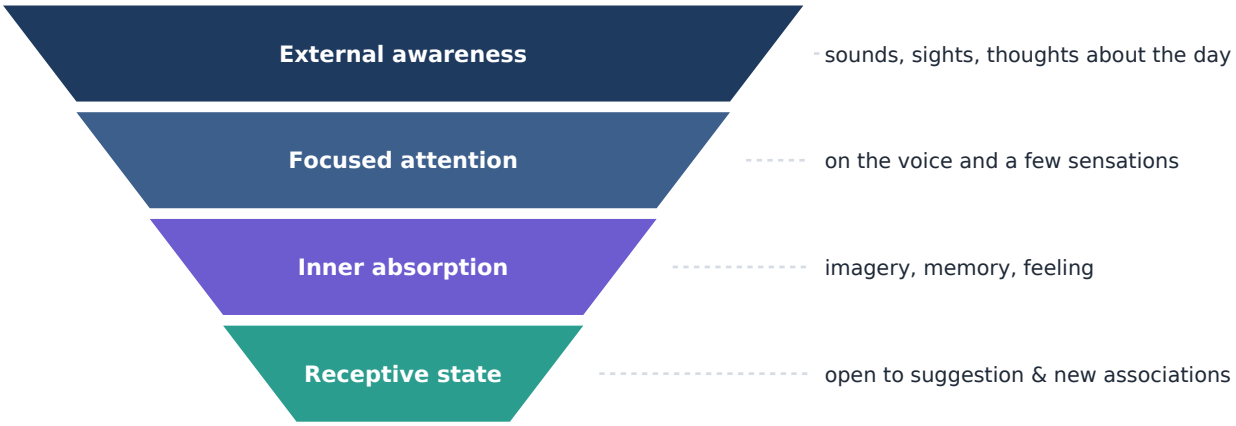


Figure 17. Attention gradually narrows from the outside world to an absorbed, receptive inner state.

#	Stage	Purpose	Typical patterns
1	Rapport & framing	Build trust; agree the purpose	Pacing, mind reading, lost performatives
2	Pace current experience	Create a run of internal “yes” responses	Pacing statements, tag questions
3	Lead inward	Shift attention from outside to inside	Cause & effect, modal operators
4	Deepen	Increase absorption	Double binds, ambiguity, universal quantifiers
5	Suggestions	Offer the change itself	Embedded commands, extended quotes, nominalizations
6	Future pace	Link the change to future situations	Presuppositions of time (“When you next…”)
7	Reorient	Return attention to the room	Counting up, pacing the room again

SECTION 24

An Annotated Example Script

A short, original relaxation script, with the main patterns labelled. It is illustrative only, not a clinical protocol.

Script	Patterns used
You're sitting here now, feeling the support of the chair beneath you, hearing the sound of my voice...	Pacing current experience
...and as you notice your breathing, you can begin to let yourself settle.	Cause & effect · modal operator · embedded command
I don't know whether your shoulders will soften first, or your hands.	Double bind (sequence) · presupposition
It's good to give yourself this time, isn't it?	Lost performative · tag question
People often find that every breath brings a little more comfort…	Lack of referential index · universal quantifier · nominalization
…and you may be wondering how deeply you can relax.	Mind reading · embedded question · presupposition
Any sounds around you can simply remind you how peaceful it is in here.	Utilization · comparative/implied contrast
A teacher of mine used to say, ‘Your unconscious knows how to learn.’	Extended quote · ambiguity (your / you're)
And you don't need to remember all of this, because a part of you is already learning.	Negative command · presupposition (“already”)
In a moment, as I count from one to five, you can return feeling refreshed and alert.	Reorientation · cause & effect · presupposition

Delivery tip

Read it aloud slowly, pausing at the commas and dropping your voice slightly on the embedded commands (*let yourself settle*, *relax*, *return feeling refreshed*). The delivery matters as much as the words.

SECTION 25

Applications

Although the model came from hypnotherapy, its patterns are now taught well beyond it, wherever influence, rapport and storytelling matter.

