



## Just A Little Story About...

While Dorothy was growing up, her father often beat her and her mother never stopped him.

Dorothy waited and waited for her mother to step in and protect her. Dorothy was very patient. She waited for 14 years.

After her mother died, her father continued to beat her. Dorothy didn't know what else to do, so she took it upon herself to do her mother's job... and never stopped him.

And she kept on waiting.

Dorothy was so familiar with her family's particular form of violence that, when she became an adult, she naturally looked to include it into the pattern of her life.

Unfortunately her husband, children, friends, and employers were mostly of the "life is pretty good" persuasion and none of them were disposed to participate in a beating-up triangle. So she had to do all three parts herself: part of her often beat herself up; another part never stopped her, and another part kept on waiting.

Many years went by and finally, someone introduced Dorothy to the concept of saying, "No!"

So she tried saying, "No" to the part of herself who beat herself up when it went into action. And then, of course, she waited to see if *that* would work to protect her.

Well, as you know, Dorothy was very patient and very, very good at waiting.

So nothing ever changed. She just kept beating herself up and in the end, of course, the part-that-never-stopped-her, never stopped her.

Carol Nichols Hadlock

## Integrative Ideas for the Process-Oriented Psychotherapist

**Q. I have a decision to make; this is it. (describes his dilemma)**

**A.** Now tell that whole story again, and this time, stay in your body while you talk.

**(Connects with self, listens to self, makes clear decision.) How did you know I wasn't in my body?**

I pay attention to demeanor and behavior changes. Also there are coloring, muscle movement, facial expression, posture, and tonality changes, in addition to tenseness, incongruous emotion, and externally focused words when someone is "out of their body."

Use your mirroring neurons. Anytime you want to make a guess about what is going on for a client, imagine what you would be thinking, doing, or feeling if you had his tone, facial expression, or body posture. Whatever you decide the underlying message might be, guess that it belongs to him too. Your guesses will seldom be exactly right. However, humans are more the same than they are different, so you will probably be in the ballpark most of the time. It's okay to be wrong. Say your guess, offer it as an idea, and let go of it. Then work with your client's *response* to your guess, whatever it is.

♪

**Q. Sometimes a client will idolize me. Do I make that part of their work or, since they shouldn't idolize me, maybe I should direct their attention to it and work with it until they will catch themselves and stop giving their power away?**

**A.** You have no control over whether something is or is not part of someone's work. Idolizing is part of this person's work because idolizing is what this person is doing. Before you call attention to his process, find a way to let go of your investment in whether he should or shouldn't continue the behavior.

The nature of the therapeutic relationship is such that every client will transfer onto you his feelings for, perceptions of, and responses to his Primary Object. As the work progresses, he will regress and begin again to work through each stage of the developmental continuum from basic trust through adolescence. He will move through and attempt to resolve to a more functional

conclusion, traumatic, developmental, or existential issues that were not completed during his actual childhood. While hanging out in this learner's mindset, the human learns by internalizing the values of others at a deep level. At this idolizing stage of therapy, it is imperative for the person's positive psychological growth that he give his power away to someone who he perceives as valuing him. The psychotherapist is an ideal vessel to hold this power if she is perceived as someone who knows everything.

And obviously when One-Who-Knows-Everything holds the view that "everything I do is okay, "the notion that, "maybe I am not completely awful after all," begins to take root. The client introjects the therapist's attitude towards him, when he takes it into himself. Later he can begin to own, as *his* own belief, that he is regardable as positive.

Your immediate task is to separate yourself from opinions about what someone else should or should not be doing. Encourage the client not only to notice what he is doing, but as he acknowledges he is doing it, encourage him to give himself permission to do it even more. Later as he continues with his therapy, he may move through a perverse, adolescent stage where, for a time, he will believe he is "okay" because you are not! Keep in mind that whether he worships you or thinks you are a nutcase, it has nothing to do with you. All his perceptions of you are projections of himself which he is not yet ready to own.

**You can't mean encourage him to "do it more," no matter what. What if he is cutting on himself, or ripping up your furniture or beating up old ladies at bus stops?**

Well, he can close his eyes and do those things more, right here in this room, right now in imagery. When he has done them enough, and if he stays connected with himself while he imagines doing them, he may be able to complete whatever it is he is trying to resolve by doing them in the first place. That is why, in most imagery work, the person is encouraged to surrender completely, to live the imagery experience rather than watch it.

Do it. Do it More.

