

= Mork Goes Erk =

" Mork Goes Erk " is the seventeenth episode of the first season of Mork & Mindy . The episode first premiered on ABC on February 8 , 1979 . " Mork Goes Erk " was later released on VHS on January 1 , 1998 as part of a two @-@ episode special which also included " Mork 's First Christmas , " and on DVD on September 7 , 2004 as part of the " Mork & Mindy - The Complete First Season " DVD boxed set .

In the episode , David Letterman portrayed a self @-@ help group leader by the name of " Ellsworth " offering ERK or Ellsworth Revitalization Konditioning . Mork (Robin Williams) and Mindy (Pam Dawber) attend one of Ellsworth 's trainings at the suggestion of their friend Susan (Morgan Fairchild) , where they endure Ellsworth 's authoritarian brand of group therapy . Mork points out hypocrisy in Ellsworth 's teachings , and exposes him as a fraud . The episode has been called a parody of the Erhard Seminars Training or " est " course . The episode received mostly positive reviews , and was highlighted as one of the season 's best episodes , along with " Mork 's First Christmas " and " Mork 's Mixed Emotions " . David Letterman 's performance as " Ellsworth " also received good reviews .

= = Plot = =

At the beginning of the episode , Mork , Mindy and Bickley (Tom Poston) are all sitting around feeling depressed . Mindy has just learned that Mork 's supervisor Orson has arranged for Mork to be transferred to another planet , and Bickley is suffering from writer 's block . Their friend Susan comes by to visit , and suggests that they all go and attend a seminar on Ellsworth 's Revitalization Konditioning . As the guests arrive at the seminar , Ellsworth nervously asks Susan if all of the attendants ' checks are in order . He then lays out the rules for the duration of the training , which includes no leaving and no consumption of alcohol . When Bickley hears this , he promptly gets up to leave the seminar .

The attendants of the seminar are then given Ellsworth 's harsh version of reality , which has been compared to the tenets of Erhard Seminars Training . Ellsworth preaches a belief in self @-@ adoration , which he says will get rid of emotional highs and lows . Ellsworth centers this goal around the notion of " finding our own space . " He utilizes an authoritarian style of control within the group , as a therapeutic method to solve problems . The other attendees at the seminar are shown to be passive consumers looking for any way to fix their personal issues . However , Mork , with his trademark causing of difficulty , begins to question the foundation of the rules of the course , as well as the nature of the philosophical material that Ellsworth has put forth , by pointing out hypocrisy among Ellsworth 's own contradictory statements . In the end , Mork wins out over the Ellsworth philosophy by instead calling to mind universal humanistic moral values . Ellsworth dismisses Mork 's victory over his methodology , exclaiming : " I 've got my Rolls @-@ Royce ! " Mork wins a moral victory @-@ and Ellworth , it turns out , has had his Rolls @-@ Royce stolen .

= = Cultural references = =

In a 1982 article in the journal Theory & Society , Lewis & Clark College sociology professor Robert Goldman compared and contrasted Letterman 's " Ellsworth " character and his training program to that of Werner Erhard 's course Erhard Seminars Training . Goldman noted that the episode spent time : " lampooning Werner Erhard and est @-@ like commercial pop psychologies . " However , Goldman went on to note that the inherent problem with " Ellsworth Revitalization Konditioning " was not the training - but Ellsworth himself .

Ellsworth is seen as a parody of consumerism : " As the self @-@ help entrepreneur , Ellsworth is portrayed as a walking collection of lifestyle @-@ status points and sign @-@ values ... Conspicuous consumption and commodity fetishism define his personality . " Goldman explained that the Mork and Mindy episode succeeded in distinguishing between criticism of the Ellsworth training , and criticism of Ellsworth , citing Ellsworth 's character traits of : " tyranny , selfishness ,

open greed , and flaunting of the accoutrements of his vulgar money @-@ making . "

= = Reception = =

TV Guide 's 2005 book TV Guide : The Ultimate Resource to Television Programs on DVD highlighted " Mork Goes Erk " as one of three " Classic Episodes " of the first season , including " Mork 's First Christmas " , and " Mork 's Mixed Emotions " . Matthew Tobey of Allmovie wrote that the episode was most notable because of David Letterman 's appearance before he became more well known . Donald Liebenson of Amazon.com also cited David Letterman 's performance as : " an abusive EST @-@ like guru " as one of the more memorable parts of the Season One DVD boxed set , but thought that the highlight of the season was the episode " Mork 's Mixed Emotions . " The Dallas Morning News also praised Letterman 's performance as a " shady motivational speaker , " commenting that the episode was a way for Letterman to hone his " smarminess " before his later work on Late Show with David Letterman . Jonathan Boudreaux of tvdvdreviews.com described Letterman as " a flakey EST @-@ like guru , " and called the episode itself " disjointed . "