

Q. A man has recognized that he taught his teenaged son to be just like him—uncomfortable with intimate relationships. Both father and son are socially shy and do not live together. What to do?

A. Once there was a certain cat who, if left to her own inclinations, would have chosen never to be touched by human hands. When her humans first met her, they did not accept her natural inclinations and set out to impose loving attentions upon her. They regularly picked up, cuddled, and seduced her with interesting things to lick or smell.

At first, she would not stay in human contact for more than a few seconds at a time. As time went by, however, she began to enjoy the contact and whenever she came to one of the humans on her own accord, they would stop what they were doing and give her their full attention. In time, she turned out to be a loving thing, who liked people and attention a lot.

It's possible this man's son needs the same kind of treatment. Just as civilization usually has to be imposed on children (use of toilets, eating with utensils, problem solving by means other than violence, taking others into consideration, etc.) Sometimes love, intimacy, and joy have to be imposed on children, too, particularly if they are teenagers.

Your client, because he is the adult, has the task of initiating time together with his son.

He can begin by responding positively to his son, his son's presence, his son's actions. He can begin the habit of telling the truth (even when the truth is "I don't want to tell you the truth.") He can touch his son respectfully, ask permission to give hugs, and in general, learn to respond to the son's thoughts, ideas, preferences, and space with respectful intent and behavior.

He might phone every so often with some version of the message, "I'm glad I know you." Now and then he can write a note to his son, even when there is no special occasion. He can learn to invite

intimacy even when his son seems not to respond.

□ In session, practice basic communication: Say what you like or want rather than what you don't like or don't want, own your emotions, behavior, intent, thoughts, and physical sensations. (No "You make me so...")

□ Invite him to connect with himself in the moment and put words to his inner thoughts, perceptions, experiences, etc. as they happen in the room.

□ You might show example possibilities by sharing bits of your own thoughts, perceptions, or experiences. There's no need to dig into your psyche and discuss your deepest personal musings. Keep it simple.

☞ "Right now, as check inside myself, I notice that I'm comfortable being here with you."

☞ "And right now, I'm wondering how I know I'm comfortable. Hmm, let me see. I guess you could say that I'm scanning myself from the inside, deciding that it's safe to be personal with you, and then finding a word that's a close approximation to the truth."

☞ "Now, you try it."

□ Suggest he practice staying aware of when he becomes uncomfortable. Encourage him to find ways *not* to emotionally or physically bolt while engaging his (both real and imaginary) son.

□ Invite him to sit in for both father and son.

- He says a statement from a father's perspective.

- He changes positions or chairs.

- He remembers the statement, notices how it feels to receive that statement.

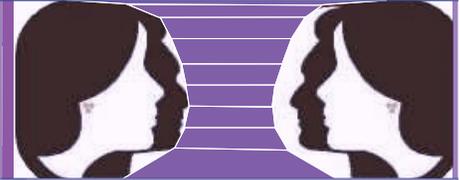
- He responds with a statement from a son's perspective.

- He moves back to the original chair.

- He remembers the son's statement, notices his response to that statement,

- He responds with another statement from a father's perspective

- He continues back and forth until the conversation is ended.



Bad Luck and Rats!

A man complains his dog doesn't behave. Of course, he assumes the dog is the one who has to change. Unfortunately, at least in this universe, it turns out that if he wants something to change, he is the one who has to do something different. He has to change one or more of the following: his behavior, his attitude, what he wants, his tone, his knowledge of dogs, and his relationship with dog-ness.

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□ Once he gets comfortable with polarity work, invite him to experiment with new conversation possibilities (such as subjects they both like), and how he might broach them to his son.

□ Sandtray, art, breathwork, sitting with body sensations, even working with puppets... These and other non-verbal activities may seem childish or silly to some, but turn out to be very useful for adult use when experiencing and exploring themselves in session.

□ Later, you might provide opportunities for him to explore his discomfort with intimacy. Innate shyness, fear, shame, trauma, lack of mirroring neurons, and plain old habit can all interfere with intimacy even with oneself, let alone with another human.

Yeah. Seems like behavioral is a good way to start. My guess is that this guy is not on the autistic scale, but was brought up in a "children are to be seen and not heard environment." So I'd also like your ideas about how to work with that.

