



Just a Little Story About . . .

A man worked as an accountant in a large business. It was his dream to become very rich. He worked long hours and seldom took a vacation.

Over time he devised some rather creative accounting practices and was able to put away moderate amounts of money which he invested quite wisely. In his personal life he was very strict with himself. Clean, polite, and respectful of community standards, he had one negative habit with which he was very uncomfortable.

Since school, he had developed the unpleasant desire to swear. He found himself mostly able to control his swearing when engaged in conversation, but whenever he was alone, he was soon muttering those unacceptable words that no right living person should ever let cross his lips. And when his tongue "slipped," he was very embarrassed.

Lately in fact, he associated each person, object or occurrence in his life with some swear word so that his neighbor became that @%&! George, the clock became the %&!@ clock and even cleaning his teeth had become the @*% brushing.

His religion was not one which offered the comfort of confession, so he decided to take the giving of consequences for his sins into his own hands. He gave the matter much thought and devised what he believed was the perfect punishment. Each time he swore out loud, his inner judge decided, he would have to go an entire day without embezzling any money.

Carol Nichols Hadlock

Integrative ideas for the process-oriented psychotherapist

Q. She says she is too uncomfortable to bring up a certain major issue in session. She wants me to bring it up each week. If I do what she asks, won't that make me codependent and disrespectful?

A. Rescuing is disrespectful when the rescuer does so from her fantasy that the victim cannot handle the problem, or is not in control. Co-behaving means, by your actions, being a partner to someone else's dysfunction.

If a person falls off a boat and yells for help, throwing a rescue buoy into the water is not disrespectful.

Even if a person *jumps* off the boat, once he asks for assistance, rescuing him (once) is not co-behaving him.

Well, I have a long history of co-behaving and I am working not to indulge it anymore. So I'm quite reluctant to "take care" of others.

So trust yourself. Do not "take care" of others.

What do I do instead?

Keep inviting the client's attention back onto herself.

Perhaps your desire not to co-behave is strong enough these days so that, in session at least, you can believe and act on your inner therapeutic niggles.

□ Try trusting yourself completely. Pay attention to your co-behaving tendencies. If you stay connected to yourself, you will not make any messes that you can't clean up. Go into session with a virgin mind and no agendas; then work with her ongoing processes.

□ Tell her that her psyche knows what's best for her and when it's the right time for her to bring that topic up, it will pop into her head.

□ Say, "No, I won't do that." Then work with her anger response as she learns she is not going to get what she wants.

□ Counterpropose that you will bring it up whenever she does something that reminds you of it.

□ Say, "Okay." Then relate every topic she mentions to this major issue.

□ Say, "Okay" and when you forget to bring up that certain issue, invite her to explore the dependency which accompanies her insistence on getting her needs met externally.

□ Do not answer the question at all. Instead, invite her into her visceral, chemical, kinesthetic experience as she tells you what she wants from you.

Clnt: I'm uncomfortable bringing that subject up every time. I'm paying you and I want you to do it.

Thst: Say that again. Notice your discomfort level as you speak. Find the words for where you are experiencing discomfort in your body. Be the voice of that experience. What does it want from you right now in this session?

(or)

Clnt: I'm uncomfortable bringing that subject up every time. I want you to do it.

Thst: Look right at me, point your finger at me and say that last part again: "I want you to do it." See if you can say that again in a real demanding way. Yeah, like that. How old are you right now? Who taught you to do that?

Clnt: Taught me to do what?

Thst: Whatever it is you're doing—wanting, hoping, trying, being uncomfortable, demanding, insisting that someone else be the bad guy—I dunno. What are you doing?

My guess is that her "uncomfortable"-ness is a door into the resolution of that "certain major issue." From my perspective, her psyche is sending you a message, in effect an attempt to tell you, "Yoo hoo, over here! This is a way into the underlying problem."

Consider that, in most cases, the work is in the defense. The defense is how we stop ourselves, how we protect ourselves. In this woman's case, make some guesses about what she is putting in-between her wanting something and her actually accomplishing that something.

Discomfort. Not wanting. Fear. Unwillingness to take responsibility.

Yes. Yes. Yes. And Yes. They are all possible doors into the work. Pick one. Knock on it. See if she'll let it open. Invite her in. Find a way to stay out of her system and go with her.

Wait a minute. How can you stay out of her system and go in with her?

“Going with her” means to illuminate her on-going processes as she wanders through her psyche, and “staying out of her system,” means to do it without needing, wanting, or expecting anything from her. Stay individuated and out of countertransference.

