

Q. When they were acting out an old spanking scene, the boy hit his father with a bataka.

A. I suggest you discourage violence toward sentient beings. Instead, encourage the idea that the experience of anger is biochemical and confined to the body. Anger is separable, not only from violent behavior, but also from muscle or verbal activity. In my mind, it is not okay for dads to hit kids. And, it is not okay for kids to hit anybody either.

For me, the potential damage in this scenario manifests itself by the father not protecting himself from his son's acted-out abuse. He is not only supporting the concept of one person hitting another, he is teaching his son it is okay to let oneself be somebody else's victim.

The next session, the son wanted to play out the same scene again.

Well of course he did. It's possible that in this family, both spanking for real and hitting for fun are considered great ways to show someone that you care about them.

That's terrible.

Possibly so. And it might have been implicitly handed down over generations.

□ Invite this father to say, "No son, it's not okay to hit real people. I know you are angry, and it's okay to be mad. If you want to express your anger by hitting, hit this pillow over here. I'll show you how."

What if instead, the father says to me, "Well, you told me to" (let my son hit me).

So, as you perceive this father, his first response might be to regress to pre-adolescence and blame you for his behavior. Is that right?

Well maybe.

□ Okay. Well, if he does, admit your error and work with what just happened.

Father: Well you *told* me to.

You: Yes I did. And it was my mistake to have suggested it. I apologize. This gives me an idea. Stand up. (As you are speaking, you stand up.)

Father: (Also stands up.)

You: Check in with yourself. Did you just stand up because I said so, or because you wanted to get out of the chair?

Father: Because you said so.

You: So, you did what I said without consulting yourself. Let's try it over again. Sit down. (You sit down while you speak)

Father: (Sits down.)

You: So, did you just sit down because you wanted to or because I said so?

Father: Uh...

You: Stand up again...(father probably stays seated)...What's going on now?

Father: Uh..

You: One of the things we might teach your son is to be aware of what's going on inside him as it's happening. I'm thinking this is something you can teach him by example. Like right now, are you confused? Amused? Not feeling anything at all?

I'm afraid the father will get mad.

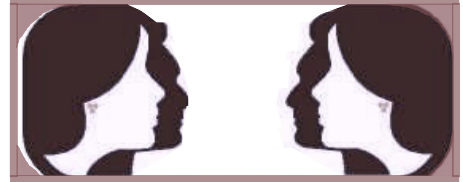
That's a good possibility. Some folks will laugh when they catch themselves out—doing exactly what they don't want their kids to do. Others will run into some level of fear regarding public knowledge that they may be less than perfect human beings. Then, to defend against the fear, they dabble in shame, and often cast an inner vote for anger at the public.

□ Whatever his response, remember it has nothing to do with you. Stay in your body and open your heart.

"Ah. It was not my intent to annoy you, but as long as you are feeling (whatever he calls it), I invite you to focus internally and see if you can share with your son whatever words come to mind that are closest to describing your experience right now."

☞ Invite him to role-model one way of letting go of anger at the expense of no one.

"Here's the bataka again. Tell your son, 'I'm annoyed but I'm not going to hit anything that's alive. My body wants to



express itself physically, so I'm going to whack this futon over here."

☞ Invite him to role-model letting go of anger in a way where not even pillows get hurt.

"Here's a idea. Close your eyes and breathe. Follow your breath. Feel your the physical sensations. Each time you exhale, allow a few of those sensations to exit your body through your lungs, your muscles,... It probably doesn't feel very good. See if you can also let it out through your skin. Experiment with other ways anger can exit your body when all you are doing is sitting here, breathing, and allowing yourself to feel."

☞ (once he has cooled down) *"Tell your son what just happened and how you handled it."*

☞ Invite the son to practice the father's behavior, right here, right now, in the session.

Which behavior?

Introspecting to discover one's internal experience in the moment, then experimenting with ways that allow those physical experiences to flow through and out of the body until they dissipate.

Q. When I see fifteen-year-old twins together, they both work on different things. I end up feeling really split.

A. If you are *feeling* split, you probably are split. What does that mean for you? Off-balance? Unfocused? Confused?

It's just that they are not together on anything.

And what is your response when they are not together on anything?

Uh, off balance, I guess.

One issue here is that you have two clients in the room who are clearly not working on the relationship between them.

They each have separate needs, goals, and styles. They each need individual attention and they're not getting it. The other issue here is that you become off-centered when you are with these young people. Perhaps trying to be all things for all people is not your strong point.