Well, once he starts communicating with his son, liking how he feels, and perceiving a more comfortable

closeness when he and his son are together, he might think his work is over.

☐ So, one idea is first to let go of wanting or needing him to continue therapy, and secondly to advise him that there is possibly more work to do and invite him to return to psychotherapy when he's ready.

☐ Another idea is the opposite of that. Appreciate his left (practical) brain and invite him to plunge headlong into his right (metaphorical) brain.

☐ *“Let's do something different. Feel your feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Let yourself be heavier in the chair. Notice both that gravity is inviting to stay down on the planet and that your chair is holding you up. Follow your breath (as you breathe X number of times). Notice the changes inside of you that come with additional oxygen. Feel that in your hands, arms, legs...”*

☐ *“What do you notice now? Pay attention to that (experience, thought, image, memory... Allow it. Follow it (as it moves into, through, and/or out of your body). What's happening now?”*

☐ Keep inviting him to notice (and find the words to describe) his experiences as he talks to you, remembers things, can't think of anything to say, has an emotion of any kind, shuts down, draws, plays a game, walks across the room, changes chairs, looks at his watch...

☐ Invite him, any way you can think of to become more aware of himself in the here and now.

How about working with the discomfort around intimacy?

☐ Bring the discomfort around intimacy into the room.

You: Here's our first experiment. Repeat after me, 'You're too close. I'm uncomfortable. Please move away.'

Him: I'm uncomfortable. Move back.

You: Okay. Here's our second experiment. (Moves chair more forward) Say that again.

Him: Say what?

You: 'You're too close. I'm uncomfortable. Move away.'

Him: You're too close. I'm uncomfortable. Move back.

You: (Moves chair back.) "Thank you for letting me know I was too close.

I appreciate you taking care of yourself.”

☐ *“Okay, I'm going to move closer, inch by inch. As I move closer, let me know when you experience even slight discomfort. I'll stop moving forward immediately. And if you tell me to move back, I will.”*

☐ (Moves forward one billionth of an inch. Stops and waits for a response.)

☐ (Repeats until client says something or shows any physical response.) *“Show me where, in your body, right now, you experience anything.”*

☐ (Once the client can indicate where in his body he is uncomfortable,) *“Let yourself experience that discomfort just a little. Breathe into it. Allow it. Remember to tell me to move away, if or when any experience gets too intense.”*

☐ Keep experimenting. Work with whatever comes forward for him.

☐ To invite him to work a little deeper, and depending on how he responds (i.e. easy introspection vs. uncompromising wall of defense), you might continue:

☐ *“Now let a memory come forward as you experience this feeling... Describe it.”*

Oh dear. Then what?

Well it depends on how comfortable you are with deeper work. I might say:

☐ *“How old are you (in this memory)? Push the Pause button in your mind, and freeze the memory. Use your grown-up brain to name what's happening to or inside your X-year old self.”*

☐ Fairly early on, I often suggest the adult personality begin by going back into the past and either offering important information to the child-he used-to-be (information which the child could not have known at that time) or simply rescue the kid (in imagination) and bring or take him back to the present.

☐ There are many different ways to go once an old memory has been re-accessed. In general they fall under the category of, “Let's try something different and aim for different endings. Let's do that until you (the client) discover an ending that enables you to experience a more functional conclusion about Self.”

☐ Other ideas include recovering unfelt

emotions, taking a different action, or finishing an otherwise incomplete event.

☐ Later, the client can return to the scene and experiment with different and more satisfactory endings.

☐ Let your client guide you. If you have ideas, suggest anything that comes to mind. If your ideas aren't applicable, he will let you know.

☐ Invite him to bring his dreams to session. Invite him to explore his dreams as he would explore a memory.

☐ Invite his son to session. Couples work is (at least in the beginning) is basically Communication 1A. Teach this father and son some structures and invite them to practice in session.

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Q. I'm not sure what to do with kids.

A. Find the part of you who can buy into the idea that most children, in an environment of unconditional positive regard and loving limits, will instinctively and intuitively move in the direction of healing.

In the moments before you meet the child in the waiting room, anchor yourself in your body and start a running monologue in your head that comes from your version of, “This person is a basic miracle. Everything this child is doing has, as its underlying purpose, the movement of the human organism toward resolution.”