Q. I’m seeing a flasher.

A. Yes, a flasher needs to be seen. So turn the lights up. Invite him to see himself.

One theory has it that flashers feel they have zero power as sexual beings so when an observer shows fear, amazement, or surprise, the flasher enjoys a temporary feeling of power and worth that he gets nowhere else. On the other hand, how old is nearly every little boy when he finds a way to run out into a public gathering wearing nothing but a big grin?

About three.

Invite all of his work into the moment.

Suggest this man to go back to the time when he was three and flashed for the first time. If it didn’t happen in reality, direct it to happen in a guided imagery. You might suggest he impose his grown-up self into the scene, remove his younger self to safety, and tell that three year-old the things somebody should have told him at the time and did not, such as,

“Your sexuality is okay. Your body is beautiful. In general we celebrate that part of our lives privately. I’ll help you find ways to enjoy your sexuality without imposing it on others.”

Invite him to claim that now-approved-of little boy as part of himself.

In imagery, invite him to return to an adult flashing scene and explore a) the personality part who was in charge at the time

Being Both in and Out of the System—Using the Ongoing Psychodrama

by Carol Nichols Hadlock

In session, find a way to perceive that you are always a cast member of the other person’s play. Even as the patient first walks into the room, you are part of his drama, whether you want to be or not. Some people will perceive you differently each time they come to session; others will cast you in only one scene forever.

You may be perceived as the authority figure, rescuer, judge, fixer-upper, general bad-guy, one-who-knows-more-than-I-do, primary Object, the Enemy, one more person who will be unable to help me, or any of a thousand other roles. From your perspective you may be happy, satisfied, and feeling good about yourself, but if the other person perceives you as angry-at-me, then “angry-at-me” is the color of the glasses through which he perceives your actions and responses.

Understand that you are in two dramatizations at once. On one level, the drama he acts out with you (or anyone) is about himself in relationship to other people and life events. On a deeper level, all the parts in which he casts you are projections of himself onto externals. You are an ‘external,’ a temporary stand-in for parts of himself from whom he has become separated. His long-term therapeutic task is to re-own these parts of himself, accept, take responsibility for, and even love all the dialogues, wars, and relationships between them.

Your task is to understand that none of this has anything to do with you and to aim for a perspective of neutrality. When you are

in neutrality, you are not judging, knowing-more-than, trying to fix, wanting something from, etc. You are clear that anything he sees in you, blames you for, responds to you ‘as if,’ or suspects you of, is about him. One hundred percent. This keeps your own neuroses in the background, your boundaries intact, and your brain available to create interventions which invite him to connect with himself.

From time to time you will, of course, find yourself out of neutrality. One way to restore yourself to balance is to use your countertransference in the work. Your first step is to become aware of your over-involvement, and to name it if you can. The second is to be curious about it, as opposed to being ashamed. The third is to understand that even though your annoyance, agenda, concern, need, or projection is part of your own internal life-drama, you are also, in this moment, in this room, a part of his.

Since your psyche is one of your finest therapeutic tools, I suggest you consider the following paradigm: you have an internal wanna-be-the-most-competent-psychotherapist-I-can-be, who’s job it is to send ideas to your brain in order to enhance and enrich the work. Occasionally muted by the cacophony of your personal issues and unable to get a thought to you directly, this inner competent therapist goes around to a back door in your mind and employs the intensity of your own neurosis in order to get your attention. Using this concept, instead

of getting lost your own responses, you can wonder who your annoyance, agenda, concern, need or projection represents to the client and what role it plays in his psyche.

You may not always guess correctly in which part of him he has you cast, but you are always part of his play, doing a part of him he is not willing to own. Through his eyes, you are portraying one of his projections. Paying attention to the interaction between you and staying in a curious mode, your own issues take a back-seat. Your professional persona can come forward and return to the task of creating invitations for the client to use to connect with himself if he chooses.

Another way to understand this concept is to imagine you are in two places at once. For example, suppose you are in session asking a question. In the few seconds it takes the other person to ponder your inquiry, imagine that you are in the audience looking at a stage on which two people are sitting. One of them has just asked another a question, and the second person is thinking about the answer. As you expand your perceptual frame to notice, “Hey, that’s me! I’m both on the stage asking the question and off the stage watching myself ask the question. I’m in his play and in mine!”

At the moment of this awareness, you are both consciously *in* the system and have freed yourself *from* the system. From this perspective, you are able to notice process and come up with ideas about what to do with his response, whatever it may be.

and b) the parts of his personality who had either left the body or who had gone unconscious. Suggest he impose a Loving Parent part of himself onto the scene. Direct the parent to remove the adult flasher to safety, (after all he's only three years old) embrace him, and claim him. Probably, he will discover that the flasher part of him has been abandoned by most of the rest of his personality.

