



Language of Change: Elements of Therapeutic Communication

By Paul Watzlawick

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In this groundbreaking book, a world authority on human communication and communication therapy points out a basic contradiction in the way therapists use language. Although communications emerging in therapy are ascribed to the mind's unconscious, dark side, they are habitually translated in clinical dialogue into the supposedly therapeutic language of reason and consciousness. But, Dr. Watzlawick argues, it is precisely this bizarre language of the unconscious which holds the key to those realms where alone therapeutic change can take place. Dr. Watzlawick suggests that rather than following the usual procedure of interpreting the patient's communications and thereby translating them into the language of a given psychotherapeutic theory, the therapist must learn the patient's language and make his or her interventions in terms that are congenial to the patient's manner of conceptualizing reality. Only in that way, he shows, can the therapist effectively bring about genuine changes and problem resolutions. Drawing on the work of Milton H. Erickson, he supports his findings with many (and often amusing) examples. This book, then, is a virtual introductory course to the grammar and language of the unconscious.

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Language of Change: Elements of Therapeutic Communication By Paul Watzlawick Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1155701 in Books
- Published on: 1978-04-25
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 172 pages

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Review

“Lucid, responsible, and tremendously enriching. ” (Neil Postman)

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About the Author

Paul Watzlawick was an associate at the Mental Research Institute, Palo Alto, and clinical professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, Stanford University Medical Center. An internationally known psychologist, Watzlawick died in 2007.

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