Even if the part of you who can think these thoughts is only one percent of yourself, as long as you are coming from this positive frame, everything you do in session will be an invitation for the child to heal.

So I can play with the child and talk to him?

Whether you play with children or adults, instead of being the adversary, join them. Play in parallel. Talk-with rather than talk-to. Keep a mindset of positive intent. Then whatever you do in session will invite the child toward positiveness. Enjoy.

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Q. Sometimes I feel like I'm not earning my money. I mean I'm not doing very much. The client is working and maybe even resolving something but I'm not doing very much besides just sitting there watching.

A. What you are being paid for is to provide an environment of unconditional positive regard. That is worth a lot more per hour than you're being paid—I'd guess around five thousand dollars an hour, give or take. It is my perspective that an hour in such an environment is a respite from the culture and therefore therapeutic all by itself.

□ If your cognitive brain needs something to do in session, you might try perceiving as delightful everything about the person in front of you. Learn to look through Grandparent-Eyes.

What's that?

Well, imagine an infant in a high chair throwing his food as far across the kitchen as he can, screaming in delight. Mom gets mad. Dad thinks something like, "Well, we'll never *this kid to college.*" Grandma and Grandpa look at each other and think, "Wow. What an arm!"

☞ Re-boot your brain every few minutes and consider the human in front of you a basic miracle, just for breathing. Given that you have enough trouble running your own life, consider that whatever this person is doing (even if it's negative), it is exactly who or what she or he needs to be and do. Feel your joyful response to that frame. That should keep you busy.



Q. A child molester appears to be working hard in session. What if he is conning me?

A. If he is conning you, then his attention and focus are on you instead of on himself. Pay attention to indications that he wants your approval.

□ If you suspect he is pretending for your benefit, intervene by wondering about it out loud.

When it comes to clients, Ignore most of what-they-say. Instead, notice and work with how-they-are as they say it.

□ Doggedly invite him to introspect and attend to his Internal Self. Encourage him to listen to the symphony he finds in there.

He can con you only if you want or need something from him, if you have an agenda for him, or if you want him to be different than he is. For example, should you want to be well thought of by the court system in your county or if you intend to have opinions as to whether or not he will re-molest, then yes, he can con you.

On the other hand, if you stay out of the intra/interpersonal systems that surround him, you will have no expectations, opinions, or needs concerning him. He can lie, tell the truth, act-out, connect with himself, or not; it will make no difference to you or the work you invite him to do.

What if he is lying?

Lies are no different from fantasies. And a fantasy is often a metaphor for some truth.

□ So work with his lies as if they are truths.

□ Then work with his lies as if they are lies.

Molestation is about taking advantage. If he perceives he is taking advantage of you in some way, then he is re-enacting the events that got him court-ordered to therapy in the first

place. From his perception, you are the new victim. The way to intervene is not to participate in the re-enactment.

□ Trust yourself that he might be lying and use not-believing as an intervention. Not-believe everything he says. Work with his response to your not-believing.

Step aside from your judgment that lying and conning are bad. After all, lying and conning are defenses against terror or shame. Chances are that ever since he was molested as a child, he feels comfortable in relationships only when one person is being taken advantage of by another. So if he does stop conning you, he will possibly assume that you will immediately start conning him.

What do you mean since he was molested? He's the molester.

Most molesters were sexually exploited at about the same age as the children they molest.

Frequently, the perpetrator will discover his sexual development was frozen at about the age he was molested. So if he was nine when he was molested, he regresses to nine years old when he is sexual. Therefore when he molests a nine-year-old, there is often a bizarre age-appropriateness to the activity.

Do perpetrators ever really finish their work?

Some do, some do not. Frequently shame, embarrassment, existential angst, and denial are such firm barriers against the letting down of ego defenses, that taking true responsibility for abusive behavior is not possible.

Other perpetrators will admit that they were abusive but stay stuck there. They say all the admitting words and then they admit everything again, and then they go on a mini lecture circuit and admit-some-more. Perhaps, for some, the admitting works its way down past the level of their sinuses, dribble by drabble, and eventually moves into their hearts where they may integrate it.

For many perpetrators, however, full recovery does not occur or takes an exceedingly long time. Goals more apt to be attained include:

- To accept themselves the way they are.
- To constantly be aware of the abusive side of themselves and consciously decide not to behave from that frame.
- To find a way to celebrate the sexual part of themselves so when they are done celebrating, no one is damaged.