□ Through imagery, invite the grown-up man to appreciate the body of the child he used to be, how beautiful, how amazing. Look at those toes, knees, eyes, ears, and fingers. How amazing that the boy is breathing. Look at that, food in, garbage out; air in, carbon dioxide out. Isn't that wonderful? Introduce the concept of total appreciation without the need for molesting or taking advantage.

□ Through imagery, suggest he imagine he is inside the body of the child, looking out of a child's eyes, and allow himself to be cherished by the adult part of himself. For most folks, "cherishing" is relatively easy. It's the "being cherished" business that is usually the most difficult part of this work.

So how can you get him to see himself?



□ You can't *get* him to. But you can *invite* him to. Keeping facilitating introspection.

□ Introduce the idea of different parts of himself. Here's an example:

- "Let me speak to the Flasher part of yourself . . . Okay, now let me speak to a part of you who isn't a Flasher."

- "I'll be your Flasher part, you be the rest of you, and let's have a conversation ... Okay, now let's switch."

- Direct a conversation between the two parts.

"Which part are you right this second, the Flasher or the part who isn't a Flasher? Okay, (pulling over an empty chair) the other part is sitting here. Tell him what you've been telling me."

- Invite his inner Intellectual Observer (a third part) to observe and comment on the process between the flasher and the non-flasher. Suggest he talk to each of them.

- Ask them to speak for themselves.

□ Invite him to "see" himself. Direct him to look at his hand, to draw and admire

it. Invite him to do the same with his feet or his toes. Suggest he appreciate himself and talk to or about the favorite parts of his body. Invite the body parts to talk back.

□ Encourage him to acknowledge, perhaps brag about, the things he has done recently that he likes and feels good about.

□ Encourage him to acknowledge, perhaps brag about, the things he is doing right now in the session.

□ Invite a fantasy where he flashes and then people cheer and clap and throw roses and think he is generally wonderful just *being*.

□ Flash! Take pictures. (I don't have to remind you that this would be clothes-on, do I?)

□ Use a mirror. Invite a conversation between himself and the image he sees in the mirror.

□ Invite an exploration of the risk-taking or adrenaline-addicted parts of himself.

□ Think of flashing as an addiction. Invite him to identify the cycle.

"So go back to the beginning of that day. Let's go through every moment that lead up to your arrest. Be in your body and look out of your eyes as you wake up in the morning. What do you notice? Okay, now what happens? What do you notice about yourself now . . . ?"

(weeks later) He did some work on the part of him that flashes and discovered that it was an empty shell.

And emptiness needs filling up.

□ Suggest he explore ways to fill himself up other than exposing himself to ridicule and danger. Invite imagery to experiment filling his flasher-part up with various creative things.

(and later) He said that when he was a child and flashed, he was really proud of himself and wanted to show somebody. But that his mother didn't pay attention.

□ One way to invite him to pay attention to himself is by you paying attention to him. With time and luck he may introject that he is attention-able.

When he went back in time to investigate the adult flasher, he discovered the flasher was made up of two parts, one with no shame at all and one who was filled with shame.

Shame can be the one of the hardest emotions to work with because it invites the person to Run! Hide! Attack! with every breath. I suspect that if we could get rid of our shame, most of us would resolve most of our psychological issues in a weekend or two.

□ Encourage the idea that shame is part of the human warning system—that shame is to be honored and listened to, but not fed.

□ Encourage him to be aware of and familiar with shame as a physical response. Suggest he immediately stop whatever he is doing each time he experiences the emotion of shame. Invite him to practice that in session. Direct him to introspect, acknowledge, experience, and breathe on purpose into the shame, giving it his full attention as he waits patiently for the emotion to subside.

How can he practice it in session? I'll not be judging or shaming him.

Thst: "Let's practice that right now. What might I say or do that would elicit just an teensy bit of shame from you?"

Clnt: ____ (fill in the blank).

Thst: Okay, I'm going say that. Pay attention to your response as I do. Here I go: _____. (Noticing his changing body language) Can you feel that?... Okay, stay with it as long as you can . . . Breathe into it . . . What's happening now?

I'd be concerned that things might get too intense for him.

□ That hasn't been a problem so far but, honor yourself. If you experience a concern that he might go into crisis, take action. One idea is to suggest a plan.

"If things gets too intense, let me know. We'll stand up, walk around the room, and talk about the weather."

Really?

Sure. In fact, you might add, "Let's practice that right now."

Thst: Imagine that you are having an overwhelming emotion and you don't want to feel it any more.

Clnt: (does it)

Thst: (standing up) Okay, stand up.