I suggest you offer therapy in whatever way and from whichever model enables you to stay centered and connected with yourself for the entire session.

When the verbal one is angry at their mom, the quieter one is uncomfortable and wants the first one to stop.

□ Be prepared (let's practice), in advance, to work with that. The moment one begs the other to stop and the other refuses, notice their process to them. Invite them to do it again—this time, on purpose.

☞ Ask the quiet one what her concerns are about anger being verbalized.

☞ Invite the quiet one to share what she does with *her* anger.

☞ Invite the quiet one to experiment with ways she can take care of herself while the verbal one is loud or assertive.

□ Invite each of them to give herself permission to be different from her sister.

☞ Invite each of them to give her sister permission to be different from herself.

□ Every once in a while, ask them to speak-for and represent each another.

When I split the hour between them, the verbal one works the whole half hour but the quiet one is silent for twenty-five minutes and doesn't warm up until the last five. I hope to get them each for a separate hour per week during the summer.

□ Give up your agenda that the quiet one either warm-up, or work therapeutically during the time you have allotted. Let it be okay that she just watches.

□ Give up your agenda that the time be equitable. Work with whichever one is willing. Let the other one witness.

□ Give up your assumption that being quiet means that someone is not working therapeutically.

□ You hope for separate hours during the summer, so take charge and make a treatment decision—split them up now.

☞ See each twin alone once a week for twenty five minutes.

☞ See each of them, one hour every other week.

☞ Refer one of them to another therapist.

I'm guessing that if you were to see each of them for a separate hour, you would discover that nothing changes. The verbal twin will work the whole time and the quiet one will wait till the last five minutes to warm-up.

Q. I was showing some students how psychodrama might be used in a particular instance. The main person was deeply affected and gained insight about the issue involved. Afterwards, someone asked me if psychodrama should be used with children. I was sorta lost for an immediate answer. What do you think?

A. I think children all over the world routinely invent psychodrama: "Let's play house—I'll be the mother, you be the baby who cries all the time, and you be the father who goes to work and comes home late." What's the concern?

She thought maybe it would be traumatic to play the part of family members—other people taking over their part or kids playing out their parents' fears. Oh, and about asking children to deepen what they notice about themselves—that it might scare them.

Kids won't work any deeper than they want to. If you ask a three-year-old what he notices about himself, he won't have a clue what you're talking about. He'll subconsciously notice what he notices and will either defend against it or allow it to display itself in the relationship in front of him. An older child or teen who doesn't understand or want to "deepen what he notices," simply won't. Any young person may or may not have the introspection skills or the words either to take your suggestion or to answer you.

When a human of any age has experienced a unresolved traumatic event, the unresolved part comes forward into his life frequently, often on a daily basis. It shows up at home, at school, out in the neighborhood, and pretty much any time that particular human is relating to anything on the planet, including himself.

Consider that just by hearing your suggestion, not only might there be something inside him to notice, it is possible he may gain some unconscious insight into his family's dynamic. Later, he might use it to influence himself towards a more functional direction when he's 17 instead of having to wait until he's 40 to begin working it through.

Wounded Healers by *Elanah Kutik*

We therapists are wounded healers, struggling with our own issues at all times. We have the professional knowledge and training that allow us to sit with clients but, without ongoing work around our own inner process, we are like puppets—simply playing a game—going through the motions of therapy. When we are aware of where and when we are countertransferred,

and when we examine unresolved issues that get evoked through our relationship with different clients, we are a more useful asset to the client as well as to ourselves. It is the prospect of two-way transformation in therapy that excites and motivates me to do this work. I know that by remaining conscious and maintaining self-awareness, I continue to grow as a person. I understand where the emotional

and psychic boundaries are between my clients and myself. This, in turn, allows me to be a better therapist. It also allows me to facilitate deeper work with clients, which in turn permits continued unfolding within me. I can think of no better gift than to find an avocation that revolves around joint exploration of body, mind, heart, and spirit. It is truly a sacred path.

Q. She wanted a reduced fee therapy session. I said no I can't do that.

A. And yet you *can* do that. The truth is, you do not *want* to.

I was scared to say no and angry that she asked.

See if you can verbalize and share your preferences out of self-respect rather than waiting to set them after you feel invaded and out of control. If you think of what the other person wants as a proposal (rather than a demand) it is easier to come up with a counterproposal and negotiate.

