

Q. A man is coming in alone to work on his relationship. I think his fantasy is that I am the expert, we will have one or two conversations and I will tell him how to fix his marriage.

A. If your fantasies are accurate, a part of him must also believe that he's the one who needs fixing.

□ One idea is to go along with the fantasy that you are the expert. Add, however, that you cannot possibly know everything about their sixteen year relationship in just a few weeks. Invite him to help you out and explain—no, “show” the problem to you in greater detail.

☞ Keep wondering out loud about processes while he describes the problem, draws the problem, role plays, sculpts, remembers, relives, and feels the problem. Eventually he may understand the problem, take responsibility for his part of the dysfunction, and come up with his own solutions.

His major complaint is about his wife's emotionality.

□ Tell him there is no way you can work on someone else's emotions when that person is not in the room. Suggest he work on *his difficulty* with her emotionality, instead.

☞ “So what happens inside you when she's emotional?”

☞ “And how is her emotionality a problem for you?”

☞ “Imagine she's here in the office right now. See if you can feel a little bit of problem right now.”

□ It's easy to do couples' work with only one person in the room. Therapeutic alert—it's easiest if there's a third place available in the room on which to sit.

You: (talking to the client and pointing at an empty chair). Come sit in this chair over here.

Client: (sits in the empty chair)

You: What's your wife's name, again?

Client: Sally

You: Okay. I'm going to talk to you as if you were Sally. Hi Sally. Thanks for

showing up today. ‘Best you can, show me that emotional thing you do with your husband—you know, pathetically whine, sob, and beg a little.

Client: (does anything at all)

You: Thank you, Sally. Switch chairs.

Client: (returns to his original chair.)

You: So John, Sally's over there in that chair, whining pathetically. Do what you usually do when you want her to stop it.

Client: (does anything at all)

You: Thank you. Switch chairs.

Client: (moves over to “Sally's” chair)

You: Sally, tell your husband all the reasons why you either refuse or can't possibly stop being so emotional.

Client: (as wife) Well...

You: (when above tirade comes to an end) Switch chairs.

...and so forth.

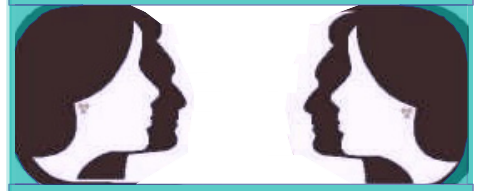
What if when you first ask “Sarah” to whine or whatever, he doesn't want to do it?

Invite him to sit in the “Sally” chair and say, “I don't want to do that.” When he return to “his” chair, tell him Sally is being resistant today and wonder if she's always that uncooperative.

Polarity work is a way to invite him to begin exploring the part of himself mirrored by his wife's emotional behavior. That is probably the part of himself who fears emotions or judges them as inappropriate. As he resolves his terror-of, and anger-at, the emotional side of himself, he may become more comfortable with and tolerant of the emotions of his real-life wife. He may also be better able to take care of himself around her. With practice he might even stop using her emotionality as a rational reason to complain.

If his wife blames him, he fights back. If she threatens him, he goes away. He would like to change his responses.

I'm confused. He thinks he should agree with her if she blames him? He wants to stay around her, instead of leaving her, if she threatens? Hmm. Let's assume he's as confused as I am.



□ Set up a role play enactment. You blame and threaten, while he fights back or goes away. Encourage him to pay attention and connect with himself as he responds.

☞ Then reverse the roles. He gets to blame and threaten, while you role model staying centered, answering truthfully, and giving clear messages about what you want.

☞ Reverse the roles again. As you threaten, blame, or go away, invite him to experiment with ways other than withdrawing or fighting back.

If he stays centered while his wife harangues him, she will be mad at me.

So? Most people respond to sudden changes with suspicion, fear, and anger. Although she wants him all fixed up, what she does not understand is that as her husband becomes more integrated, her marriage will change. So if her process is that she has to blame somebody, it might as well be you.

He expects me to know all the answers.

If he believes that you, the wise authority person, knows everything and will tell him what to do, he will probably be quite annoyed when he discovers that you do not know all the answers.

□ Predict that he may be angry with you soon. Invite him to share his feelings openly with you each time he experiences them.

He says he has blocked out his feelings.

□ Your immediate therapeutic task is to invite him to become aware of, acknowledge, allow, connect with, and experience the block he has developed so as to avoid releasing his feelings.