What if they feel neither shame nor guilt? Some never admit or admit but are unwilling to believe they have caused any damage.

Yes some people are so deep into denial they cannot allow themselves to feel anything. Denial is a protective device, so remember that basically they are afraid of shame, guilt, other people's opinions, their secret-selves, losing face, embarrassment, having to take responsibility, admission of imperfection, etc.

In many cases, the best society can hope for is what with the police, the lawyers, the courts, the social workers, the counselors, the psychotherapists, and the family uproar, the abuse has caused so much hassle that the person determines to discontinue abusing just so they will not get tattled on and have to go through all the upheaval again.

Pedophiles, those adults who prefer or stalk young children as sexual partners, and people committed to their compulsions are rarely willing to work introspectively, let alone to give up their dysfunctions.

Work with these people indirectly. The unconscious will often cooperate if the work is done in metaphors. As soon as the work is direct or conscious, terror sets in and the person defends too much to continue.

There is hope. Just being in the company of someone who sets and maintains clear limits, is non-judgmental, and has no investment that change has to occur is enough to invite change, albeit slowly.

Even though a perpetrator may not work through any of the issues that lead to the abuse, any introspective connection leaves him different than he was before. He has perhaps only a molecule more of self-knowledge, but that is a molecule more than he had before.

Self-esteem naturally increases in an environment of unconditional positive regard. And since all abuse is self-abuse acted out on others, with every increase of self-esteem, abuse is less inclined to recur. So invite people into their work and let go of any need that they heal themselves.



Q. A boy is very angry. Someone suggested I should encourage him to get more angry.

A. It is not more *angry* you want to invite him to be, it is to be more connected to the anger he already has.

The distinction is important. To encourage him to be more angry is easy—you might beat him up, pick away at his self-esteem, abandon him, or embarrass him in front of his friends.

Alternatively, to invite him to connect with his anger, you might encourage him to experience his anger instead of acting it out, to take responsibility for his internal experience, and to move towards its resolution rather be shamed, than blaming it on externals, losing control or abusing other people with it. Invite him to notice his anger, allow it, experience it and stay with it until either it is done, or he is too exhausted to continue. (No expression, no repression.)



Shouldn't I wait until a person feels safe enough with me to encourage his anger?

Good luck with that. Should someone tell you he feels safe with you right now, there is no guarantee that he will still feel safe with you 30 seconds from now.

On the other hand, if you want to guarantee that someone will not feel safe with you, here are three easy things to do:

- Try to get him to do something,
- Expect him to do it, and then
- Take it personally if he doesn't.

The really challenging part of this profession is not to 'know', but rather to assist someone else to discover.

So, without being invested in the outcome, invite this boy to connect with his experience as he goes about his business in the psychotherapy session. Invite (not insist-on) a connection with Self-in-the-moment and then invite work with the response whatever it is.

□ Whether he feels safe or not, you be safe. Provide a safe container. For physical safety, make sure you set and keep clear limits. For emotional safety, make sure you have no judgments.

Keep in mind that anger is only an emotion; violence is a behavior.

☞ *"There are three rules about anger in this room. (1) Nothing gets broken on purpose. (2) You are safe and don't get hurt, and (3) I am safe and don't get hurt. One idea is to wrestle with Big Bear (a rather huge stuffed bear in the corner). Another idea is to use this plastic bat on that pillow over there. You can whack it and yell, both at the same time. Hmm, I wonder what you will choose."*

☞ If he should hurt himself, even slightly, even by accident, stop the work immediately. You can stop it for three minutes or you can stop it until next week. You be safe and he will be safe.

So you work until they trust either you or themselves enough to be angry?

You do your work and let him do his work. Your work is to invite; his is to respond. When he trusts himself enough, he will connect with his anger. Until then, he will not. Let go of needing either one to happen.

Q. She talks and talks—serial subjects. Mostly she either complains or talks about protecting family members. I sit there not knowing where to begin.

A. Some ideas:

□ Listen for the common thread. Here's how. Begin by imagining there is such a thing as a "common thread." Then quiet your mind and wait for a picture, thought, or other mental message to flash into or pass through your conscious mind.