"I can understand you wanting a reduced fee. However, I'm not willing to do that at this time. What I Am willing to do is ..."

Part of me thinks I should be willing to lower the fee anyway, but I really don't want to and I'm concerned she'll tell other people that I'm mean or something.

Just because you won't work for a reduced fee, will probably have zero future effect on whether she thinks of you at all. I suggest you hold her request in the same respectful, high regard that you do your financial boundaries. Then, let go of needing this person to agree either to pay your fee, or to be your client.

Q. He didn't seem to have the ability to attach. I finally gave up on him and focused on his partner. Now he wants to work with me individually. I am completely surprised.

A. Perhaps when you gave up, you gave up not on him, but on your agenda. Now, with your agenda gone, he may perceive that you accept him exactly the way he is.

He said he chose me as his therapist because males are too competitive and females are more comfortable.

And *none* of that is about you. Restating his statement reflexively, he described how he competes with men and takes better care of himself around women.

He may be more comfortable with females because the females in his life have allowed him to win. If that is true, he may be expecting you to be comfortable while he wins at your expense.

So what?

Later on in therapy, when he discovers you are a person, as opposed to a female, he may become quite angry.

Actually I confronted the heck out of him the first session. He wasn't turned off at all.

Then perhaps what he liked was somebody telling him the truth. Actually, for something really different to do, you might ask him that question, directly.

...verbalize and share your preferences out of self-respect rather than waiting to set them after you feel invaded and out of control.

Q. Several times a boy, sixteen, has ingested alcohol to the point where he blacked out. Recently he was arrested for drunk driving. I feel that he has a problem. His mom feels that he has a problem. He swears he has quit.

A. So everybody "feels" but the boy. You have a problem; Mom has a problem—You both want someone else (the boy) to be different. The boy however, does *not* have a problem. He is fine with the way things are and doesn't want or need anything to change. Have I got that right?

Uh huh.

Well, unless someone else wants to take responsibility for his not-drinking by chaining him to his bed or watching him twenty-four hours a day until his twenty-fifth birthday, his behavior is unlikely to change. Some time in the future, should he perceive he has a problem, that's when he might be willing to take responsibility for resolving it—and not before.

Yes. My hit is the boy will stop therapy as soon as he is off restriction.

So work individually with him around any issue he is willing to address. Even the smallest baby steps can point the mind toward positive resolution. And by the way, let go of needing that to happen.

Invite him to explore relationships with his peers, draw, use the sandtray, play games, brag, tell jokes, focus on what he's good at, even regress and use the therapy time much as a nine to eleven year old might—I'm thinking army games, with you as a loving witness.

Should he indicate he is even remotely available to investigate his alcohol use,

Wonder what it is that alcohol keeps him from "feeling.

Invite him to explore the benefits that come with being unconscious.

Wonder out loud how long he has been suicidal.

Wonder what it is that terrifies him.

Invite him to remember and reconnect *in great detail* with the physical experiences of being nauseated and hung over.

Invite him, to recall a social situation during which he drank. Then guide him through an imagery where he relives

that situation, but instead of drinking, explores a number of other coping mechanisms.

Tell this young man your perceptions. In your case, as I understand it, they go something like this:

"My guess is you will be leaving therapy as soon as your mom takes you off restriction. I hope you change your mind but in case you don't, I want to say what is on my mind. Since you black out when you drink, you may already be an alcoholic even if you never have another drink. There may be other ways to escape to which you are not so allergic. As a therapist, I do not judge you if you drink, become an alcoholic, or have an unhappy life. But speaking as a community member, I want you to know that I'm not okay with your drinking and driving. My teenaged daughter is out there and I don't want you to cause her harm."

As always, work with his responses.

"What's it like to have me lecture you?"

"How do you respond to the idea that there are other ways you might escape your life?"

I strongly recommend you invite the mother to explore her parenting alternatives, either as an adjunct to the boy's counseling, or as a gift to herself.

See her individually.

Recommend additional family counseling.

Suggest she enroll in a positive parenting class such as Love and Logic.

Suggest she find a twelve-step program for relatives of adolescent-alcoholics, and begin attending regularly.

See them together—think of them as a "couple."

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Q. When she described herself, she said it was like she was in a hallway in front of a door crying, "Where's the key? Where's the key?" I had a feeling there was something awesome I could do with that, but I couldn't think what. Any ideas?