☞ As frequently as you can, no matter what he is talking about, breathe through any desire to ask about the content of his

discourse. Instead, wait until he pauses. Then say some version of, *"Now that you've said that, take a moment, close your eyes, breathe deeply, follow your breath...Now say it again and notice your internal response as you say it."*

☞ Should you perceive he is angry (or whatever) at you for not having all the answers, say, *"My guess is you are angry (or whatever) right now. Is that true?"*

☞ If he says yes, you can add, *"How do you know you are angry (or whatever)? Describe your experience to me as if I were a Martian and have no knowledge of humans."*

☐ Use his descriptions to trigger enactments. For example if "blocked" is his word, bring some blocks into session. Say, *"Show me."*

☞ Initiate an exploration of his blockedness. Invite him to *be* the block and speak with its voice. [I know blocks don't talk. You're asking him to say what the block would say if it *could* talk.]

☞ Invite imagery with or about blocks.

☞ Look for the positive intent of the blocking. Ask the block what it is blocking, exactly, and what it hopes for.

☞ Direct a dialogue between him and his block.

☞ Leave the room and the two of you walk around the block. Wait a minute, that seems silly doesn't it.? Oh, I know. After you've walked around the block, turn around and start walking back the way you came. When he asks what you're doing, call it, "unblocking." Then suggest he spend the time to, "use your inside-eyes, focus on your feet as they interact with the sidewalk, then verbalize anything, no matter how silly, that comes to your mind on the way back."

♩

Sara

by Jen Weiss

Sara has been in therapy for six months. She started shortly after she was diagnosed with cancer. She has chosen to treat the cancer through traditional medicine, and I have seen her go from trying to cure her cancer, to trying to control it, and now she is trying to decide whether she wants to continue fighting or if she wants to be as comfortable as possible in her remaining time.

This situation has been challenging for me, because I firmly believe alternative treatments could have been helpful and still might be. However, Sara has made it perfectly clear that she is not interested in looking at alternatives. She trusts her doctor completely. Her doctor has explained to her the best course of treatment for this type of cancer, and she will not deviate from that treatment plan. At first, I wanted to jump into the role of Rescuer, and I wanted her to behave how I would handle this disease, if I were facing it.

In order to preserve the therapeutic relationship, it was extremely important for me to let go of my own agenda. I needed to trust Sara to make the right choices for her physical health, because I want to be available to support her emotional health fully. My wanting to rescue her has really tested my resolve.

It has been necessary for me to stay connected to myself, in order to spot my countertransference coming up in this situation. Being able to be open and not assuming I know what is best for Sara has been a constant exercise in neutrality. It is only from coming from neutrality, that I am able to meet Sara in her truth and support her process, without being blinded by my wish that things were different for her.

In doing this, I am able to stay neutral and create a safe place for Sara to continue to process her experience. Sara is dealing with many things all at once. She is struggling existentially with her fear of death. She is facing the deterioration of her physical body, and she is

emotionally pressed to her limits. The physical pain she is experiencing, causes her to want to disassociate from her body, and as a result, Sara is finding it harder to be in touch with her emotions. So I have been inviting Sara to stay present in her body.

Exploring her inner realm in the support of the therapeutic session has been beneficial to Sara. She is becoming more connected to herself again, and in this connection we are able to look at some of the deeper fears that she is experiencing.

I often make guesses, such as:

"I wonder if you are feeling alone in this struggle.

"I wonder if you feel betrayed by your body.

"I wonder if you feel like you are letting anyone in your life down because you are not able to do as much as you used to accomplish.

"I wonder if you are afraid."

"I wonder how you still find time to enjoy life."

We spend most of our time exploring these themes. Sara is still undergoing treatments, and she is considering stopping them. This would mean the cancer would continue to run its course in her body. I have been inviting her to explore both possibilities. We have done a mixture of art therapy, guided visualizations, imagination work, practiced making each decision and feeling into the futures that those choices might create.

During all of this, I continue to invite Sara to go as deep as she will allow herself. I track her reaction, and I make sure to follow her process. Sara often becomes resistant during enactments. I am careful not to run ahead of her—I want to make sure to honor her resistance as it arises. Each time, we go back and establish safety in the room. Afterward, I invite Sara to look into the new process that the resistance has brought to light. In this way, we keep moving into and through Sara's process, even when her process is to stop.

Q. One woman related that as a child she was molested by a famous movie star. Another woman, after a deep piece of work, said her abusive parents had been involved in Satanic practices. Both wondered if I believed them. I didn't know what to say.

A. When you do not know what to say, ask yourself what part of their system they have assigned to you. In this case, it may be either the reality-bound part who does not believe, or the naive part who needs to believe something is "true," before resolution can occur. Three of the many possible answers for, "do you believe me" include:

- "Yes. What's it like when I believe you?"
- "No. How is it for you when I don't believe you?"
- "Speak from the part of you who doesn't believe you."