Do it until you are done with it.

Move on.

**I don't understand. Wouldn't that just make him want to do it more?**

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But given that the person is not psychotic, experiencing a schizophrenic break, or sociopathic, it doesn't seem to work that way. To use your concern about ripping up furniture and to paraphrase a saying about alcohol that my colleague, Sharon Lutman, once told me—ripping up furniture isn't the problem; ripping up furniture is an attempt at a solution to the problem.

Neurosis is generally layered. So, when all the ripping is done, some other something will usually float forward in the person's consciousness. It may not be immediate, but it will be the something that the idea of ripping-up has been covering up.

You don't have to know what that something is, but you can invite the client to pay attention to it.

□ "Now that every piece of furniture in the country (the world/the universe) is ripped up, what's different?"

□ "What is it that you need, right now?"

□ "Follow your breath. Allow your mind to go where it goes while you're breathing. Allow your felt-sensations. "

□ "Notice your body. What is it telling you, right now?"



**Q. He likes to storytell about himself.**

**Q. I think my 10 o'clock needs to storytell. But I suspect I should be doing more.**

**A.** Many people report the week's events in order to transition between the externally focused way they live their everyday lives and the internal focus of the psychotherapy hour. After ten minutes or so, they are usually done with the talking-about and are more available to be present and to introspect than they were when they began. Trust both this need to storytell and that you should be doing more. Pay attention to the process.

□ Every one of the stories has something to do with the issue the person came into therapy to work on. As you are listening, ask your brain to give you some ideas as to their common thread.

Keep in mind *you* are not the person who needs to hear him. Find ways to invite him to listen to himself. It is not your job to stop him from storytelling. That would be you having an agenda for him (a.k.a. being countertransferred).

□ Use the story to learn what it is you can do that invites him to deepen his connection to himself. "Content illuminates process. Listen to the content; work with the process."\*

☞ Hear the story to see if the telling deepens his connection to himself.

☞ Fiddle with the story to see if this deepens his connection to self.

☞ Challenge the thinking or logic of the story to see if that deepens his connection to self.

☞ Do whatever else you can think of, and watch to see if *that* deepens his connection to self.

## *Assignment: Polarity Work*

*by Amanda Morgan*

SN flops on the couch and immediately begins a dialogue with herself: she feels guilty because she wants to go shopping and have nice clothes like the other girls at Los Gatos High, but on the other hand, she really doesn't care about that stuff. She "should" focus on her studies and not her looks.

I prop up a giant teddy bear on the couch next to her and say, "This is SN #1. She is the part of you who wants to go shopping. You are SN #2, the part of you who does not care about shopping. What is she saying to you?"

SN looks at the bear and repeats her reasons for wanting a Gucci bag.

"And what would you (SN #2) like to say in response?" I ask.

She answers me, not the bear.

I ask her to talk to SN #1.

She looks at the bear, starts talking, and eventually ends up with eyes on me again.

The bear continues to stare at her, but receives no further attention.

I let go of my desire for a magical moment where bear and SN integrate, find perfect balance in the universe, and dance out of the room together. She is "in her head." How can I help involve her body in her thoughts?

With a clean slate, my attention floats to SN's body language which seems to communicate defeat. A sigh, a worried forehead,

and sudden silence. "I noticed you just took a big sigh. What does that mean?" I ask.

"I don't know. I just don't know what to do. What should I do?"

Again, my intention fails. I stay where she is.

"I have a feeling you know what you want to do, but something is in your way. You are in a bind: you want the brand-name clothes so others will think you are cool, but if you have them, you will judge yourself for being superficial. Does that sound true?"

Here, I think I am reflecting and validating, but I'm not sure.

"Yes! Exactly!"

I then invite SN to imagine herself walking around LG High first in what she has on in the office (jeans, a T-shirt, and Converse) and then in designer clothes, and I ask about what feelings and thoughts she notices.

In the end, she bargains with herself: she will buy a couple of nice things—it's ok to look nice—but not get carried away.

I confirm that balance is possible; ask if she could dress well and be a moral person?

"Of course," she decides.

Before I can check in with how this talk felt, SN is on to her next dilemma at school. I assume she knows she is finished with the subject and let it go.

□ Invite the story into the present: Invite him to experience himself as a) the main character, or b) the storyteller/observer and retell the whole story in the present tense.

□ Ask him what that story has to do with the issue he came in with.