A. Well, without asking about the content of her story, the first thing I think of is to invite her to imagine she's in a hallway in front of a door crying, "Where's the key? Where's the key?"

Once she creates herself an imagery, I'll go with her wherever she takes herself. I might start with something like, "What do you notice? (Describe your experience.)"

If she says she wants to know where the key is, I might suggest she explore her environment. Maybe she'll find the key.

She may try to open the door without the key. If so, I'll go with her as she finds out what happens—to her, to the key-that-isn't-there, or to the door.

At the same time, I'll be trusting my psyche to come up with ideas regarding what might be missing or what she might be avoiding.

For example, I might suggest she imagine she *is* the door and explore what the door wants, what it hopes for, its perceived job, and perhaps its secrets.

I'd invite her to *be* the key and find out what the key has to say for itself. Does it want to be found? How did it become hidden?

I might invite her to imagine she is on the *other* side of the door and explore the metaphor from the point of view that someone or something in the hallway wants to get in (or maybe, out.)

So what do you think is the problem?

As you describe it, her dilemma might be about impotence (I can't find the key; I want someone else to help me) associated with generalized terror. Perhaps she is be dealing with frozen creativity in the face of either the unknown or the seemingly hopeless. I have no idea what she needs, how she can get it, or what she might discover about herself. I enter into imagery work with an open mind.

Since there are no pre-determined laws of physics to bother with in one's imagination, anything is possible. I do, however, bring my psycho-theory with

me—that everything in any person's imagery is a metaphor for a part of that person's Self.

I invite you to hold the view that there is no "right" to work with imagery. You will guide imageries differently than I do. All ways are exactly perfect

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Q. I hate the phone and have a hard time returning calls and responding to minor crises.

A. Consider taking personal therapy time to work through your phone phobia and resentment of minor client crises. In

the meantime, try subscribing to a truth-in-packaging ethic.

Before he pays his money, tell your client (who is, after all, a consumer) the truth about your "product" (that's you and your time). For example, since you know you are not responsive to weekend calls, let each client know during the intake interview. This information can be offered without apology along with other intake information such as your fee, cancellation, and insurance procedures.

Clearly outlining expectations is a part both of setting the frame and being ethically responsible.

"The truth is I'm not very responsive to phone calls. To protect yourself, I suggest you take care of business during session. If you need to change or cancel an appointment, it's usually best if you leave a straight-forward message and don't count on my calling you back immediately."

So what do I tell the clients I have now? They often come in angry with me after I have been irresponsible and we spend time working through that.

Are you saying the *client* thinks you are irresponsible? Or is it *you* who thinks you are irresponsible?

I guess I think I am.

And one way you punish yourself is by calling yourself names until you feel bad?

I guess.

Does that usually work?

Mostly. (laughs)

Hmm. More on that later. Let's move on to the topic of the *client's* anger at you.

In general, time spent working through client anger at you is not wasted. Their annoyance at you is part of their transference.

Use your "irresponsibility" as an opportunity to role-model being up front with others and taking responsibility for your own behavior.

"When I took you on as a client, I managed to leave out a truth about myself and I'd like to apologize for withholding that information. The truth is that I'm not very conscientious about returning phone calls and in the future, it's usually best if..."

Use the client's annoyance as an opportunity for him to further deepen his exploration of Self.

Wonder out loud who else they are angry at.

Wonder who else in their life is irresponsible.

Wonder how it is for them to be involved with someone as undependable as you.

Invite the person to use his current state to begin exploring his anger in general.

"Pay attention to your inner experience as you recite a list of the many things you resent. Start with something like, 'I resent that you didn't return my call.'"

Make a policy with yourself that you will never pick up a phone again unless you want to. Then notice how much easier it is to return phone calls once you have permission Not To.

Well, it happens the other way around, too. I told another client not to telephone me at home and she called me anyway.

The problem there is not that your client called you, but that when you found out she was on the phone, *you talked with her anyway.*

Some people perceive a telephone call as a mandate—that the caller has top priority for of their time and attention, even when they don't know who the caller is. If part of you agrees with that perception, then of course you will feel compelled to answer when the phone rings.

But (and this may be news to a part of you) answering one's phone is not a legal requirement. The ringing of a phone is nothing more than an electronic question.

It's similar to a therapeutic intervention

or enactment in that it is only an invitation, "I'm inviting you to talk right now. Are you available?" Not answering says, "No."

□ And then there's always the option of telling the truth.