Actually it is not your job to believe or disbelieve. Your job is to invite clients to believe themselves.

As a general rule, treat everything a person says in session as true. Understand that the polarity of everything they say may *also* be true. Usually, treatment will be the same if they are making it up or if it is the absolute truth.

If the situation was real, if the child thought it was real, if the child made it up to protect herself or to blame others, if the adult made it all up, or if the adult is psychotic, treat any event in memory as a metaphor for something on which the psyche wants to work.

Be no more or less involved in needing to know Reality than if she had related a dream. Damage from trauma is more about how the person responded and the decisions about Self that resulted from those responses. The work is to recover from those decisions.

Q. An eight-year-old draws houses with huge roofs. If I can just figure out what her symbolism is, I'll be able to understand her.

A. When you believe you shouldn't do anything until you discover exactly what the right thing is, the fantasy that a right thing exists can stop you from doing anything at all.

When you believe you shouldn't do anything until you discover exactly what the right thing is, the fantasy that a right thing exists can stop you from doing anything at all.

The probability that a psychologically sophisticated observer such as yourself would correctly interpret drawings, behaviors, speech, and body language, might, I imagine, be as high as eighty to ninety percent. And for the intellectually oriented adult, an understanding of self, might give internal permission to access occluded emotional material. However, while "knowing things" may make a person's integration of psychological work more interesting to him, understanding, by itself, does not lead to resolution.

Let's suppose you have managed to break this girl's symbolism code. Now you know stuff about her that she doesn't even know herself. This may be intellectually satisfying for you and alleviate some of your existential anxiety about not knowing what to do next, but it does not directly do anything for the *girl* at all.

I thought if I could understand her, then I could help her.

I strongly invite you to evert your thinking here—turn it inside out. Your perception that she needs you to "help" her connotes that you may think she is unable to help herself: that she is incapable of understanding herself, and that her psyche doesn't know what it is doing and cannot be trusted.

Consider the concept that every human organism is always moving toward the resolution of her issues and that the way to assist this child's psychological growth and healing is to provide a container of trust and acceptance. Within that frame, your job as a psychotherapist would be to act as:

- Solid Object
(unconditional positive regard)
- Universal Witness
(no judgments, no agendas)
- Blank Slate
(onto which projections can occur)
- Encourager of Connection to Self
- Reality Test
- Mentally Healthy Role Model

Your professional task is to provide this child with an protected environment

free of external interpretations and opinions. Focus your energy and access the nonjudgmental, loving parent, house-with-a-big-roof part of yourself.

Allow this girl to introject your positive regard. Within such a frame, this child will, in time, heal herself, even if you never understand a thing about the content of her healing process.

Support her movement toward the resolution of unresolved or repressed experiences at her own rate and in her own way. Trust that, within the safety of your office, she will naturally move towards mental health.

The challenge for parents and other adults who care for children is to take care of themselves in a way that is not at the expense of the child's self-esteem. Include yourself in that group.

Q. She was molested and one of her big shames is that fantasies of abuse sexually excite her.

A. This is a pervasive but seldom talked about result of child abuse. Victims of all ages are as sexual as their perpetrators. The perception of out-of-control and the experience of surrendering are on the same continuum. Abuse is often as exciting as it is frightening, and a sexual association with abuse is easily imprinted onto the psyche, particularly a child's.

Even nonmolested adults often find abuse to be somewhat sexually exciting. The sexual turn on from abuse can be acted out within a loving or at least a safe relationship in activities such as gentle bondage, or 'me Tarzan; you Jane' flirting. It can be enjoyed also through fantasy or by watching the fantasies of others as they appear on stage, in books, and in movies.

One popular choice is vicarious involvement with activities where abuse is enacted but nobody is actually supposed to get hurt. Professional football and wrestling come to mind as examples.

Some molest victims discover they are not only imprinted with a connection between sexual excitement and abuse but with a direct link between sexual excitement and child molest or between sexual excitement and brutality. As with this woman, most of the emotional pain involved is caused by shame.

Unfortunately for the part of her psyche who wants *not* to exhibit positive sexual responses to the abuse and who pronounces judgment and shame upon

the parts who do, the damaged part of her psyche will find a way to express itself. When she locks it up in the closet of unconsciousness, it sneaks around, invades the metaphorical walls of her mind, grows bigger, makes messes, and stinks up her whole life. Ignoring it just makes it grow. The way to get control of it is to bring it out into the light, become aware of it, and attend to it. Loving it, regarding it from a frame of unconditional positive acceptance, is the only thing against which it has no defense.