☞ Then, trust your inner "mental message" and wonder about it out loud.

"Who protects you when you need it?"

"How old were you when you realized you were the 'family-protector?"

"Are you (or How are you) protecting yourself right now, right here, in this room?"

"Imagine all your family members are gathered here in this room. Tell them what you've been telling me."

But what if my "mental message" guess is completely wrong and off-base?

So what? This isn't a test. Your guess is just a guess. As long as you have no agenda whether or not the client hears you, replies to you, considers what you say, or takes your suggestion, it's okay to invite it.

If it turns out you are completely off-base, the most likely response will be a quizzical look passing across her face, or perhaps a shake of the head, after which she'll return to whatever it was she was saying or doing. If you are right on target, she'll probably think you're magic. You're not, of course, but she gets to think what she wants.

□ However, if you a great desire to be "correct" or "right," you might take notes while she talks and then ask her directly, *"What do all the topics you've been talking about have in common?"* The cognitive part of our mind loves to solve puzzles, so even if she originally answers, "Nothing," to your question, her cognitive mind will probably spend the next day or two working out a satisfactory possibility or two.



Q. They don't know what to do. Nothing I suggest gives this family a permanent replacement for their dysfunctional behavior patterns.

A. The really challenging part of this profession is not to 'know', but rather to assist someone else to discover.

Your therapeutic task is not to replace someone else's dysfunctional behavior patterns; your task is to create an environment where the someone-else is invited to become aware of behavior patterns, decide to replace them or not, and discover how they resist behavior patterns that are functional.

Normally, a family will begin acting out both the functional and dysfunctional parts of their system as early as the intake session. Call their attention to these family-created enactments. Alternative communication devices can be suggested on the spot.

"One thing I notice about this family is... Am I in the ballpark? I wonder what would happen if... Let's try that right now."

This family may have named you 'IT' in a game of 'Yes, but.' If that turns out to be true, one way to remove yourself from this no-win place is by relentlessly encouraging each person to take responsibility for creating solutions to their own problems.

"...And what is Your part in this not working?"

"What can You do to get what you want? ...Right here, right now in session?"

To make a process more concrete, enact it physically in the session.

Each time you have an idea, invite the family to roleplay your idea. Then invite them to tell you why it will not work.

When they do not know why your idea will not work, wonder out loud what each of them might have to do in order that your (or somebody else's) suggestion will work.

Consciously join the system.

Take over the family's 'Gee, I dunno what to do' component. That might free up one or more family members to take on the role of I-Know-The Answer person.

If ultimately, nobody can figure out what to do, accelerate that process.

Wonder (out loud of course) if perhaps the family is doomed to misery, a psychological anomaly with no hope.

What if they believe you?

If they believe you, it will be because what you say has truth for them. If they believe there is no hope in trying to get the other-guy to change, they may accept each other the way they are, and automatically clean up a lot of the dysfunction.

Or they may leave feeling victorious because they have successfully convinced an expert to give them permission to dissolve the marriage.

Or they may join forces against you, find another counselor who is 'better,' and arrange that this new person will tell them to do whatever they have been wanting to be told to do all along. None of this will have anything to do with you.

Give up any beliefs you have that your responsibility is to get this family to change. Invite them instead to become aware of the system they have created and how they each contribute to the maintenance of that system. Understand that even after

you have done your job, they may still choose their current system over all other alternatives.



Q. I don't know what to do with this family.

A. On the board, draw a picture of how they are with each other.

(draws, erases, draws again, fiddles, explains..., still doesn't have a clue)

Walk to the other side of the room and look at what you have drawn. Say again how this family is with one another.

(Re-describes family and finally listens to self) Oh! I see.

Now that you are connected with your perception, your creative mind will probably think of all sorts of things to do.

In session, you usually cannot take time out to describe a family's process to a third party and then listen to yourself as you have done here. So use the drawing board in your imagination. Imagine that you are explaining how this family is, to someone else. Pay attention. Listen to yourself. Create an intervention based on your description.

Invite the family to physically re-enact the picture you draw in your head. Work with their responses.



