COMMENT ON THE SPECIAL ISSUE:
Jay Douglas Haley

In this special issue of the International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, Jay Douglas Haley is being celebrated worldwide by his friends and family. He shared his ideas and experiences over many years in his writings, his teaching, and most importantly in his relationships with all of us. Jay was a unique, vibrant, and benevolent iconoclast. He challenged us to see things differently and to enjoy a creative freedom in our caring of patients and clients. Recently, Jay’s wife, Madeleine Richeport-Haley, PhD, found a treasure from his past—seven unpublished papers about applying and teaching hypnosis from his early and later years. They form the basis of this special issue.

I have been asked to focus on Jay’s early years in Philadelphia when, at the beginning of my career, I was most influenced by him. He displayed for me his early instinctive courage, humor, and uncanny insight into the subtleties of communication that characterize all good therapy. These newly found papers provide an exceptional opportunity to get to know Jay, the man, his intellect, and his seminal ideas.

Jay was born in Wyoming in 1923. At age 4, the family moved to California where he grew up. During World War II, he served in the US Army Air Forces and then earned his Bachelor of Arts in Theater Arts from the University of California Los Angeles in 1948. He continued his schooling and received a Bachelor of Arts in Library Science at the University of California Berkeley in 1951. He then earned his Master of Arts degree in Communication from Stanford University in 1953. During the next decade, he joined the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University, eventually working on a project of communications directed by Gregory Bateson. His early interests and the Bateson laboratory’s needs included research on hypnosis, animal behavior, films, schizophrenia, psychotherapy, and families and family therapy. It was during this time he also met Milton Erickson and elaborated on the facets of communication that Erickson shared with him. Jay quickly became the editor of Family Process.

In 1967, he travelled to the University of Pennsylvania and worked with Salvador Minuchin, MD, at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, while directing the Family Therapy Research at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. Leaving Philadelphia in 1976, he went on to become Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Howard University, Co-Director, Family Therapy Institute of Washington, DC,
Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of Maryland, and, finally, Adjunct Professor, United States International University/Alliant International University until his death in 2007.

It is a truism that great men with enormous ideas stand the test of time. Jay was one of these outstanding individuals in our field of clinical hypnosis and family therapy. He communicated ideas that took courage and insight. For instance, one of his early books of essays titled *The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ* (Haley, 1969) has a provocative essay by the same title, in addition to contributions on “The Art of Being Schizophrenic,” “The Art of Psychoanalysis,” and, my favorite, “The Art of Being a Failure as a Therapist.” This last essay contains the Five Bs, which “Guarantee Dynamic Failure: Be Passive, Be Inactive, Be Reflective, Be Silent, and Beware.”

Jay always taught young people in the mental health arena. Why was he so unique? Perhaps it was his willingness to call it as he saw it—no matter the personal consequences. As a Master of Arts in Communication, perhaps he was not burdened by the traditions of psychiatry or psychology. His freedom to influence our field during his career is probably best attributed to his brilliant insights on how therapy worked. The respect so many had for him gave him entrée and inclusion into any gathering of scholars, and he used every minute of these opportunities to inculcate others with his love for effective patient care. He was seminal in his lifelong impact on others.

During my internal medicine residency at the Hospital University of Pennsylvania (HUP), William Webb gave me an audiotape one day of Jay speaking about therapy to the psychiatric residents at HUP. Jay was describing the work of Milton Erickson and how Erickson formulated the strategies of psychotherapy—the actual title of Jay’s earliest book (Haley, 1963). Bill had seen me work on the medical floors in creative ways and sensed, before I did, my eventual career in general psychiatry and clinical hypnosis. On hearing Jay’s description of Erickson’s work, suddenly I no longer felt alone. Here were strategies that could be shared, that certainly could be taught, and were based on the therapist’s freedom to follow his or her instincts in helping patients/clients change. Listening to that tape was a singular moment in my career.

One evening on a train ride back to Philadelphia from New York City where we had attended the “Beyond the Double Bind” conference sponsored by Columbia University in which both Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson participated, I mentioned to Jay that his lecture to the psychiatric residents prompted me to take a University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine course in clinical hypnosis. The faculty included Kay Thompson, Herbert Spiegel, and Martin Orne. I told Jay that, soon after my training in hypnosis, I entered a residency in psychiatry. Jay’s immediate reaction was “to shiver and shake” and to exclaim he didn’t want to be responsible for my choices. I mention this story because it characterized Jay’s relationship with his younger colleagues.
and students. He wanted those who learned from him to find their own path with heart, and he did not need nor wish credit for their choices. This was Jay’s genius.

My friendship with Jay deepened as I immersed myself in his early books. His writings had a profound impact on me. Treating the symptom directly without insisting on treating first the unconscious conflict behind it, having goals in therapy, being active, and trusting our creative intuitions were the practical foundations of Jay’s teaching. To resonate with these concepts and to let them contribute to finding our voice as therapists was Jay’s offering to us all. Friendships are many faceted. My brief personal relationship, my reading quietly his written words, and now once again discovering these unpublished papers many years later, I know how important he was to me at a critical time of career development. He can still model for those who read his works today, beginning with this special issue.

One final personal comment: As I became a psychiatrist and eventually became active in national and international organizations, I put together a psychiatric workshop as part of the original course I had taken a few years before at Penn. Jay accepted my offer and joined us for a few sessions. It was during these times that I appreciated his superb teaching ability and watched him bring to life his evolving ideas about hypnosis and therapy. In preparing for this article, I searched my files for reel-to-reel audiotapes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I found one entitled *The Art of Therapy or How Not to Handicap the Therapist* 1968 (Haley, 1968). After obtaining professional audio enhancement and noise reduction, I thrilled in hearing Jay’s voice once again from those early years. His enthusiasm and interest in sharing the pearls he had learned about effective communication in therapy rings out through the entire lecture. His admonitions originating from his own practice are still relevant.

In conclusion, Jay Haley’s insight into communication still stands as a solid foundation for much of what we know today. It has been a unique experience for me to pay tribute to him for his influence on my early career. I thank Madeleine Richeport-Haley for sharing these papers and the Editor and Guest Editor for sensing that a special issue of this prestigious journal was a suitable home for these papers. All of us, young and old, who mentor, treat, and learn throughout our lifetimes, will give Jay Haley a posthumous round of applause.

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References

Haley, J. (1968, November 19). *The art of therapy or how not to handicap the therapist*. Recorded lecture delivered at the Hospital University of Pennsylvania.