□ Occasionally interrupt and direct him to attend to his experience in the moment, both of the story's content and of himself as he tells the story.

□ Ask him to tell the story again. Let him know you will be stopping him now and then to suggest he connect with his experience in the here and now.

□ *"And how is that a metaphor for an unresolved issue from your family of origin?"*

□ Share your experience of the storytelling with him. Direct him to focus his attention on his response to your sharing.

□ Work with the content of the story as you would a dream.

□ After the story is done, re-enact the story using props or fantasy. Invite him to work with the different parts of his story. Direct him to be the different parts and dialogue between them.

□ Guess or ask directly how the content of the story or how he is telling it relates to his relationship with you.

□ Guess or ask directly how this story relates to other stories he has told.

□ Wonder about themes common to his stories.

□ Wonder what he would be doing if he were not telling this story right now.

□ Wonder who else he needs to tell this story to.

□ Invite him to draw as he talks. This gives his unconscious a way of expressing itself while his intellect is focused on words.

□ Tell parallel stories, metaphors, fairy tales. Vary the endings.

□ Arrange another, nonverbal activity while the talking is going on. It is harder to stay solely in your intellect while your hands are sifting sand or smearing paint.

□ Put a sandtray in front of him as he talks. If he doesn't use it to demonstrate the story, *you* use the sandtray to demonstrate what you hear. Wonder if you've done it correctly.

□ Take notes. Interrupt often to make sure you have written down the details

correctly. Ask him to slow down and repeat himself so that you can get the details straight. Wonder about some of the details while you're taking the notes.

□ When he is done, ask him to say it all again, this time condensing it into one paragraph, sentence or phrase.

□ Pull up an empty chair and ask him to "talk-to" as opposed to "talk-about" the main subject of his story. If he doesn't like empty chairs, you can volunteer to "be" the subject of the story for awhile (get out of the therapist's chair while you do it), or ask him to say what he might say *if* that other person (or thing) were here right now.

□ Get out of his visual way. Ask him to close his eyes or lie down while he tells his story. Or sit behind him à la Sigmund Freud.

□ Interrupt occasionally and ask whether he is listening to what he is saying. Be surprised when you discover that, more often than not, nobody in the room has heard a word but you.

□ Since the therapist's response usually has something to do with the client's work, ask him what "suspecting" (that you should be doing more) has to do with the story he is telling.

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**Q. I charged a semi-dysfunctional woman a little more than she could comfortably pay. Occasionally, I have allowed her to pay me later. Now she owes me. I suspect she is using money as a control issue.**

**A.** She probably is. But then, she's the one in therapy and if "value" or "worth" is her issue then it might be her job to act out that way. Your job, as you describe it, appears to be "put myself in a position where I struggle with and then blame the client."

**I guess I've made a mess.**

Well, not all by yourself. But I suggest you clean up your *part* of the mess. She doesn't have to clean up hers. Her mess is part of her work. Figure out what your part is.

**Charging her more that she could afford?**

Possibly. Her part there is that she

didn't refuse you and find herself another counselor.

**Allowing her to pay me later?**

Again, possibly. To agree one time to "I'll pay you next time," seems like good business. But when she didn't pay you "later," well,...

**I should have asked her every time to pay me?**

How about the second time she comes to session and hasn't brought payment, you cancel the session and know in your own mind that you won't see her again until the debt is paid.

Either that or tell her, "I don't really care about the money; I'll just see you for free"

**Well no, I don't want to do that.**

Okay, then don't stay in the room past the time you discover she isn't prepared to pay. And let her know she can call to make the next appointment as soon as you receive a check in the mail.

**That sounds so harsh.**

Be assertive, not aggressive. Speak out of love for yourself rather than out of annoyance at the other person. Ideal Therapeutic Parent loves unconditionally, but the role includes inviting Therapeutic "Child" to learn that the Parent can be counted on to mean what s/he says.

**So what do I do now?**

□ Begin by forgiving or collecting the entire debt immediately. Chalk up the loss to education. The class you have been taking is a lab class apparently titled Taking Care of Myself in Session, 1B."

□ Set clear financial limits for the future. This means to charge a reasonable fee, and commit to a policy that you will collect payment before starting each session.

□ With all future clients, propose they pay the full amount at the beginning of each session.

□ If you sense a new client cannot pay your regular fee and you are available to take the occasional low fee client, agree to a fee only when you get a financial commitment that you believe will be honored.