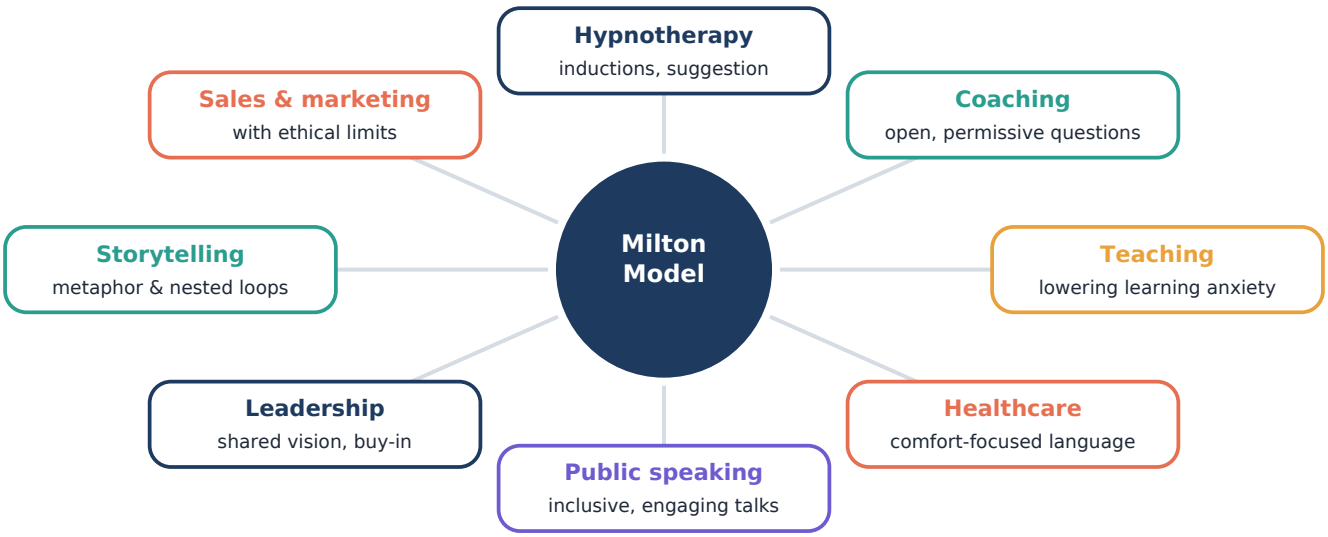


Figure 18. Fields where Milton-style language is commonly taught or used.

Field	Example in practice
Coaching	“What might you notice when things start going well?” — invites the client to imagine success in their own terms.
Teaching	“You may already know more about this than you realise.” — lowers fear before new material.
Healthcare	“You can let your arm rest as comfortably as it wants to.” — comfort language instead of “this will hurt”.
Leadership	“Everyone here wants this to work, and we'll find the way together.” — chunking up to shared values.
Public speaking	“Some of you might be wondering where this is going…” — mind reading that builds rapport with a room.

SECTION 26

Ethics, Evidence & Criticism

Language that bypasses critical evaluation is powerful, and so it carries responsibility. It is also important to separate NLP's claims from what research supports.



Figure 19. Four guidelines for responsible use.

What the evidence says

Claim or topic	Current view
NLP as a whole	Widely regarded by researchers as lacking scientific support; it is often classed as pseudoscience. Systematic reviews (e.g. Witkowski, 2010; Sturt et al., 2012) found little or insufficient evidence for its specific claims and outcomes.
Hypnosis in general	Clinical hypnosis has a stronger research base, with evidence for uses such as pain management and some stress-related conditions. This does not validate NLP's particular explanations.
Language framing	Mainstream psychology does show that wording, framing and presuppositions affect judgement and memory — consistent with some Milton Model ideas, though not tested as “the Milton Model”.
“Unconscious mind” language	A useful metaphor in practice, but simpler and less precise than how cognitive science describes automatic and implicit processes.

A balanced takeaway

Treat the Milton Model as a practical **vocabulary for noticing persuasive and hypnotic language** — including when it's used on you — rather than as a proven technology of the mind. Anyone using it therapeutically should hold an appropriate professional qualification.

SECTION 27

Practice Exercises

Identify the main pattern in each sentence, then try writing your own. Answers are at the bottom of the page.