☞ "Hello Susie. I want to remind you that I charge for client phone calls I receive at home. It turns out I'm not available at this moment. However, I can call you back at ..."

☞ "Susie, I'm busy with something else (my weekend) and I am not available to talk with you right now. You are welcome to call the office and leave as long a message as you want."

☞ "Susie, I am available to talk with you for five minutes. I've set a timer right here next to me and it will ring when our time is up."

☞ "Susie, what I want you to do right now is dial this (other) number and talk with them. I'll see you next Tuesday at three."

□ If she calls, leaves a message, and later complains that you did not return her call soon enough (for her), you can say,

"Yes I was busy that day; I wasn't taking calls. Sometimes I'm available and sometimes I'm not. It's best not to count on me. Here are some (crisis) numbers you can count on."

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Q. After a particularly difficult session, how do you clear the head boggles away in order to be clear for the next person?

A. Emotional biochemicals, particularly the head boggles, take time to work their way out of one's bloodstream. When your head is boggled, leave time in between sessions to access and breathe through your experience. Other options include drugging yourself (caffeine), meditating, aerobic activity, sandtray, listening to music, journaling, drawing...

Your challenge, of course, is not to get your head boggled in the first place. The way to do that is to stay separate, maintain clear personal boundaries, and let the client do the work.

What if I can't move through it in time?

You might consider going out into the waiting room and saying, "I'll be another five minutes." Then go back and *do something*: scream into a towel, have at a pillow with a tennis racket, or sit with your head boggles and breathe through them until they dissipate. Other ideas include: take time to cry, eat something, write how you feel, stand in the sunshine for a few minutes, walk around the building, or talk to a co-worker.

What if I'm distracted by thoughts of a previous session while I'm in the next session?

□ If you really cannot focus on the present session, one idea is to be thoroughly authentic, and stop the work.

"I need to stop. I'm not entirely here for you. I need a couple of minutes." Then take some sort of action that, in your experience, invites you back toward neutrality.

□ Role-model moving through an emotional experience. For example, if your emotion is fear, then do something to create the illusion of safety. If you are angry, access your anger and let it move through you, even if that takes some physical activity. If you are sad, sink into your sadness, allow yourself to breathe through a wave or two, then say something like,

"Okay. There's probably more, but for now I can be more available for you."

But she's paying for my time.

Even though you took some of her time for yourself, you will have demonstrated how to be emotionally connected in a functional way. If your head boggles are the exception rather than the rule, she will have gotten her money's worth.

Suppose she now shows concern and wants to take care of me?

Whether she gets angry and withdraws, regresses, or begins caretaking, her response will not be about you. Her response will come from her transference. As always, treat whatever you did as just one more enactment. Invite her attention back onto herself, then work with her response.

"My guess is you're trying to take care of me. Who else do you do that with? How old were you when you learned that?"

"What do you need right now?"

"Who did you want to take care of you?"

I hold the position that the master-therapist hanging out in our subconscious, somewhere, both loves us and wants us to be the best therapist we can be. Ask yourself why a particular idea, thought, memory, emotion, or felt sensation would come forward in your awareness, right now, right here in the middle of someone else's therapeutic work.

One possibility is that you haven't been paying attention to those polite electrical messages that your right brain has been sending over to your cognitive mind. Occasionally, it gets tired of being polite, and shouts, "Hey. Listen up. Take your ear plugs out. You're not the only one for whom this idea, thought, memory, emotion, or felt sensation is a major issue. *It's also about the client.*"

□ So try trusting your psyche completely. Offer your head boggles as part of the current client's work.

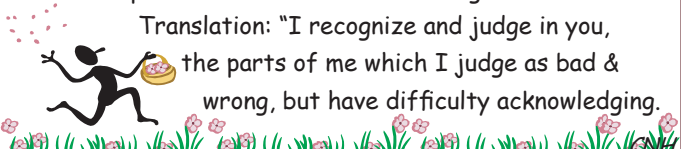
"This is what I'm experiencing right now. In what way might that be a match for what you are working on today?"

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Q. He is immature and was promoted from the eighth grade just because he turned sixteen. He was molested by an uncle at age four. Until recently, he lived with and was sexual with a nineteen-year-old woman whom he thought was his aunt and...

A. Stop. This boy has been molested again.

On Becoming a Psychotherapist
We teach what we know so...
Teach yourself to recognize the projections of others and acknowledge the projections of yourself. Consider the following possibility: "It takes one to know one."
If that is true, *one can only see oneself.*
Speaker: "You are bad and wrong."
Translation: "I recognize and judge in you, the parts of me which I judge as bad & wrong, but have difficulty acknowledging."