□ If you are willing, in some cases you might decide to ask, "Okay, how much *can* you afford?"

□ If a client does not or cannot pay you, then make sure the session does not happen.

□ Notice that it is *you* who has to effect a behavior change, here, nobody else.

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**Q. A fairly healthy family wants to come in with their nearly seventeen year old son. There are no big problems but both parents are a little worried that the boy is not doing quite as well as he might in school.**

**A.** As always, encourage intimacy and clear communication in the here and now. In addition:

Encourage grown-ups to use family sessions as an opportunity to articulate their fears rather than to give vent to their usual don't-likes and dissatisfactions.

□ *"I imagine you've done this many times before, but I'd like you to outline your concerns about Joey's school work. Say more about the most catastrophic outcome you worry about."*

□ *"So you are really annoyed about Joey not doing as well in school as you'd like. Tell him your concerns about that. What is it, exactly, that you fear?"*

□ *"What is it you appreciate about your son? Let's make a list...Take some time now, to look your son in the eyes and tell him what it is about him you really like."* (You'll have to be extra quick to catch and stop the sneaky sabotages that parents sometimes have difficulty not-adding such as, "but the part I don't like...", or "except when you...")

□ *"What advice do you wish you had listened to when you were a teen? Tell your son how come you didn't? What would someone have had to do to get you to pay attention back then?"*

With teens, family counseling is an opportunity for someone not invested in the system (that's you) to bring up the really tough topics: sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll. Rock'n roll is defined here as all the ways the child is really scary from the parent's point of view. That might include anything from body piercing to dying one's hair green to having an obsession with skate boarding to not really wanting to be a professional \_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).

□ (to the teen) *"So tell your parents about alcohol, marijuana and any other drugs you use. While you're at it, tell them what*

*substances you've used in the past, and what your plans are for the future. Let's let them have their heart attacks right now, okay? You tell 'em the truth, and I'll call 911."*

**Would you really say it like that?**

Sure. I like to postulate the extreme. That way, the truth often seems rather bland in comparison.

**He's got a girlfriend and he wants to spend more time away from home.**

□ Same as above with relationships and sexuality as the central topics.

♪ "So...Dad (or Mom) tell your son (or daughter) what's important to you that he/she know about sexuality."

♪ "...And tell him/her your particular, most troubling, concerns."

♪ "...What do you wish someone would have told you about relationships that you know now, but you didn't know then?"

♪ "...Recalling what you were like when you were a teen, how could someone have told you (the above) in a way so you might actually have listened and maybe even believed?"

□ See the boy alone for a session (or two). Find out for yourself what's going on.

□ See the boy and each parent as a couple for at least one separate session each. Invite attention on how parent and child relate to one another differently (or not) than when their son was younger.

□ See the parents alone as a couple. If their only son is individuating and beginning to grow (from their point of view) away from them, they are probably a lot more stressed than their son.

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**Q. A boy, sixteen, called for a family appointment. Apparently he made an agreement with his probation officer that he would get into therapy. While he talked, I heard the step-mother in the background yelling, "What does the bitch want?"**

**A.** Time out for laughter here. This may be "the family from hell."

**I asked the whole family to come in. Dad, stepmom and the boy showed up. They left four other children at home. As we began to discuss the fee, the father stood up and said adamantly, "We're not payin nothin." The session ended a few moments later.**

□ You are not obligated, but after you decide what to do, I suggest you call the probation officer and tell him your plans.

♪ One idea is to call the boy back and propose that you see him individually. Your agency makes allowances for teens paying lower, or zero fees.

You might wait awhile before inviting the parents back—perhaps until the boy requests it. Given the family's behavior, it may be that the boy is the most mature person living in his house at this time. Issues to consider bringing up include:

□ Okay, so your family has problems. Let's explore...

♪ ...how to separate my problems from theirs.

♪ ...what I really want from my life and how I might get it.

♪ ...taking responsibility, both for myself and my behavior.

♪ ...beginning to explore who/how/what I am on the inside of me, as well as on the outside.

♪

**Q. A boy is very angry. I want to encourage him to be more angry.**

**A.** What is your purpose in encouraging him to be angry?

**Well, so he can get it all out, I guess.**

Okay. It's not more *angry* you want to invite him to be, it's to be more *connected* to the anger he already has. The distinction is important. To invite him to be more *angry*, you could beat him up, pick away at his self-esteem, 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 somatically instead of acting it out. You would experiment and find ways to invite him to be curious about and take ownership of his internal experience so that he might move into and through it and, as you've indicated, ultimately let go of it.