Q. I've been gone for five weeks. Half my clients have found reasons not to return. Am I being punished?

A. Possibly. The unconscious reasoning may be, "If mommy abandons me, I'll show her I don't even need her."

Therapeutic interruption can be unsettling for someone who is dependent or in the dependent stage of their therapy, as well as for anyone who is actively or regularly working deeply to resolve old issues. In the future,

With all your clients, bring up the subject of your vacation early on. Some will re-experience their anger that mommy will not be there forever, or get in touch with their old fears of being abandoned. Work with these responses.

Do a modified terminating session before any extended vacation. Take the time to articulate any unfinished business you perceive between the client and himself, and between the client and you. Ask him to do the same.

To those who are working through abandonment issues you might say, "I do not plan to abandon you, I plan to continue to exist, and to continue to be your therapist when I get back."

Nothing to do?

Practice appreciation.



□ If someone does not appear to respond to the fact of your leaving, bring up the subject again. Some folks deny reality until the last minute and then freak out when confronted with the imminent truth.

□ Make a definite appointment for the future. The person may still call and cancel but you will not be in that one-down position of calling them, telling them you have returned from vacation and would they like to make another appointment, please.

□ Realize how long a five week interruption is to someone who has high intentionality about working through their issues. Make an interim therapist available in your absence.



Q. She called saying she was in a bar getting drunk and wasn't coming to session today. I said okay I can't make you, am I going to see you next week? She said, "I don't know, I'll call you." Another intern said not to call her back! What do you think?

A. In the future, inform your clients that their hour is theirs. They can come, not come, go someplace else, be late, or use the hour any way they want. The agreement is that you will still be at the office and they will still pay you for your time.

□ You might consider getting payment ahead of time for the month.

□ Since that is not your agreement here, the issue at hand is about limit setting and being taken advantage of. The appointment time is available for next week. She said she would call if she wants it. If someone else wants that slot first, give it to them.

So I should not call her and ask her if she is coming in?

□ Think of everything you do relative to the client, in or out of session, as an intervention.

☒ Act as if you were Ideal Parent. If the car leaves at eight for school, Ideal Parent does not walk in at 7:30, and 7:40, and 7:52, each time pleading for the child to get out of bed and get ready.

So, go put the clothes on for them?

Ideal Parent is unconditionally accepting and takes perfect care of

herself. After one reminder, at 7:55 she picks up an outfit of clothes and shoes, a well-stocked lunch and a banana and puts them in the car. At eight o'clock she cheerfully picks up the kid and puts him in the car. In good humor, she drives toward the school. If the kid is still not dressed by the time she gets to school, she carries the clothes, the shoes, the lunch, the kid, and the banana into the nurse's office or some other private place. She kisses the kid goodbye and leaves. She shouldn't have to do that more than once.

So I shouldn't do closure and checking, I should just let it ride and see what happens.

Right this minute, I can think of two possible solutions for you. I imagine there are more.

Option 1: "This woman has created a metaphorical hole in the universe. (My supervisor calls it an unfinished gestalt—in that it compels Somebody or Something to fill it up.) So, since it is the client's empty space, I'll let her be the one to feel compelled to fill it up. I'm not going to take care of her, smooth it over, or steal her opportunity to confront herself. This is part of her therapeutic work.

Option 2: I am feeling uncomfortable about not calling at least once and I'm pretty sure I would feel uncomfortable having not called her, should I never hear from her again. I need to take care of myself however neurotic that might seem to others. So, I'm calling because I'll be happier with myself afterward."



Q. He hits his kids.

A. Your biggest challenge will be to stay neutral and not to judge him.

Boy, that's for sure.

□ Share your judgments and concerns with him.

"What's it like when I share how I feel with you?"

He is angry that he is even here.

Well, that makes sense to me. I'm guessing that shame will also be a major block to any therapeutic work he attempts.

□ Invite him to introspect and explore his experience as he does so.

"Focus internally. Take a physical inventory. Notice anywhere you have a felt sensation such as heat, coolness, tingling, pain, or pressure. Wonder if that feeling is anger exiting your body. Breathe and let it go."

□ Reframe his behavior positively, validate his positive intent, admire his wide repertoire of protective defenses.

□ Wonder what way he would have been more available to learn whatever it was his mother/father tried to teach him by hitting.

□ Perhaps he is available to learn basic parenting skills.

□ Perhaps he is available to parent himself in a different way.

□ Invite this man to work on his own abuse issues. Wonder out loud who beat him up when he was a kid. What was it like to surrender his body like that? What defense mechanisms did he use so that he didn't die?