I don't understand. How it is a molest? Sixteen and nineteen seem age appropriate.

The fact that he is under eighteen and was previously molested notwithstanding, your description of him as being about twelve years old socially would qualify any adult's sexual activity with him as exploitative. The fact that he thought she was his aunt is an additional qualifying factor.

If you think of someone as your aunt, your relationship is usually a one-up, one-down association as befits a parent-child, adult-minor, teacher-student, therapist-client, or supervisor-intern. Sexually healthy boundaries in such a relationship require that the person in the adult, one-up position, take responsibility and say, "No" to any sexual activities between them.

And when two people relate in a way that one of them holds the other to be child-like, subordinate, or less-than, relative to the other, any sexual relationship between them is exploitative, and is at the very least a figurative, if not literal, molest.

As I see it, even if this particular relationship were age appropriate, and even if it is later learned that they were not related by birth at the time the sexual activity occurred, this boy *thought* she was his aunt. Therefore, at the time, their relationship was incestuous—if not by any legal definition, certainly psychologically.

Molest, like rape, is not primarily about sex. Molest is the taking-advantage-of someone else in an attempt to meet one's own sexual needs at another person's expense.

And all too frequently, the sexual molestation of boys is taken less seriously than that of girls. Often when a boy brags of his early sexual experiences, his associates laugh, and enjoy his macho attitude. Thus, the male victim's denial is supported by the culture. Later, as an adult, he cannot understand why he is unhappy in relationships or why personal satisfaction is so elusive.

For many molest victims, life is often one molestation metaphor after another. My guesses about this boy include that he presents himself as a victim, placates as a communication style, and often finds himself in situations where he is doing something he does not want to do, but feels helpless about altering any of the circumstances.

Yes, absolutely. He always comes to counseling though. He arrives hungry, tired, and thirsty from a two-hour bus ride across town. Actually, he lives right across the street from another counseling center, but his social worker insists that he come out here.

So the social service system is unwittingly part of his continuing coercive scenario, also. Without therapeutic intervention, chances are good this young person will live his entire lifetime moving from one I'm-not-in-control situation to another.

Consider that in the future, other boys may interest this aunt as she explores her sexuality. A molest report may interrupt her exploitative behavior. The damages from such a molest are usually emotional, not physical. Your act of reporting the molest might invite this boy to notice that someone thought he was worthwhile enough to step in and say, "No" to other people invading his boundaries. It may be news to him he has the right to have sexual

boundaries at all. And as you role-model protecting him, he may begin to introject the beginnings of the concept of self-worth and self-protection.



Q. I want her to be different than she is. (laughs and makes fun of herself by pouting and posturing as a 7 year-old)

A. Most people have at least two different intentions regarding their psychotherapy. One part of them wants to change, and another part wants *not* to change. And both are adamant that their desire is the best one for the person at this time.

In session, every moment you want this person to be different, she does not have to access the part of *her* who wants to be different because *you* are doing it for her. And if she takes you with her in her imagination when she leaves the session, then she does not have to want to be different outside of session, either.

Anytime an outsider (in session, that's you) wants a person to be different, that person often responds by polarizing. First, she accesses the part of her who wants to stay the same. Then she fortifies her defense system. The more intensely you want her to be different, the more she settles into her battle stance, reinforcing all the reasons why she is just fine the way she is.

Try not to get lost in *her* battle. Move towards providing a container of positive regard in which this person is okay just the way she is—where it is safe both to change and to stay the same. Trust that the more fully connected she is to her Complete Self, whatever direction she chooses is in her best interest, if only because it moves her towards one of those dreaded "learning opportunities."

Since you are aware that you want some something from her, consider using your over-involvement as an intervention.

"I want you to be different than you are. What's your response to that?"

"I find myself wanting you to be different than you are. I have an idea. I'll come up with reasons why you should stay the same, (and all the drastic repercussions of changing) and you argue with me."

Assume that in wanting this person to be different, you also are mirroring a part of her she may not be connected to. Invite her to explore that.

"Speak with the voice of the part of you who wants you to be different... Now let the part of you speak who wants you never to change."



Q. When you do two-chair work, do you have the person actually move physically from chair to chair?

A. Ask a colleague to do some "chairwork" with you on a real-life issue. Find out how moving physically from chair to chair makes a difference.