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

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 when he doesn't.

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 yourself. For emotional safety, make sure you have neither agenda nor judgments. Once you're uninvested in the outcome, invite him to connect with his experience as he goes about his business in the psychotherapy session. Your task as a therapist is to invite a connection with Self-in-the-moment and then to work with the response whatever it is.

□ *"If you like, you can beat up Big Bear (or a pillow) over there. There are three rules. It's not okay to break things on purpose. It's not okay to hurt yourself. It's not okay to hurt me. Other than that, I wonder what you'll do."*

□ If he should hurt himself, even slightly, even by accident, even emotionally, 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.

### **So you're saying I should just keep inviting him to figure out what's going on inside him and eventually it'll be anger and then I can say, "hit that pillow" or something and he might do it?**

You can suggest he "hit that pillow" all you want, any time you want. Hitting a pillow is no guarantee that anger will be experienced. For many people, even kids, when someone in session indicates he is mad/angry/ticked off, some ideas for what to suggest include:

□ *"Stay feeling that way for a minute or so and, at the same time, notice what's going on inside your body while you're feeling it."*

□ *"On a scale of zero to ten, how mad/angry/ticked off are you right now? How about now?"*

□ *"See how loud you can yell, "I'm angry."" (Or, "I don't like it.")*

□ *"Who do you want to say that to?" "Imagine that person is right over there. Tell them..." "What else do you want to tell them?"*

□ *"Here's a futon and a plastic bat. Show me how mad you are." Whack the futon as hard as you can until something changes."*

□ *"Close your eyes and imagine you have a futon and plastic bat..."*

The point of being physical while one is angry is just a beginner's step toward becoming more aware of anger's somatic experience. For many people, a primal part of their psyche is just mad, much like that of a small child who strikes out without conscious awareness. Once another part of the psyche learns to be aware of the felt sensations of an emotion, the owner of that psyche has more options—both internally and externally. I'm guessing you know where I'm headed with this, don't you?

### **No expression; no repression?**

Yup.



### **Q. She is uncomfortable expressing her rage physically. She works well in fantasy but has internal sanctions about thinking violent thoughts.**

**A.** Encourage this woman not to violate her belief system. She can encounter her anger as the physical experience it is and never think anything violent at all. The emotion of anger can be experienced without conscious images or thoughts of any kind.

□ Invite her to be aware of her physical responses as she works down the long long list of her resentments. "I resent \_\_," "and I also resent \_\_," and "another thing I resent is \_\_".

□ Invite her to attend to focus on and to allow physical responses until, if in fact her emotion is anger, the anger peaks, and turns into sadness.

□ Invite this person to practice articulating descriptions of what goes on in her body while she is angry. For example, she may experience her blood pressure rising, a sensation of heat to various body parts, physical tingling, tightening, pressure, internal invitations to do something, anger coming in waves or a flood, or an intensity that keeps time with her heart beat.

□ Invite her to become aware of her anger process. Does she think about, remember, or image a Particular Something over and over to keep the anger going? Encourage her to time her anger response cycle. Does one angry thought create an internal storm of annoyance that lasts for several hours, open an emotional floodgate, or does it explode briefly and abate?

□ Encourage her to discover the smallest increment of anger she can experience and let go of with out being undone by a tsunami of rage.

□ As she experiments and learns to connect with her anger, use your body as something she can push against. From a firm stance, extend your arms with elbows slightly bent, and invite her to place her hands against yours and PUSH against you. As she pushes, respond as the wall would respond. Do not push back, just hold your own. Meet her force with an equal and opposite reaction. As her force subsides, you pull back.

□ If your muscles are not strong enough to meet her anger, invite her to push on the wall "...harder ...harder ...squeeze the anger out." Then the tears may come and she will have discovered another way to experience her anger physically and without abuse.

□ Making faces, making a fist or wringing a small towel are other methods to nonviolently involve the muscles and move anger out of the body without abusing anything or making noise.

on becoming a psychotherapist

**We teach what we know, so...**

In your everyday life, begin freeing-up your creative mind.

Access your inner artist, musician, dancer, sculptor,  
poet, playwright, actor, athlete, goofball, free child,  
comic, inventor, experimenter, chef, adventurer,  
general silly, and joyful self.

Make a few mistakes.

On purpose.

Laugh at yourself.