Clnt: (stands up)

Thst: (opening the window) Wow, it sure is clear today. Come look. (Or, How about those Sharks?)

Have you ever really done that with someone? Y'know talked about the weather.

No. So far, none of the people I've worked with have gone into crisis. But how I do things is not the important thing here. The important thing is for you to trust yourself completely. If you are concerned about intensity, then honor yourself and take precautions by practicing crisis intervention beforehand.

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Q. How do you keep unconditional positive regard if, say, (and I know this is a negative exaggeration) some guy comes in and wants you to help him beat his wife more?

A. If working with a person who has a particular issue violates your values, do not work with him, of course.

However, one way to honor your values and still work with the person in your question might be to contract with him that, while he is seeing you, he will not beat his wife at all. He may, of course, beat his wife anyway, but you will have done your part to invite it not to happen.

For any presenting problem, ordinary or bizarre, there is always a polarity. If part of the man in your example wants to be helped to beat his wife more, then another part of him is having trouble beating his wife or he would not keep showing up in your office.

So, there is a part of him who wants to beat his wife and another part that does not. Do not take sides. Keep separate, stay out of the content, and direct his attention inward.

Intervene the same as if he wanted you to help him drink carrot juice more. Separate yourself from any investment that he take your suggestions and encourage him to connect with how it is to drink more carrot juice, less carrot juice, only carrot juice, or no carrot juice at all.

Invite him to explore what it is that his body is trying to get for itself by drinking more carrot juice. Vitamin A? Since he is allergic to carrot juice, perhaps there is another way to meet his body's needs.

Your task is to encourage both parts of any polarity to be explored, acknowledged, even celebrated.

Celebrated?

Yes. I have this apparently unusual belief that everything we do is an expression of

at least one part of our Self. Along with that, everything negative or dysfunctional thing we do is done with the positive intent (often unconscious) to work some unresolved issue through to another, more functional conclusion.

The solution to a psychological stuck place is often paradoxical: the way out is to go in, more.

□ Since imagery is a more useful tool than having an actual wife willing to be beaten, or for that matter, cases of actual carrot juice sitting around your office waiting for him to act out on, use imagery.

□ Invite him to exaggerate his process.

"In your mind, imagine yourself surrounded by carrot juice. All you ever wanted. Start drinking it. Have more. Here's a swimming pool, an ocean, full of carrot juice. Jump in. Drink all you want. Keep going. Tell me when you get enough. Okay, so what do you notice about yourself now? What's different? Oh you feel satisfied at last? So memorize that satisfied feeling. Now bring it back with you to this room as you open your eyes. (Oh you drank so much you exploded. Uh huh. So what's That like?)"

□ Invite him to explore what it is he is trying to get for himself with his process.

"So imagine it's okay to beat your wife. Let yourself do that in your mind. Let me know when you've had enough. . . Okay, so now what? She's pulp. Who do you want to beat up now? Okay, do it. . . Now what? Oh, you've had enough? So what do you notice about yourself, now? What do you have that you didn't have before? . . . Peace of mind? Let's explore how you can get peace of mind without anyone getting hurt."

Again, the theory behind exaggerating the work is that the way out of a storm is not attempting to outrun the storm, but rather going toward and into the storm, then through to the other side. Likewise, the solution to a psychological stuck place is often paradoxical: the way out is to go in, more—until the resolution (the other side) is reached.

Consequently, I often suggest that therapists start the work by inviting the patient to, "Do that more," instead of "Do that less."

□ Breathwork is another technique to offer as he connects with, and moves through his experiences.

□ His dreams will also offer an abundance of material to work with.

Perhaps, since he is most likely allergic to jail, he will be motivated to find another way to meet his psyche's needs. As the work progresses, the primal scene (possibly some event from his childhood) of which the wife-beating is a re-enactment, will be revealed. The underlying control, anger, grief, fear, abandonment, abuse, and identity issues will surface.

Eventually the content of wanting to beat the wife more might become, in the man's consciousness, the *symbol* of his hostility rather than the literal expression of it.

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Q. Twice during the family session, the subject of physical abuse was brought up or re-enacted indirectly. I felt afraid and was unsure whether to mention it or not.

A. I suspect you were afraid they might be hostile, that you wouldn't know how to handle their response like the seasoned professional you would like them to think you are, or that they would leave, never come back, complain about you to the director of the counseling agency, and then everyone would know how incompetent you really are.

Whoa. How did you know?

Oh I dunno, I may have had some of those feelings myself from time to time.

The thing to remember is this: as you allow your uncertainty and fear to stop you from intervening, you co-behave this family by protecting them from their work. When an abuse issue is brought up or re-enacted indirectly, some family member is doing the best they can to bring it out in the open. Facilitate that.