Perhaps, if she can give herself permission to accept this uncivilized side of herself and even give it a stage to act itself out upon such as private fantasizing, it might not need to be acted out onto her everyday personal or professional life.

□ Between now and the time this person relives, reconnects, and resolves her existential issues, reclaims the innocent but traumatized child left in the clutches of her molester, then embraces the idea that she is, in fact, only a human being and not in control of her childhood imprinting, I suggest you reframe her association of sex and abuse as “normal under the circumstances.”

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Q. Once he was connected to his anger at his wife, I invited him to direct his anger towards a pillow to represent his mother who also abandoned him. He came out of the work three times.

A. Often, a person can be encouraged to introspect and connect with himself on a deeper level by invitations such as yours. Perhaps what happened in this case was that though he could have used your invitation to deepen his work, he chose, instead, to use your invitation to access his fear. In other words, his actions had nothing to do with you.

Well, I was wondering if maybe something I said made him come out of his work.

You can attempt to take responsibility if you think you and/or your words are actually powerful enough to *make* another being do or feel something. But when you tell a dog to “sit” and he sits, it’s neither you nor your words that make him sit. The dog wants the reward or doesn’t want the penalty he has learned to expect. The

spoken word does not make the dog act. Even with his limited I.Q., a dog *decides* to act. And so it is with a human.

However, you *can* take responsibility for noticing, oh, the client changes direction when I say X, but when I say Y, he doesn’t.

Word choice can be especially important to some people. When you invite a client to go deeper into his work, try for words that are as generic as possible. Use phrases such as, “*do that more*” and “*say that again,*” and “*allow that,*” even if you are uncertain what the “that” is.

When we think we know what the “that” is, we often misname it and some clients will use that as an opportunity to change direction and do something else—like argue with you. Start working on the habit of inviting every client to do *more* of whatever it is, he is already doing.

But if I don’t know what the “that” is, I might get confused.

If you are confused, try quieting your cognitive mind. Breathe. Slowly. Several times. Stop trying to understand. When someone is introspectively focused or close to their impasse, your main task is to keep out of the way.

□ One way to do that is by giving up your need for clarity, and by trusting and staying with the person’s process as it changes from moment to moment. *You* do not have to understand what is happening in order for the resolving work to take place.

□ Next time he says something that triggers in your memory a connection with the mother, try directing him to, “*Tell your mother.*” [Consider *not* providing him a physical prop such as a pillow, and letting *him* decide where his mother is, in the room.]

☞ Should he ‘come out of the work’ and move back into his intellect, stay focused on this *new* process. “*Okay, tell your mother you’re Not going to say that to her.*”

Many therapists believe that people are in their work only when the intellect has been disengaged or when the person is deeply introspected or focused. When you believe that, you limit yourself and short-change the client. A person is working therapeutically from the moment they enter the room

How so?

As he enters the therapy room he is connected with himself, or not. He is scared, sad, angry, distracted, or hopeful. He may feel compelled to say hello when he would really rather not; he may be worried that you still like him, or be waiting for you to acknowledge his existence.

How he moves across the room and sits down, what he chooses to say, how he is breathing, where his focus is, how he holds his body, how he is with himself, and how he is with you, are all parts of a re-dramatization of whatever unfinished issue is forefront for him at the moment.

Every moment he is in session, no matter what topic is being addressed, the session itself is a restaging of some facet of his life. And *you* are one of the props.

In this case, this man’s relationship with you will have much in common with his relationship with his wife. And both those relationships may be reenactments of his relationship with his primary object.

Assist him to express his annoyance at you for interrupting him. If he cannot “say that again” to his mother, maybe he can say it again to you.

When you say he was “connected” to his anger, I take that to mean you perceived him as experiencing his anger and aware that he was experiencing his anger, both at the same time.

Reasons for the behavior you interpreted as coming “out of his work” might include: he needed a breather, his cognitive mind needed to gather some information, his anger comes in waves, his grief started to surface and he did not want to cry, and...

□ Add your own speculations to the above list and should he “come out of his work” again, wonder about it out loud—not because you need to know the answer, but that he might benefit from exploring it.

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Q. I want him to connect with an emotion.

A. Would you be willing to reframe that as, “It’s not that I want *him* to do anything, I want *me* to invite him to connect with an emotion?”

Oh yeah, I forgot.

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Q. He doesn’t like that I don’t talk about myself. He wants something more from me.