CNH

□ Recommend that she journal about her anger and accompanying experiences. Encourage her to connect with her emotions as she writes or draws.

□ Invite her to scream (throat open, push from the diaphragm) and scream and scream. If other people in your office building will be disturbed, suggest she hold a clean towel to her face as she screams. Maybe she'll best serve herself by biting the clean towel as she screams.

□ For homework, suggest she park her car by an airport or railroad track and when something noisy flies over or rumbles by, well..., let 'er rip.

□ Invite her to visualize that the felt sensations she experiences when she's angry are leaving her body as opposed to circulating around and around inside her like they usually do.

Rather than directing anger at someone or something in particular, many people (and many therapists too) are more comfortable with the idea of, "Let me show you how angry I am." In the external, physical realm, she can show you, or she can imagine someone else sitting in the corner over there, and she can show *them*. The same can happen in imagery. Even when it's just pretend, *showing* someone how angry you are can feel a lot less threatening than directing violence toward them.

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### **Q. What's the point? Anger feels bad and nothing ever changes.**

**A.** Anger is guidance from the psyche and an opportunity to let go of something you have been holding onto.\*

In session, the point of inviting anger resolution is not to get someone to change or to fix an unpleasant external situation. The past cannot be changed. Even a one minute-old trauma cannot be made Not to have happened.

The point of inviting anger resolution is to let anger out of the organism so the person can move on to his next task, whether that next task is deciding what action to take or beginning to resolve the emotion underneath the anger.

The metaphor I like to use is that of old, unfelt anger stored in the body. It stockpiles and acts like poison in the system. It taps on the door of consciousness saying, "Hey, I want out."

But when that door is shut too long, the anger bypasses the conscious mind and manifests itself in posture, tone, attitude, and behavior, as well as negative relationships, vicarious violence, self-destructive decisions, righteous indignation, accidents, substance abuse, dishonesty, and physical discomfort.

Given the nature of the planet, the predisposition of the human species, and the beliefs of the culture, it's likely that more anger comes in to most people than goes out. At a certain point, the stockpile of anger gets overwhelming and many folks either act-out abusively or trade in their anger for depression or disease.

Continuing the metaphor, there is no way to get old bitterness from the past out of the body other than the same way it came in— biochemically. Unfortunately it feels just as bad when it leaves your body as it would have if you had been in your body when it entered it. However, several things are different now.

- You have a bigger, older, wiser nervous system which can handle the intensity.

- The thing/person-you-were-angry-at is not in the room right now, hence it is safe to feel your real feelings.

### **Okay, that's about old anger. Can't a person just get in a mind-set where he is not annoyed by everyday things that he can't change?**

I'd say that is, in fact, the goal of anger work. And most of us have days when that mindset is easier or harder to attain. Should the day ever come that you are completely enlightened, perceiving life from the frame that everything is as it should be, and you are detached from wanting things, then perhaps you will never get angry again. Good luck with that. In the meantime, the child part (the primal part, the animal part, the snake-brain part) of you or any human being is going to be attracted to the I-don't-like-'ums as a regular part of our life experience.

And every time you don't-like-it, your organism responds. There seem to be fewer resentments per day as a person matures, but even petty annoyances can invite old unresolved rages. Rather than deny the anger and pass it back to the unconscious, I suggest allowing it to flow through you as it happens. Acknowledge it. Release it. Let it go.

Think of yourself as a river. And think of your body as what the river flows through. Your lungs are the bellows, pumping the river along. Surrender to your experience. Allow yourself to Be. Anger is just one part of your experience. You are more than your anger. Move toward, into, through, and out of the storm. The resolution is on the other side—back where it began.

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### **Q. Given his symptoms, he concludes he was molested by his father. However he insists he has no memory of such a thing and says he can't believe it.**

**Any event in memory is a metaphor for something on which the psyche wants to work. At the very least, a memory is a manifestation and projection of the rememberer's personality.**

**A.** Treat any event in memory as a metaphor for something on which the psyche wants to work. At the very least, a memory is a manifestation and projection of the rememberer's personality. Assume, for a moment, that no molest occurred. If that is true, then sexuality is just the stage on which he

acts out his pathology. Apparently, in his mind, a molest has the necessary features which his unconscious needs in order to work through some important unresolved trauma.

Any scene and any memory, fantasy, drawing, dream, or other expression of the unconscious can be worked with as if it were true. Real or not, the scene, because he is the person imagining it, accurately reflects many of his personality parts and how those parts relate with himself and others.