□ Next time, and there will most likely be a next time, name what you see.

"That same subject got brought up in your last session, and here it is again. Who wants to tell me what's going on?"

"Two times last session, I noticed ____ (whatever you noticed). I felt afraid and was unsure whether to mention it or not. I'm guessing one or more of you feels afraid or unsure about bringing up that topic also. Is that true?"

□ Invite some version of, "Show me."

"Let's back up a minute. Now George, you just said ___ and I noticed, Sammy, that you did ___. Do that again, if you would, please . . . Thank you. What's happening here? What's being left out?"

"Y'know George, when you say ___ and do ___, if I were Sammy, I'd be scared. Is that your intention? Oh, you'd like him to behave. That makes sense. What did your parents do when they wanted you to behave?"

Keep in mind that occasional hitting (swatting, even slapping) of one's child is not necessarily abuse and is actually legal in our state. That doesn't mean we have to approve it. It would benefit your demeanor and, by extension, the family's willingness to stay in counseling with you, if you would find a way to rearrange your inner goals so that stopping future violence has a higher priority than punishing the bad-guy. You would then be free to—

- Provide an environment where
- Parents are invited to learn and practice more progressive parenting techniques.
- Children are vicariously learning that parenting without violence (physical, verbal, or emotional) is a possibility.
- At a later date, parents are invited to explore how childhood violence and discouragement have affected their adult lives.

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Q. She came to the third session in full makeup and fancy dress. My sense was she was being seductive.

A. It is possible. It's also possible that you were attracted to her. It's also possible that she was going out to a party afterwards, and the dress and makeup had nothing to do with you at all. However, since you had a response, assume your psyche is trying to tell you something. Find out.

- "I'm having a response to how you are dressed today. What are the words that go with your outfit?"
- "So, how else do you celebrate yourself besides wearing makeup and dressing-up?"
- "I wonder if sexuality is an issue we might explore sometime."
- "Put words to the part of you that your exterior is expressing right now. Put words to the part of you that Isn't being expressed. Draw pictures of both. How are they different? How are they the same? What do you notice about yourself while you are drawing them? . . . How about now that you are done?"

Given that your seduction guess may be correct, keep in mind that it is normal for her to be transferred onto you in that way. You are in the Father role, relative to her psychotherapy. Children generally practice seduction of parental figures in the Oedipal stage, and they do it again in early adolescence. So it's a good guess that if she is being seductive, she is temporarily regressed either to age five, age fourteen or an age at which she was molested.

□ Since Father's task at all age levels is to let his daughter know that even though she is attractive, her sexuality is safe with him. Find a way to validate her response, take responsibility for your own projections and at the same time let her know that you will not be taking advantage of her.

"I sense a certain sexuality in you today. I'm not certain if it is your sexuality I'm sensing or if I'm projecting my own onto you. At any rate, I am reminded to put words to a policy of mine about being sexual with my clients. I want to make sure my clients are safe, so I never get involved sexually with them. What's your response to my telling you all that?"

Be that blunt?

□ Absolutely. And if you guess she perceives you as blunt (blunt being somehow not-okay), use your guess to put the focus back on her.

Facilitating the Journey

by Don Hadlock

A client complains she has had a migraine headache for the last six weeks and she wants to talk about it.

I tell her to show me where she hurts.

She touches a couple of places on her head.

I say I'd like to put my hands on those two places.

She says okay, and I do.

I say, "Where does that take you?"

There is a long pause. "To a volcano."

"What's happening at the volcano?"

"It's crumbling, And people are falling in and dying."

"Be the volcano . . . Be the crumbling crust . . . Be the people who are dying," I continue. I get permission to touch her again and wiggle my fingers like a avalanche around the area of the migraine.

While doing this, I ask her, "Where does that take you?"

"To the water."

"I'll be the water flowing through and over you," I say, as I return to making a physical representation of flowing motions."

"Be the water," I say. "Just observe and be the water. Need nothing, no outcome, just observe."

"Where does that take you?" I say,

"To a carnival"

"Be the carnival."

She says she's walking through the carnival, looking at all the rides.

"Be the rides. The carnival is you. The observer is you. The rides are you. Watch."

She says she has gone to another place.

She hesitates. It is frantic there: She feels as if she were wading through the most intense, stressful place she's ever been, and it is pushing in on her.

With permission, I push on her arms to represent the struggle going on there. She pushes back. She accelerates her pushing. I meet her energy and push back just enough to match her energy.

As she relaxes her movement, I relax mine.

"Where does that take you?"

"I'm totally calm."

"Be the calm; don't resist it."

She is calm.

I sit down.