□ Wonder what he is hoping to teach his kids by hitting them. Brainstorm and practice different ways he might get the same messages across.

□ Address the issue of anger and offer to teach him anger management skills.

□ Wonder out loud what he will do when he gets angry at you. Tell him what you want him to do when he gets angry at you.

□ Teach him how to release his anger through imagery.

□ When he is willing, work with him as you would any perpetrator. Guide him through re-living his abusive childhood scenes. Invite him to change the endings, rescue himself before he strikes out at someone else, reclaim abandoned parts of himself and connect with his grief.



Q. He says he lies to keep from hurting his wife's feelings.

A. Crank up your child abuse antenna. Frequently, unless they are sociopathic, adults who lie as a relationship style began lying as children to protect their abuser, a parent with an addiction, or themselves. At some point the child concludes some version of, "If I tell the truth, I will die."

□ With this in mind, responses to, "I lie to keep from hurt my wife's feelings" might include,

- ☞ “How old were you when you were abused?”
- ☞ “Who did you have to protect when you were a child?”
- ☞ “What are you lying about right now?”
- ☞ “How come you are not protecting My feelings?”
- ☞ “Connect with your own hurt feelings right now.”
- ☞ “Here’s your wife (in the empty chair). Tell her the truth. Pay attention to your response as you do that. Now tell her what you usually tell her. Notice the difference.”

☐ Tell me a lie... Okay, now tell me a truth. What’s the difference?

- ☞ Tell me another lie. This time, pay attention to your body as you do it... What did you notice?
- ☞ Do it again. See if it changes...As you lie, notice where in your body your attention goes...If I were a Martian, how would you describe it to me?...Pay attention to the experience, follow it, wherever it goes.
- ☞ Here’s the sandtray (white board, art supplies, furniture, clay, objects in the room)—find a way to show me how you experience yourself when you lie.
- ☞ What are the words that go with that experience. Who do you need to say that to? Who needs to hear it? (Pointing at an empty chair/space in the room), tell them right now.

♪

Q. He hopes his father will connect with him emotionally on an upcoming fishing trip. I suspect he will be disappointed again.

A. Consider that he (your client) is his only hope for a father.

- ☐ Invite him to role play both positive and negative fishing trips. As he role plays his father, he will experience his fantasy of his father, the father he has introjected, and the parts of himself he has modeled after the man he knew in childhood.

Therefore, as he role plays his father, he connects with himself. Work with his responses.

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Q. Her insurance will not reimburse for therapy so she wants to reduce her fee to almost nothing. I want to tell her no, but she’ll quit otherwise and since she lives a victim lifestyle, she really needs therapy.

A. So part of you thinks you can help her out of her victim lifestyle by allowing her to victimize you?

She supports her unemployed boyfriend, and cannot afford much for anything else.

She has created an enactment for the two of you to work in. She would rather support her boyfriend than get her therapeutic needs met. Most likely, sacrifice and martyrdom are significant issues in her life.

Should I name that directly to her?

- ☐ Invite her to tell you that her boy friend is more important than she is and that she has no intention of changing right now.

What if she says, no that’s not true.

- ☐ Have no agenda that your guesses are right. As always, pay attention to and work with the reaction.

- ☞ “Oh. So what is true?”

♪

Q. In order not to get stuck in the system, I’ve been leaving the room for a few moments whenever I discover I’m experiencing judgment, expectations, agendas or whatever.

A. Just remember to take your body with you, when you go.

♪

Learning To Be

by Shari Derksin

One of the most transformative elements that I’m taking away from Group Process is an understanding of a state of “being” when I’m with clients. That is, letting go of an agenda and trusting my creative intuition to journey with the client wherever that will take us. This is monumental for me as I tend to be performance-oriented by nature. I am comfortable with doing and am not so experienced with being. What I’ve learned is that, for me, having an agenda tends to instigate anxiety as I then have a standard to which I feel I must perform against. Performance anxiety hinders my presence with a client and obstructs creative energy. There are several attitudes and behaviours that I’ve adopted to help ground me in a state of being rather

than “fixing” or doing. These changes in behaviour and attitude have significantly altered my communication patterns and relationships with friends and family, as well as with clients.