### **So it doesn't matter if it isn't real?**

That is correct. All the components that make up a molest by one's father make up whatever it is this man is trying to work through. If there was no actual molest, then the child-self made whatever did happen into something sexual, victimizing, humiliating, and intense enough to permeate into nearly every facet of this adult inner life. Trying to determine the existence of a molest is a distraction from working on his issues.

□ Instead, invite him to work *as if* he had been molested. As he resolves what he perceives to be "molest issues," he will be completing his actual unfinished business because the molest

represents or parallels in some way the things-that-really-happened. Trust his unconscious and encourage him to do the same. When it becomes safe enough and if it is important to him to remember the truth, he will.

♩

**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, and still doesn't have a clue)**

Now go the opposite end of the room from your drawing 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 begin to think of all sorts of things to do.

**Wow. That is amazing.**

In session, you obviously 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, one thing you can do, when you don't know what to do in session, is stand up, walk over to the board, and begin to draw a picture of how you see the family being with each other in your office. Just like you did here. Erase, fiddle, wonder, perhaps ask the family to assist you. Eventually, either you will have an "ah Ha, I get it" moment, or even better, one of member of the family will.

□ Another way in session is to use the drawing board in your imagination. Take

a moment and imagine you are explaining how this family is, to someone else. Pay attention; listen to yourself. Create an intervention based on your description. My experience is that as you practice this, you will begin to notice that your psyche is sending you metaphorical pictures in session even when you don't consciously ask it to.

□ Once you have a picture in your head or on the board, use family members to physically re-enact your picture in the room.

♩ Invite them to show you how you are close to correct or grossly wrong.

♩ Invite each individual, in turn, to show the family relationship as that person pictures it. Call attention to samenesses and differences. Work with their responses.

♩

### *A Father Complains*

Father: ...and the kids just won't pick up after themselves.

Therapist: Hmm. You can *make* them pick up after themselves, you know. There are several ways. There is a glitch however. Every one of the ways involves you changing *your* behavior. *You're* the one who has to do something different. And you have to do it consistently. Are you up for it?

F. I don't know. I'm tired of the whole thing. I just want it to go away.

T. Well. I guess you could put the kids up for foster care. That would do it. How about it?

F. No. (laughs)

T. Well, you could continue being annoyed at your wife for not making them do it. You seem to be pretty good at that being-annoyed business. But I'm guessing even that's not working all that well, or you wouldn't be here.

F. Yeah, that's not going very well.

T. (in my best Jim Fay imitation) I can think of some other ways to handle the problem. Would you like to hear them?

F. Okay.

T. I'll tell you a little about each. They all involve rewarding behavior. You can pick one, and then we'll practice it. Okay?

F. Okay.

T. Here's the first one: You stay home 24 hours a day for as long as it takes. Follow the kids around, watch everything they do, and whenever they don't pick up something that should be picked up, you yell at 'em and hit 'em with stick, or zap 'em with a cattle prod. It's guaranteed. They will end up picking up after themselves. And they'll do it forever. Well, that is... as long as you are there watching. So, if you are willing to devote your time to getting what you want in the way of picking-up, go for it.

F. Oh no. That's way too much work. I'm willing to be a disciplinarian, but that'd take too much of my time. And I'd have to do that for years and years until they leave home.

T. Well, I can think of at least two more ways.

F. Wait a minute. How's that 24 hours a day thing about "rewarding" or whatever?

T. Well, that would be you doing an extreme version of what you're already doing—training your kids that one easy way to get Dad to yell at them is to leave messes around.

F. How's that a reward?

T. Kids like attention. Heck, kids crave attention. They'll do anything for attention. And, too often, they learn pretty quickly that the only time Dad really notices they exist is when he's mad and yelling at them. And being intelligent creatures, they figure that anger and yelling are better than no attention at all. So...

F. ...They make messes.

T. You bet. Wives often come to the same conclusion, by the way.

F. What d'ya mean?

T. That if the only time a husband passionately notices that she exists is when he's annoyed, well, that's better than being invisible.

F. Hunh.

T. Are you ready to hear about another way to change your kids behavior?

F. (nods)

T. It's called intermittent reinforcement. Super guaranteed. First you do the 24 hour a day thing with the yelling and the hitting and the cattle prodding. Well, you do it for a couple of weeks, anyway. Then you stop. You ignore. Or at least, you let them think you've stopped. They'll continue to pick up their stuff for a little while. And then, they'll begin to return to their old behavior.