Suddenly, she is beaming a big smile. She opens her eyes. "My migraine is gone!" she declares. "All I have to do is be in flow with everything, and . . . She starts teaching herself about being in harmony with everything.

I listen.

"What's your experience when I'm being that blunt?"

On the other hand, it is quite possible that the person in the room who is having an issue, is you. So stay open to the fact that you are a mammal, and a human, and attraction happens. There's nothing unusual about running unexpectedly into countertransference now and then. If you can't find a way to transcend it in session, make an appointment with your personal therapist.

Your client may deny that sexuality is in any way connected to her attire, she might use your mention of the subject as permission for her to begin working through a sexual issue, or you may discover it is *your* issue. In any case, provide an environment of positive regard for *both of you*, where, no matter how goofy she acts, she will be safe, unjudged, and unmolested.

Why do you use the word molested?

Hmm, I don't know. Because of the transference, I suppose. If she is acting out a developmental phase, she is responding to you as if you were her parent and she, your child. Since you are in the adult role in her projection, any sexual activity between you at any time during the therapy would be exploitative and as damaging to her as child abuse.

Oh, wait a minute! I *do* know. My unconscious was trying to get a message to me! At what age is it developmentally normal for a human child to be seductive?

Let's see, probably 2, 5, and puberty.

So posing the question, "How old are you right now?" addresses the possibility that she is regressed and invites her to explore.

You: How old are you right now?

Clnt: (hesitates) 42

Thst: Probably so, right this second. But when I wondered out loud about it, I was thinking more like 5, 6, or so. What's your guess?

From here the conversation may go many ways. Two of the more frequent are:

#1

Clnt: No. I'm 42.

Thst: Oh. (completely dropping the whole idea from your mind and inviting her to attend to herself) So, what's going on with you right now?

#2

Clnt: Well, . . . more like 7 or 9.

Thst: Oh. So *be* 7 or 9 years old right now . . . Look out of 7 or 9 year-old eyes . . . Where are you? . . . What do you see? . . . Who's with you? . . . Hello seven (or nine) year-old self. Tell me what's going on . . . What do you notice about yourself? . . . What do you need? . . . (And so a deeper piece of work begins.)

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Q. She has a memory of her father hurting her, but he died before she was born. Since it can't be true, I'm uncertain how to proceed.

A. The parts of any incident which remain in our mind are the parts that represent our relationship with the incident. At best we remember only the parts that are important to us, that have meaning in some way. So this memory has meaning for her;

whether it is true or not is irrelevant. Whatever the memory represents still needs to be resolved. So, let go of *ever* needing to believe *anything* that *any* client *ever* tells you (hyperbole intended). Knowing the truth is not necessary in order to work with psychological issues. And sometimes it's obstructive.

□ "So there are two parts here: your memory and your practical mind, yes? And they disagree, right? Okay, have them discuss the issue. Which part is up front for you right this minute? Your practical mind? Okay. Say your piece, Practical Mind. . . Now switch chairs. Let's hear what Memory has to say. . . Switch back. . . What's your response to that, Practical Mind?"

□ Find ways to invite her to explore this metaphor, and what it might represent for her. She may discover that it *is* a memory after all, only, perhaps, not about her father.

Whether or not a memory is real, view it as a metaphor for whatever *is* real

Think of any memory, thought, story, dream, idea, guess, imagery, deliberate falsehood, suspicion, hope, fantasy, mental picture, vision, drawing, sculpture, photograph, doodle, response to a poster on the wall, or whatever, as a canvas onto/into which the describer has

projected a part of himself. In the psychotherapy session each of those things is a metaphor for whatever is foremost in the person's psyche at the time. If the client brings it to the session, it represents a part of the client's inner reality. Real world accuracy is unimportant in the psychotherapy session.

□ "Okay. You say it can't be true, but your memory says it is. I'm guessing you feel a bit confused about that. Yes? Oh, and concern, also. I see. So notice how your body experiences those two things right now. See you if you can let those emotions do whatever they want. Notice what happens when you put your attention on them. What are the words that go with them right now? . . . Say them again. . . Say them louder . . . Who do you need to say them to? . . . Do it now.

Work with any issue exactly as it comes from the client's psyche, which, in my opinion, knows way more than you or I do about what is relevant to the client's psychological healing.

Whether truth, lie, hopeful fantasy, or memory, this client's psyche has brought it to the psychotherapy session because it is the doorway into (a metaphor for) some larger issue.

Suppress your inclination to invite talking-about it. Instead, invite it into the present moment. Allow it to be re-created in living color (if you will) both a picture and a emotional, somatic experience for the client.