A. Do you want to give him more?

Sorta and sorta not.

Honor yourself. If you give him more, do so not for him but, for the "sorta" part of yourself. Listen to the "sorta-not" part of yourself too. Stay connected with both parts, and give only that with which they both agree.

As always in session, even though you are taking care of yourself, pay attention to the client's process. For example, if he wants something more, then "wanting more" is his process. Resolving existential confusion and rage that one cannot always have all of what one wants is a developmental issue that most humans first confront around the age of two or three. But many people don't get the issue resolved by adulthood, so when they enter the therapeutic environment, I-can't-always-have-what-I-want is one of the issues they will run into, and clearly one of the issues they might resolve.

□ Acknowledge that he wants more from you and let him know when he cannot have more. Then invite him to connect with his response. One response pattern he might follow is anger, then a tantrum, then grief followed, by acceptance and a decision to continue to be in the room with you anyway.

□ Invite regressive work back to a time when he wanted Other to give more than she did. Most likely he'll bring up something that happened just yesterday.

□ Tell stories (made up) with you as the protagonist that are metaphorical and relate to your guesses about his life. [*When I was a kid, my father used to bring me presents, but never the exact thing I wanted...*] Work with his response when he gets annoyed because you are hogging all the time in his session.

□ Talk about yourself. Share outrageous experiences whenever he asks you; immediately invite his attention back on himself. [*A childhood friend of mine ate a bug, once. What's the picture in your mind as I say that?*] He may use his perception that you are being intimate to begin to trust himself with you. On the other hand, he may use what you say to play, "Gotcha." Pay attention to process. Whatever he does, do not take any of it personally.

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Q. Enactments please, for an adult female, sexually abused as a child, who chooses abusive relationships and denies it.

A. Start by having it be okay with you that she "denies it."

The abuse part of sexual or physical abuse is usually less about sex or pain and more about invasion, lack of control, exploitation, and loss of self-worth.

From my perspective, the trauma to recover from has less to do with sexual actions or physical harm at the time of the abuse, and more to do with the dysfunctional conclusion about Self made by the victim at the time: "I'm not supposed to choose what to do with my own body." "The only thing I'm good at is being a sex object." "Saying 'No' is bad and doesn't work anyway." "I'm unworthy." "I'm not supposed to say, ask for, or get what I want." "The way I know someone loves me is that they hurt me." And so on.

Effective enactments often need to be more outrageous than the dysfunction. I suggest starting by teaching the client that she/he can say, "No!" to you with no negative consequences. Enacting abuse can get bizarre, so have as an agenda for yourself that you stay in neutrality, whatever happens. The interventions

(below) are not geared to excite. Rather they hope to invite a deeper opportunity for the client to connect with how desensitized to abuse he/she is.

For lesson #1 in the "Taking Care of Myself 1A class," I find it pragmatic to begin by teaching that it is safe (and productive) to tell *me* to stop whatever it is I am doing in session. You'd be surprised how many people have a distressingly difficult time telling their therapist, "No. I don't want you to do that". And way too often, once they can say their truth, they have the even more difficult challenge of connecting with their emotion as they say it.

You might start with something simple you suspect they don't want to do. Then ask them to do it. When they look uncomfortable, start to do thing they don't want to do, or look like they'd like to say, "No," but can't find the words, say, "*Repeat after me. I don't want to do that.*"

Once they can say any version of "No", ask them to do it again. Whatever they respond, you can say something like, "*Repeat after me—I don't want to do that, I'm not going to do that, and nothing you can do will make me do that.*" Afterward, I usually throw in, "*Now say it again, and see if you can really mean it this time.*"

Some people need more physical enactments:

□ Try lightly tapping this person repeatedly with a pillow. Confirmed victims will not even notice for a while. So you might have to name what you are doing.

"Don't bother about me. I'll just be tapping your knee with this pillow here while you talk."

□ Ask to borrow one of her shoes. If she gives it to you, look at it a little, then do something silly with it, like putting it on the window sill or outside in the hallway

□ If the dedicated victim is female, pick up her purse and appear to start going through it. Even committed victims will usually stop you there!

Once the client perceives that when they tell you to stop, you will, and then once they believe that you won't judge or hate them when they do tell you to stop, you might continue to work through more difficult scenarios.


Her husband says sarcastic and belittling things about her, sometimes in the presence of the children. I've invited her to explore why she stays, but she sidesteps the issue.

□ "*So here's my picture of what goes on when your husband says sarcastic things.*" Pick up some soft object from the room's collection of stuffed animals, pillows, balls, cushions, Kleenex, towels, or other soft things. Throw it gently toward the client and

On Becoming a Psychotherapist
We teach what we know so...