One's inner conversation generally takes place at the speed of electricity, inside one's brain. Two-chair polarity work is a great way to invite that inner conversation to slow down. This aides in exploring the relationships between the different parts of Self. Moving to a different physical position each time a different part of Self has something to say, engages the body as well as the

mind. Movement also makes the differences between the two sides more explicit.

Changing chairs creates a physical anchor which eases his transition into and out of contact with each personality part. All sides of the internal dialogue have the opportunity to be articulated clearly.

Some people will not or can not change chairs, but they often unconsciously switch their weight from one side of the chair they are sitting in, to the other, depending on which part is speaking.

Other people are more comfortable with, "On the one hand I think ... And on the other hand, what's true is ..."

As each part is acknowledged, attended to, heard, and felt, it is available to be re-owned as a separate and real part of the self. Interestingly, sometimes the conflict is resolved while the client is moving between positions.

I usually use a pillow or stuffed animal to represent the other person or part of themselves they may be talking to.

I discourage the use of objects in chairwork. First of all, even if the other chair contains someone other than a part of Self, such as a family member or acquaintance, the voice from the other chair can only be the client's perception of that someone else. It is not necessary for the client to understand the concept of projection—"you only see yourself coming." But if you are going to stay clear of the client's system, *you* need to understand it.

Secondly, chairwork is most effective if the non-cognitive part of the brain is accessed and allowed to remain forward in the client's awareness. When your introduction to polarity work is to put a pillow in an empty chair and say, "That's your mother. What do you have to say to her?" The cognitive part of the brain will almost immediately come forward and think, "No, that's not my mother, and she doesn't look like that."

- Start by physically moving an empty chair either closer to or farther away from the client and saying some version of, "*Imagine Sally is sitting in this chair. (pause) Tell her what you just told me.*"

To the extent the client can project the sense of Sally-ness onto the other chair, he is in a light trance. Therefore the non-cognitive part of his mind is more available to be explored.

What if he says, "That's silly."

Some people are quite afraid of accessing their subconscious in public. Some people are so afraid, they will refuse to do anything that smacks of fantasy.

- Let go and move on. Get out the sandtray, the art, invite them to draw diagrams of the problem on the board, etc.
- For everyone else, join them and tell them your truth.

"Yes. It is silly. In fact, I was hoping to invite the silly part of your brain into session. The way I figure it is, if the solution to your problem were a cognitive one, your logical mind works perfectly well and would have figured it out a long time ago. I assume that one of the reasons you are here is to give the creative, artistic, silly part of your brain a chance to come up with some additional ideas."

How do you know when to tell them to switch chairs?

You cannot *know*. You can only sense. Consider exposing yourself to this technique by being a client. As you use the technique to learn about your intuitive self you will, at the same time, be using your intuitive self to learn about the technique.

As they dialogue, many people will feel a response to what they have just said floating up to consciousness and they will change chairs without relying on you to invite them to switch. Other people will never move until you tell them to. Frequently, this may be a part of their victim or Good-Child dysfunction and therefore a process worth noticing and working with, separate from whatever subject the two chairs are discussing.

When you first start out, a good rule of thumb might be to suggest the person switch chairs when he starts repeating himself, when there is a long pause, or when he stops and looks at you for instructions. If you are not sure what to do, either do nothing, or wait the length of a complete in-and-out breath before suggesting anything.

As you become more experienced, you might consider directing the client to change chairs after every clear "I-message."

What if they get confused about which part is in what chair?

That happens fairly frequently. Don't get involved in trying to straighten them out. Sometimes the parts have switched chairs without letting you know. So in fact, they are not where you thought they were.

For some people, not being able to tell the difference between one part of their personality and another is part of their work—possibly part of their diagnosis. Others want *you* to keep track of who's who, so they don't have to. I suggest most of the time that you be completely oblivious to which part sits in which chair. Then, if he asks you directly, you can say,

"I dunno. Check inside and find out which part you feel like right now."

What if they go on and on?

The work is often begun with each side lecturing the other at length. Invite each side to talk about and share itself. As the person focuses, a conversation is entered into, the dialogues get more to the point, and the words from each position may consist only of a short phrase or a word or two. Trust the process. Keep inviting introspection.

How do you know when they are done?