♪

Q. Attila the Hun from another agency has some misinformation and doesn't think I'm qualified to see this family. She is coming here next week to meet me. Right now I'm only three years old. I can hear myself whining and I'm afraid she will cut me to pieces and take the clients away.

A. She can only cut you to pieces if you let her. Let's prepare some adult-type responses you can memorize. You can rehearse them out loud now and again by yourself as often as you like between now and your meeting.

Arming yourself with something functional to say may allow you to transcend your inner-child with the loose boundaries and access instead your individuated, resourceful inner-adult.

□ Practice not only the words but having a loving attitude under the words.

"So tell me, what is it you want from our meeting?"

"I can understand your concern. If the circumstances were true as you describe them, I would agree with you. However, what you have understood is not true. Here are the facts . . . I wonder if that clears things up?"

□ Apply your "listen for understanding" skills. Join her.

"So let me see if I understand. It's your position that _____. And what you want is _____. Have I got that right? What did I leave out?"

□ Invite yourself to disengage from the needing and wanting that brings on your fear and whining. Symbolically say an internal goodbye to these clients. And since Attila is most likely a representative of a family of origin issue which you have not resolved, work on that in your personal therapy before the meeting.

□ During the meeting, take time to do an inner consult and discover your truth. Then tell your truth and put the attention back on her.

"Yes, I am willing to . . . However, I am not willing to . . . What is your response to that?"

□ Until you work through your issues, you might take time to kill or disable Attila several times in your mind, so that your inner empowerment is accessed. Perhaps a ritual disembowelment?

I really like that last idea. Even though it sounds silly.

Yes. In imagery, exaggerated aggression does not lead to violence, although you may feel and release some anger. As a bonus, humor is usually experienced once one connects with the absurdity of being in that same old victim-place, *again*.

□ See if you can maintain this "silly" enlightened perspective long enough to love Attila exactly the way she is. See if you can not *need* anything from her. Hold to your boundaries and try not to personalize as she reaches out to connect with you from her own afraid place.

How do you know she's afraid?

Well why else would anyone masquerade as Attila the Hun?

♪

Q. I was annoyed at him and nothing seemed right so I got out the blackboard and just taught.

A. In session, trust yourself totally, no matter how weird you think you are. Your countertransferences stem, of course, from your personal issues, but in session they usually have something to do with the client's issues, too. Your intuition may have sensed that the mode in which he was most available was education.

Personally, I like the possibility that since you were not believing yourself and not giving yourself permission to act on your internal signals, the only way your subconscious could get you to *teach* was to fan the flames of annoyance and confuse you until the only recourse left you was to straight-forwardly tell the man what you thought he needed to know.

□ In the future, pay attention to your inner emotional conversations and use them as opportunities to connect on a deeper level.

"As I listen to you talk, I notice I'm getting more and more annoyed. Who else gets annoyed around you? What's it like being around annoyed people all the time?"

"I'm annoyed and nothing seems right. Are you experiencing any of that too?"

"I'll tell you what. Here's the chalk and blackboard. Teach me, with diagrams and lists, what you think the problem is and how come it can't be solved."

♪

Q. An aggressive eight year old said, "If you don't (do what I say), I'll put the great big bear on you." I didn't, he did, and then he sat on the bear! It was abusive and I allowed it. What can I do to avoid that in the future?

A. In session, make it your practice to slow down a bit before you respond. Let your brain take the time to picture various outcomes before you decide what to do.

Remind yourself to respond non-judgmentally, holding compassion for *yourself* as well as for the other person.

"Hold on a minute. I feel uncomfortable with what is going on. (Breathes, checks inside, takes a moment for the annoyance or fear to subside.) Okay, this is what I want to do . . ."

□ In the future, take responsibility for yourself. Find a way not to put your actual body in physical jeopardy. Ever. If someone says some version of, "I'll put this bear on you," stand up immediately, and respond with something like,

"No, I'm not going to let that happen. This, (picking up a pillow or other found object in the room) can represent me. Put the bear on the pillow. You can sit on the bear, if you like."

Then this boy can yell at, sit on, slug, or kick the thing-that-represents-you all he wants. No sentient being is getting abused. Then you can do your job as loving witness from an individuated place.

Once you have acted to keep yourself physically safe, it is not so upsetting to allow some pillow or toy-bear abuse for a time, as this young person begins to learn other ways to vent his anger than onto you.

□ Role model how *not* to allow abuse to continue.

"Hey. It's not okay that I get sat on. I'm getting out from under this bear right now. (Gets up.) That's better. If you want to show me how angry you are, let's find some other ways to do it."