Let go of agenda for the other guy. Eliminate these phrases—first from your language, then from your brain:

- ...get the client to
- ...want the client to ...
- ...need the client to ...
- ...have the client ...
- ...try to get the client to ...
- ...make the client ...
- ...teach the client ...
- ...think the client should ...



say, "You're a lousy housekeeper" (or other words the abuser might use). One by one, continue throwing objects towards her accompanying each missile with (in this case) sarcastic and belittling things: "You don't know what you're doing." "You're disgusting." Etc.

☞ Most often, the client will catch the first few objects, throw the next few back at you, and then divert a few to the side. After that, most people who allow themselves to be abused at home, will give up and just sit there until you stop. It'll take you maybe a minute or so to throw all your objects accompanied with abusive remarks. [If all you can throw is kleenex, it'll take quite a lot longer, but be just as effective.]

☞ After you pick the objects up, and if she still sitting there, say, "I'm going to throw these again. And this time, when I do, get out of the chair." Since she probably won't take your suggestion, you are now reduced to: (throw object)—"You're a lousy housekeeper, get out of the chair;" (throw object)—"You nag too much, get out of the chair," (throw object)—"REALLY, get OUT of the chair,"...

☞ When she finally gets out of the chair, keep throwing the objects (at the empty chair, not the person), and begin telling her to leave the room: (throw object)—"get out of the room," (throw object)—"get out of the room," until she does it. Most people are amazed at how long it takes them to put together that they don't have to stay in place when abuse is coming toward them.

☞ By the way, a confirmed abusee will often return to the room and begin to pick up the mess. I advise you to intervene immediately and say something like, "Stop cleaning up after other people. This is MY mess. I'm responsible for it, not you." When she says, "well I just wanted to help," reply with a version of, "Thank you. I prefer you wait till I ask."

Q. When one sees the other in the waiting room, they always find a way to ask me how the other one is doing. I get very uncomfortable.

Q. I see two people who know each other. They talk about one another and each asks me questions about the other. Sometimes I find it hard to keep clear.

A. As a socially habituated creature, it is often difficult to separate yourself from the content of questions that might take you by surprise.

This is certainly the case with phone calls that start out, "Hi, I'm George's wife, (lawyer, neighbor, grandmother). I'm supposed to pick George up at three. Could you tell him I'll be late?"

Unless George previously told you that he told the wife, lawyer, neighbor, or grandmother he was in therapy with you, then the moment you answer either "yes" or "no," you have violated his confidentiality! Even if the caller is asking about someone you've never heard of, even if you say you do not know that person, the caller immediately has more information than he did before he called.

☐ Prepare, rehearse, and practice answers to such seductions.

☞ "I'm not available to respond to that request."

☞ "I don't give out information about Anyone without that person's written permission."

Notice that there is no "I'm sorry, but,..." attached to either end of those sentences. Memorize the phrase you decide on and say it in any and all situations where one person asks you about another.

Everything I can guess about you is something I recognize, in myself.

Concerning two people who know each other—when you are with one of them, find a way to forget the other exists. (That's probably true outside of session, also.)

Keep in mind that it takes one to know one. For example, I might have the sense that you are angry, but that's because a part of me knows what anger is. If I have no concept of what 'anger' is, I might sense that something is fuzzy or out of balance, but I won't be able to put my finger on exactly what it is. Everything I can guess about you is something I know about in myself.

When one person includes any other person in his work, he is only talking about his *perception*, his *fantasy*, of the other person. In session, when Sue says, "Sam is stubborn and stingy," you still know absolutely nothing about Sam, but you might sensibly guess that Sue is focused externally, name-calls, and (at this moment) is not owning her internal experience. Sue's problem here, isn't that Sam is stubborn and stingy, but that Sue has occasional trouble handling whatever it is she perceives him doing.

☐ So, in this case, instead of wondering what Sam does to "make" Sue so angry, I suggest you invite Sue's attention back onto herself:

☞ "Say that again, Sue, and pay attention to your experience as you say it." "...and what is it you want, instead?"

☐ Respond to, or work with, a client as if his projections are real, all the time remembering that any part of Other which a person perceives, can only be projections of different parts of himself.

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Q. Do you think the denial-bargaining-anger-grief-acceptance steps apply to the death of a marriage?

A. "Grief is a naturally unfolding process and will complete itself. Our job is to invite people to stop resisting this completion." *

Any death is a change. And every change, whether a loss or a gain, is a death—the death of the way it used to be. Each person grieves in his own way. Nearly every human being responds emotionally to loss, although every person on the planet may not exactly follow the same path to resolution.