"Done" is when a resolution occurs that melts the conflict away. An incomplete dialogue is an unfinished gestalt which is often experienced somatically as an empty space—a compelling unfinished Something that begs for completion. Your job is to remember it is not *your* empty space. It's the client's empty space. Attend to his response to it. He may run from it, deny it, or breathe through it and wait until something filters up from his consciousness to fill it. Whatever he chooses to do, the only way for you to have any idea at all whether or not he is "done" with the present piece of dialogue is to access the intuitive part of yourself. Pay attention to internal signals from your body.

Keep in mind that even though you sense he is finished, it is possible he is not. Conversely, you may sense he needs to finish and it is possible he will not. Again, the best you can do is guess and work with his response to any guesses you put voice to.



Q. When the session was over, he wanted to hug me. I was uncomfortable because he wouldn't give his own wife a hug. And she was feeling needy.

A. At that moment, you were protecting her and participating in an enactment of their dysfunctional system.

Your discomfort is an inner warning signal that you are caught in the system. Heed it.

Take responsibility, tell the truth, model self-care, and set good limits for yourself.

"Thanks, but no. I'm not comfortable hugging right now."

"I'm available to hug you, and at the same time I'm uncomfortable that you haven't hugged your wife."

Accept a hug from whoever gives it and use it as an intervention.

(Speaking to the wife) *From your response, I'm imagining that it is difficult for you when your husband hugs me and not you. Is that true? We'll work on that next week if you like.*

Sometimes I'm uncomfortable hugging, at all.

If you can comfortably receive a hug from any client, then your discomfort in receiving a hug from a particular client is a manifestation of your countertransference onto that person.

Well, this hug felt manipulative to me.

Then it probably was. As you have previously described this man, he is basically five years old developmentally. He may be tall and married, but he still endeavors to charm Ideal Mommy and seduce her into liking him. Even though, as an intervention, you might have commented on his process, remember that when one's heart is open, one still hugs five year-olds even when they are manipulative.

Q. She says she can't leave her battering husband because he always knows where she is. I feel alarmed. Maybe it's true.

A. Take care of any legal or ethical duties first. Protect, refer, etc. Then step back, get out of the system, and look at the big picture.

Hanging on to the delusion that her husband is omniscient is one way she keeps herself in this victimizing relationship. Any time she decides to get serious about stopping the battering, she can call the police and press charges. She might also, while her husband is at work, walk out of her house, take the bus to any other city in America, rent a room, change her name, and get on with her life. Even in such a whimsical scenario, without an internal decision-to-change, chances are good this woman would create an abusive relationship wherever she went. And the part of you who believes she can't leave has joined her dysfunctional belief system.

She says she can't call the police because a police person is involved as a family friend.

She seems quite determined to stay where she is. Perhaps she protects either her own or her husband's reputation by volunteering to sacrifice herself. Okay, she gets to do that if she wants to.

Create enactments that make the martyrdom more concrete. Pick up a doll and start battering it. Direct her to tell the doll all the reasons it should stay in the room.

Wonder if perhaps she wants you to rescue her. If so, encourage her to pay attention to her experience as you tell her you would be glad to rescue her.

Encourage her to notice her response as you tell her you are *not* going to be rescuing her

It is doubtful that she stays in an abusive marriage because she had a childhood where she was taught to value herself. Probably, she stays in this abusive relationship because, as a child, she was taught how to be a victim. Apparently she was good learner and had masters for teachers.

Invite her to focus her attention on the events in the past of which this current situation is a mirror. Perhaps, as a child, she could not-leave her battering parents because they always knew where she was.

Invite regressive work to recover parts of herself she abandoned as a child. As she lives from a more integrated Self, she might take care of her marriage.

Remember that the thing-we-fear is usually connected to the thing-we-want.

Someone always "knowing where she is" may be, at the same time, her worst fear and her fondest desire.

In general, where we are looking is where we are going. She has a negative picture of herself in her head, something like, "my place is to be one-down to some violent Other." Suggest alternative mind's-eye templates for Self.

"Imagine what it would be like to be protected and respected."

"Visualize the perfect scenario. Find a physical picture of that perfect scene (draw it, find a picture in a magazine...). Put the picture in a place you visit several times a day (refrigerator door, bathroom mirror). Each time you see the picture, stop what you are doing and for 10 seconds or so, visualize yourself in the picture. Then go back to what you were doing."

Experiment for yourself with the method immediately above. Give yourself at least a couple of months (possibly years) to find out what happens.

Invite *her* to "know where she is" so she will not have to arrange her life to ensure that other people do.

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