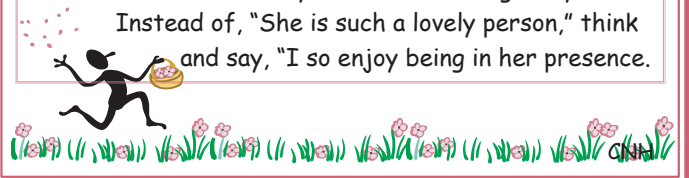
□ While he's sitting on the bear that's on the 'you' pillow, consider joining him. You might even sit on the bear with him.

I think what went through my mind was I didn't want to cut off his process.

Definitely do cut off processes which, from your point of view, promote abuse.

On becoming a psychotherapist— we teach what we know so...

Embark on a path where you use I-sentences most of the time. Practice speaking about yourself *only*. For example, instead of, "He makes me so mad," think and say, "I use him to anger myself." Instead of, "She is such a lovely person," think and say, "I so enjoy being in her presence."



Behaviors are abusive when they are exploitative or at someone else's expense. If you perceive you are being abused and you allow it, you reinforce abusive behavior.

Whether or not you were correctly naming a behavior as abusive can be something you work out later. You cannot protect this boy nor teach him to take care of himself if you refuse to protect or take care of yourself.

♪

Q. She is 13. I told her that anything she did in session would be okay. So she sat, looked at me, and didn't talk.

A. Angry, intelligent, and testing the limits?

Yes. At my suggestion that she do a sandtray, she dumped a few objects in the sand. Then when I asked her if she wanted to tell me about her sandtray, she said no and just sat there.

She may have been testing you to see if you meant it when you said that whatever she did was okay.

Well, mostly she sat there and looked glum. At the end of the hour, I asked if she wanted to return and she said yes!

Apparently she was getting *something* she liked out of her time with you. Imagine that! We're often face to face with our issues. Glumness may be one of yours.

Possibly (laughs). I know I'm not looking forward to just sitting with her while she looks at me.

□ Given her response so far, one idea is to develop a routine of sorts. First, offer a sand tray, then something messy and kinesthetic such as paints or clay.

□ Teen girls usually like "finding out more about myself" projects. Be aware that they also enjoy rebelling, especially if they think you have an investment in them doing whatever you've suggested.

□ Invite her to play a game, perhaps something fun and non-threatening. Checkers or Monopoly come to mind. I usually like something I can have fun with, make up silly rules around, and occasionally cheat.

Cheat?

Sure. Then I get to admit to cheating, and laugh at myself. That usually loosens things up a bit. The point is to play, to have fun, and to role-model living and let-living. Whatever you do, it might take several sessions before she trusts herself enough in your presence to bring more of herself into the room.

□ Decide you are going to have fun and included yourself in activities you enjoy:

- A collage made from pictures cut from magazines. The theme of her collage will have something to do with her issues. Ditto for the theme of *your* collage.
- The making of lists. "All the words that describe me," or "Things I don't like."
- My life now. My life in 5 years. My life in 10 years: draw, tell truths, tell lies.
- She draws on the whiteboard; you copy.
- Both of you create (draw/clay/sandtray) an image of the same thing (the perfect cute boy, the future, a misery sandwich).
- If it's okay with your agency, go outside and walk around while the two of you talk or be glum or whatever.

So she needs a more directive approach?

Not necessarily. Being directive is just another option. See how she responds. If it turns out what she wants is to sit and do nothing while you approve of her, find a way to do that.

I like that perspective. Although with some people it's harder to get there though.

I invite you to put some energy toward accessing the place in yourself who can just "be" with another person without wanting or needing *anything* from them.

Part of your job is to find the place in your heart which sees the human being in front of you as a basic miracle. That's the part of you who feels honored to be in the same room with a person courageous enough to confront her inner traumas, and the part of you who, when you say, "Anything you do in session will be okay," really means it.

Actually, I did mean it. It's just that sometimes it's hard to follow through.

Not as your first response, but if, in the end, you find you are unable to just "be" with this young person, then I suggest you refer her to someone who can. Forcing yourself to do something you don't want to do is, in my opinion, self-abusive, and not an appropriate model for your client.

That makes sense. I think I can rearrange my mind and just "be" with her, glum or not. By the way, what is a misery sandwich?

I have no idea. Let's go up to the white board and find out.

♪

Q. He commented that if I had more gray hair, I would probably know more.

A. My first response might be, "Possibly so. How might that be helpful to you?"

□ If you could do it without sarcasm, consider wearing a grey wig to the next session. Without referring to your hair, comment that you really learned quite a lot since last week. Work with his response.

□ At the beginning of session, suggest he close his eyes as he begins. This invites him to put more of his attention on himself, than on you.

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