Well this person did research which shows ...

Instead of questing to find *the* answers, proceed on the path of finding *your* answers. Treat other people's ideas the same as you treat what you learn in this magazine. Think of them as a guide rather than gospel.

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Q. I seem to feel their pain and I always hope every client will heal.

A. Imagine that a certain person can hold in his body an actual, measurable amount of pain. In this fantasy, imagine that his body can hold two gallons of pain.

Imagine also, that he is able to numb himself enough to feel only a couple of teaspoons full of that pain, even at times of stress. At some level he thinks, "Heck, I can handle a couple of teaspoons of emotional pain. No problem. There's no need to change my life."

Should this person manage to notice and feel all two gallons of his pain at the same time, he might think, "Hey I really am miserable here. This is too uncomfortable. I want to do something to change my life so I don't have all this pain any more."

Well today in his therapy session, he was able to open himself up and for the first time, he was available to experience the whole two gallons. Alas for poor timing, today is the one day that the therapist did not have enough pain in her own life, so she borrowed some of her client's pain to experience.

The result, of course, is that the client didn't have to feel the whole two gallons available to him. So there he was again, deep in his work, hurting a lot but never too much and thinking, "Hey, this is a lot of pain, but, no problem, I can handle it."

He lost out on being able to connect with how totally unhappy he really is because the therapist had, in a way, stolen that last little piece of pain he needed to push him over the brink.

Suppose his wife has died and he feels bad.

There is a part of you, of course, who is sad that death occurs, who is sad that sadness exists. Your existential grief helps makes you human, compassionate, and tolerant. However, someone else's therapy session is not the place to indulge those feelings of grief. Your job is to expand beyond your existential sadness that the universe is a hard place to be, focus on the client, and invite the client (not you) to connect with his grief in the moment.

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Q. A couple keeps fighting in session. They'll stop briefly when I ask them to, and then have at it again.

A. Above all, stay out of their system. Some ideas:

□ Whenever they start fighting, find yourself something to do such as writing in a notebook or reading a professional article about couples who fight. When they inquire what you are doing, inform them you will be available anytime they are willing to stop fighting and try out your suggestions.

□ Or stop them and ask, "Does either one of you want to be doing something

From my perspective...

...the inner child of many an adult sits in his/her metaphorical crib and spends much of his or her life waiting for Perfect Primary Nurturer to appear.

About half of these inner children wait and hope, and believe that if he or she waits long enough, is good enough, or is *Enough* enough, Perfect Primary Nurturer will finally come and do the job which should have been done in the beginning: approving, caregiving, acknowledging, respecting, cherishing, protecting, etc.

The other half also wait, but on the off-chance a Loving Nurturer should actually appear and attempt to give love or approval, this inner child will reveal that his/her sole purpose for waiting in the crib all these years has been to accost Perfect Primary Nurturer, beat her up, tell her she not needed any more, and reject her outright. So there!

Members of these two groups appear to go through much of their life carrying a metaphorically cracked, if not broken, love-receiver. Picture a person woefully wandering through life carrying an a empty cup (of varying sizes), asking and expecting that their cup be filled up by external sources. Each cup is labeled with some version of, "Needs I Refuse to Meet by Myself."

Some members carry around a cup with a hole in the bottom. Sometimes this hole is as big as the bottom of the cup. Sometimes the hole is pinprick-sized, so the cup empties slowly and often goes unnoticed.

Some of these cups have lids on the top. Some of these lids are easily removed. Some of the lids have holes in them. Many are glued shut.

Whatever the metaphor, it seems to me that, *without intervention*, it is pretty much guaranteed that most any person involved will not be able to do what he or she craves most of all—i.e. to maintain functional, "filled up" relationships with other human beings in their adult life.

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different right now?" Focus on whichever one says, "yes." Then ask the two of them to return to their discussion. As they squabble, keep interrupting. Invite the one-who-said-yes to consider if he/she is being the way they'd like to be "right now? And if not, how might they alter their behavior, tone, choice of words, etc, "right now." Assist that person to explore alternatives.

□ Each time they go back to the old way of responding, stop them and start all over.

"You're doing it again. Is this what you want? No? Oh, okay let's try something else. Here's a suggestion ..." ["Yes? Oh, okay, I'll be busy over here, let me know when you want an idea."]

Chances are, when I ask if they want to be different, both will indicate they want the other person to be different.