The most significant behaviour change came in learning about Karpman’s Drama Triangle as I recognized a pattern of rescuing in my life. I realized that in many of my relationships, if not almost all, I have been drawn to the self-righteous power position of Rescuer—a place of “fixing” and doing with an agenda.

If I am brutally honest with myself, I might even acknowledge that I tend to seek out relationships where I can adopt this role, and shy away from relationships where I cannot (heaven forbid that I should ever become someone else’s “project”).

A perfect example of this is the relationship that I developed with a diagnosed borderline personality disorder female in the last year. She was a member of a ladies group that I was facilitating. From the beginning it became apparent that she was very needy.

A lot of the group’s energy was directed towards her. She had multiple issues, which were way too overwhelming for the Rescuer in me, and yet I felt compelled to help her somehow. I offered to go for walks with her in the park where she could talk or just be silent so that she could have quiet time to think without being alone. Simple, right? My simple plan opened me up to the vortex that is her victimization.

Stupidly, my Rescuer dove right in. She loved to talk, and she stroked my Rescuer ego by telling me what a good listener I was and how I seemed to understand her so well, much better than other people. I was special.

But after many intruding phone calls, and dreading checking my email because she'd be there to "chat" online, and realizing that my "profound" conversations with her were not instigating any significant progress in her mental/emotional health, I became increasingly angry with her. I was now Rescuer turned Persecutor.

At the time I did not understand that this is what was happening. I was disgusted with myself for being so angry with her when all I wanted to do was help her. I was a Rescuer with an agenda, and I was failing miserably.

It was at this time that I started my own personal therapy as required by my counseling psychology program. My therapist asked me a brilliant question. She said, "You have a young family, a husband in school, you are in school, and you're all adjusting to a new country. What makes you think you could take on a borderline personality?" What indeed. She encouraged me to set my boundaries in the relationship and to stand firm with those boundaries. I decided to honestly, yet gently, inform my Victim that I was no longer available for phone calls, online chats, or walks in the park, but that she could contact me by email and I would respond to her when convenient for

me. She has respected those boundaries and I have not heard from her since. I'm sure she has probably felt abandoned by me, but the tremendous victory and freedom I felt in my self-care overrode any potential guilt. She was a valuable, valuable lesson and the start of the death of the Rescuer in me.

By not having an agenda when working with a client I shut off the Rescuer in me. Without an agenda they cannot be a "project to fix." Abandoning the Rescuer in me is critical in being present with a client. It allows me to "be" and not "do". In a state of being, my creative intuition is unobstructed.

Not only that, but I have more therapeutic energy available for the client. Without an agenda I can approach a client with a sense of curiosity about who they are and what their journey will be, rather than as a "project to fix". I am then available to journey with them, rather than toil in a position of power over them. Empowering a client with their own process is, I believe, when real healing can take place.

By diminishing the Rescuer in me, I am enjoying more states of being and am discovering my own creative intuition. I also like to practice creative intuition with my husband in moments of inspiration as they arise. For example, just recently he shared with me a sensation that he has been experiencing that he has not had since childhood. He expressed how difficult it was to explain the sensation. I was patient and remained silent. He explained that as a child, while lying in bed, he would sometimes have the

sensation that his body was only like a centimetre tall but that his head filled the room, or like he could wrap his arms around the whole world.

He said it was sort of like an out-of-body sensation. I was curious about the sensation he had then and wondered why he was having it now. Rather than go down the Rescuer road of trying to understand and define what it meant and determining what to do about it, I remained in a state of "being" allowing my creative intuition to kick in. Instead of probing him more about what it meant, I asked "What would you do if you left your body?"

Like an excited child he jumped right into an expression of what he would do. He said he would fly way up to the sky and just fly around looking at everything. He would visit people he knew, like his sister and her family, and just hover over them as an invisible observer. He would also fly around the world observing all sorts of animals and nature, and then he would dive down, down into the depths of the ocean, and swim around observing life in the ocean. He would then fly out of the water way up to the sky again and just fly around going up and diving down. As he was talking I felt like I was on a journey with him flying around. I felt like I saw a glimpse of him as a child, delighting in finally have the freedom to express his fantasy. It was such a beautiful moment of intimacy. I didn't have to understand what the sensation means, I just went on a journey with him. And that was all that mattered.

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