Here's what you do then. Without warning, you burst in and yell and hit and prod until every little thing that's not picked up is picked up. Then you go back to ignoring. And you keep doing that. Intermittently ignoring and then without

(continued on next page)

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warning...you go back to the hitting and the prods. Pretty soon they'll pick up everything, pretty much all the time. Of course your kids will be scared of you but, y'know, at least the house will be straight.

F. (sighs) Okay, that's not what I want. I want them to have good values. I want them to pick up after themselves even when I'm not watching.

T. Oh. I see. So you don't mean that you want them to *pick-up* after themselves, you mean that you want them to *want-*to pick stuff up.

F. Yes. Definitely.

T. Ah. Well. That's different. As far as I can tell, the only way to teach humans to want to behave civilly (for the long term) is called positive reinforcement. Unfortunately it, too, involves a change in *your* behavior, not theirs.

F. Okay, I'm game. Whuddo I do?

T. First you have to commit yourself to being on red alert the whole time you're doing this. Start on the weekend, maybe Friday evening when you get home. You say absolutely nothing about picking-up or making messes. The first time you notice that *anyone* has picked up, cleaned up, or put away *anything*, no matter how small or insignificant, you find a way to give your attention to that person and reward that behavior. "Thanks for picking that up," you'll say. (No prizes involved here; just "Dad appreciating me out loud.") The kid'll be shocked, but don't let that bother you. Then you say nothing more and go back to ignoring bad behavior and waiting for someone to behave as you like—picking-up, straightening-up, or de-messing even the smallest bit of anything. And when they do, you immediately go give them your attention (maybe look 'em in the eye

or touch them gently) and say some version of, "I really like that you put XYZ away." Then you shut up again and move on. No lecturing. No under the breath grumbling. No whining. A smile might be in order. That's all. Oh, I left something out. Find a way to mean it when you say you really like something. Kids know when adults are lying. And if you lie, this won't work.

F. And when they don't pick something up?

T. Here's the hard part. When they leave a mess, your job is managing not to respond at all. Turn away, don't look, perceive the mess as invisible, ignore it, whatever you have to do. What you're aiming for here is "positive response for positive behavior and no response for anything else."

F. What happens if they clean up half the mess and leave the rest?

T. Then you take a deep breath and focus on the behavior you like. Appreciate out loud that they picked up whatever they did and ignore all the rest.

F. If I ignore all the rest, the place will be one big garbage can in two days.

T. Possibly so. Especially at first. Make sure you pick up your own messes. Keep in mind that your immediate goal is not to get the messes picked up. It's to nudge the kids toward *wanting* to pick them up.

F. Do I get to go back to work with this method?

T. Sure. But every evening as soon as you drive in the driveway, you're on positive reward duty again. Stay with it every moment you are with kids for as long as you can. It might take weeks—even months. Hang in there. Eventually, the house will be noticeably less messy, and the relationships between you and your children will be noticeably more...uh, what are you looking for?

F. (thinks) Less, I dunno, exasperating.

T. Well if "exasperating" is what you *don't* want, what is it that you *do* want your relationships to be?

F. Easy going, I guess.

T. Well I invite you to notice that eventually the relationships between you and your children will be noticeably more easy going. Let's practice that right now.

F. Okay.

T. I like how you cooperate with me when I ask you to do something.

F. Thanks. (smiles) (waits) I guess I'm waiting for you to ask me to do something else.

T. Actually, I wasn't planning to ask you to do anything. But I really like it when you check out loud whatever you think might be going on in my mind.

F. Yeh. I felt a little nervous when you said you liked how I cooperate. People don't usually say that kind of stuff.

T. That's for sure. And I also like when clients take care of themselves and say stuff like, "I felt a little nervous." Saying what's true for yourself is one way to have clean relationships. And that's one of the things I encourage.

F. Hey, wait a minute. You're doing that positive reward thing to *me*, aren't you?

T. Yes. What do notice? What's your response?

F. Well it's strange, but I like it.

T. Let's turn the tables. I'm going to move around the room. Practice not responding when I make a mess or don't pick something up and, instead see if you can find something positive to say when I do.

(several minutes later) Now it's *your* turn. I'll reward *your* positive behavior and ignore anything else.

F. (A few, considerably more detailed, minutes later) Okay, I think I've got the general idea.

T. See you next time.

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