□ Of course. Tell them clearly you are not able to make other people change. Let them know that whoever wants the interaction to take a different course, that

is the person who has to take responsibility for being different within it. Invite the practicing of alternative behaviors in session.

□ "Okay, I'll make him/her change. Just a minute, I'll get my automatic people changer." (Grab some object around the office.) "Every time they do something you don't like, I'll zap 'em, okay?" Act amazed that, when you zap someone with it, that person doesn't change.

□ Set up a language structure.

Him: I want you to change.

Her: I am not your problem and I am not your solution.

Her: I want you to change.

Him: I am not your problem and I am not your solution.

You: That all makes sense to me. Try saying it again. Who's willing to say it first?

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Q. Part of my job at the school is to suggest that certain parents or their child come into our agency

for treatment. I am physically uncomfortable with that and feel that I am selling.

A. Sweaty palms, butterflies and the general don't-wanna-do-ums are often indications of "I'm afraid I'm going to placate (saying "yes" when you mean "no").

□ If your job violates your values, stop working there. Not taking care of yourself and dishonoring your personal limits is an effective way to overwhelm yourself and end up (possibly) choosing not to continue in this profession.

□ If you perceive "suggesting" as "selling," and "selling" as trying to convince someone that they need the thing you are promoting, I can understand why you might not be excited about that activity. I suggest:

☞ Stand aside from the system. Not only the family's system but the agency's, too. Stop needing the child to be fixed, the family to help him, the school to respect you, or the agency to approve of or continue to employ you.

☞ Share what you do at the agency and guess out loud how that might affect the family positively. Your task here is the same as it is in the therapy session—to invite, without needing anyone to accept your invitation.

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Q. One person asked me a question and I just couldn't get it. He would say a few words and I would just zone out. I did not know what to do.

A. Own yourself as the problem, then use your response as an intervention.

□ "The strangest thing is happening. As you talk, my mind just goes away."

☞ "Who else has that same response to you?"

☞ "How do you protect yourself from feeling like you've done something wrong when that happens?"

I did ask him to repeat it but my brain just wouldn't let the words come in.

□ "My brain is acting-up today and I guess I'm just not going to be able to hear. Let's go over to the white board...draw it for me. (Sculpt it for me. Maybe act it out?) Apparently I need input to come into my brain in a way other than my ears."

What if the person has a problem like a speech impediment?

□ Same thing. Take responsibility for your part of the problem. Propose a solution that works for you.

☞ "I have a problem. I'm not understanding and I want to. Let's work together and find a different way you can tell me the things you want to say."

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Q. She told me that she would not tell me her whole story because I might tell her probation officer.

A. Well we know she's not stupid. She has no way of knowing that you are uninterested in triangulating yourself in a relationship between her and the legal system.

Tell her, again, your legal mandate to maintain confidentiality. Commend her for protecting and taking care of herself. As therapy progresses, she may come to trust herself enough to tell you the part of the story *she* needs to listen to.

In the meantime, the story of her life is unimportant to the therapy. She has already told her story to umpteen friends, neighbors, relatives, and strangers. As yet, the "telling" has neither fixed nor changed anything.

More important to the psychotherapy than what has happened to her, is how she *responded* to what happened to her. Whatever occurred in the past, the result of all the stories manifests itself in her behavior as she relates to you and to herself in session.

□ Join her. Invite the attention back onto her.

"So what I'm hearing is that you are protecting yourself by withholding part of your story from me. Is that right? How else do you protect yourself in here? What stops you from protecting yourself outside the session sometimes?"

□ Suggest she continue doing what she is doing. Direct her not to tell you another thing about her story. Tell her that psychotherapy is a place she can connect with herself and heal even if the therapist does not have the vaguest idea what is going on.

□ Do some work that does not depend on her telling you any truths. Any symbolic work will invite her to heal even though you may never know what is going on. Try projective interventions such as fantasy, sand, art, breathwork, bodywork, and

storytelling. Use the posters on the wall as subjects onto which she can project.

□ Suggest she tell her story as if it were a fairy tale. Work with this metaphor as if it were a dream.

□ Suggest she find a way to show her story, without words.

□ Invite her to remember scenes from her past, but not to tell you about them. Once she has accessed a memory, direct her to breathe into the feelings that are connected with these experiences.

"Identify where the feeling is, breathe into it, dilute it with oxygen and expel it from your body."

□ In guided imagery, invite her to rescue any abandoned, victim parts of herself and reclaim them into her personality structure. You do not have to know all the details in order to work with these old scenes. Tell her you will be saying generalized stuff and anytime she needs to change the details she can just go ahead and do that in her head.

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