#	Sentence	Pattern?
1	“You may be wondering what you'll discover today.”	
2	“Before you settle completely, notice your breathing.”	
3	“It's important to take care of yourself.”	
4	“Would you like to begin now or after a few breaths?”	
5	“People can learn new things very easily.”	
6	“Every sound you hear can help you relax.”	
7	“You have a growing sense of confidence.”	
8	“Don't feel too relaxed just yet.”	
9	“Can you imagine how that would feel?”	
10	“Your feet know the way home.”	

Write your own

Pattern	Your sentence
Cause & effect	
Embedded command	
Double bind	
Pacing → leading (3 + 1)	

Answers

1 Mind reading · 2 Presupposition (time clause) · 3 Lost performative · 4 Double bind · 5 Lack of referential index · 6 Universal quantifier · 7 Nominalization · 8 Negative command · 9 Conversational postulate · 10 Selectional restriction violation

SECTION 28

Quick-Reference Cheat Sheet

Pattern	Cat.	Example
Mind reading	Dist.	*“You may be wondering…”*
Lost performative	Dist.	*“It's good to relax.”*
Cause & effect	Dist.	*“As you breathe, you can relax.”*
Complex equivalence	Dist.	*“Being here means you're ready.”*
Presupposition	Dist.	*“Before you relax completely…”*
Universal quantifier	Gen.	*“Every breath helps you relax.”*
Modal operator	Gen.	*“You can let your eyes close.”*
Nominalization	Del.	*“…new understandings.”*
Unspecified verb	Del.	*“You can learn and change.”*
Simple deletion	Del.	*“You're ready.”*
Lack of referential index	Del.	*“People can relax easily.”*
Comparative deletion	Del.	*“It's better this way.”*
Tag question	Other	*“…can't you?”*
Pacing current experience	Other	*“You're sitting here, reading…”*
Double bind	Other	*“Now, or in a moment?”*
Conversational postulate	Other	*“Can you imagine that?”*
Extended quote	Other	*“She said he told her, ‘You can…’”*
Selectional restriction violation	Other	*“Your chair can support you.”*
Ambiguity	Other	*“Your / you're unconscious…”*
Utilization	Other	*“That noise can take you deeper.”*
Embedded command	Other	*“I wonder if you'll **relax now**.”*
Embedded question	Other	*“I'm curious what you'll notice.”*
Negative command	Other	*“Don't relax too quickly.”*

Dist. Distortion · **Gen.** Generalization · **Del.** Deletion · **Other** Hypnotic pattern without a Meta Model equivalent

SECTION 29

Glossary & Further Reading

Term	Meaning
Analogue marking	Setting words apart with a change of voice, pause or gesture.
Artfully vague	Language general enough for listeners to supply their own meaning.
Chunking	Moving up (general) or down (specific) in levels of abstraction.
Leading	Guiding someone toward a new state after pacing.
Meta Model	NLP's set of precision questions; the inverse of the Milton Model.
Modelling	Studying and replicating how an expert achieves results.
Pacing	Matching or describing someone's current experience to build rapport.
Rapport	A state of trust and responsiveness between people.
Transderivational search	The inner search for meaning triggered by vague language.
Trance	A state of focused, absorbed inner attention.
Utilization	Using whatever arises as part of the process.

Further reading

Work	Why read it
Bandler, R. & Grinder, J. (1975). *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.*, Vol. 1.	The original source of the model.
Grinder, J., DeLozier, J. & Bandler, R. (1977). *Patterns...*, Vol. 2.	Extends the model to non-verbal and sensory patterns.
Bandler, R. & Grinder, J. (1975). *The Structure of Magic*, Vol. 1.	Introduces the Meta Model.
Grinder, J. & Bandler, R. (1981). *Trance-formations*.	Training-style presentation of the patterns.
Haley, J. (1973). *Uncommon Therapy*.	Classic account of Erickson's therapeutic methods.
Erickson, M. H., Rossi, E. L. & Rossi, S. I. (1976). *Hypnotic Realities*.	Erickson's work in his own and Rossi's words.
Witkowski, T. (2010). *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 41(2).	Critical review of the research on NLP.