

CASEBOOK OF ECLECTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

A MARITAL TRIANGLE:

How Open Can We Be?

George J. Steinfeld

Commentaries by
John F. Clarkin & Michael A. Westerman

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About the Contributors

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Selection.

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A Marital Triangle: How Open Can We Be?

George J. Steinfeld

INTRODUCTION TO THE TARET APPROACH

The present case discussion focuses on a couple's attempt to resolve some very thorny issues involving two problems that can destroy marriages—physical abuse and infidelity. This case is formulated and treated from my integrative therapeutic approach known as the TARET systems.

My interest is in holistic health and psychotherapy. I have worked with clients of all ages, in varied settings, and in most modalities. My concept of holistic health on the individual level is consistent with a systems model of family functioning. The family, like the individual, is conceived to be *whole*, more than the sum of the interacting parts, with its own uniqueness in structure and process. Each member interacts with others, affecting and being affected by them; the family unit is seen as a part of even larger systems, also having interactional effects. At the center, however, remains the person, the seat of all psychological events, living in his world as a function of his level of consciousness (level of awareness). The problem for me has been

to find ways to characterize the relationships between the uniqueness of the person and his family as a unit, and the relationships between the family members, without losing sight of both the smaller unit (the interacting parts of the person) and the larger social community systems.

My search for concepts and methods that can describe these interactional processes on the intra- and interpersonal levels has not been easy, and I have used and subsequently discarded a variety of personality theories. Currently, to help organize all the information that is gathered while working with people, the clinical theories of transactional analysis, rational emotive, and social learning theories are combined within a holistic family systems framework. More formally, it is a cognitive-behavioral systems approach to intrapsychic and interpersonal relations. It is called TARET systems (Steinfeld, 1980). TARET systems integrates transactional analysis (TA), rational emotive therapy (RET), and systems thinking.

Given this framework, how can we understand the presenting problems of John and Jane? John's abusive behavior and his infidelity, and Jane's anxiety regarding his abusive potential and her conflictual feelings about John's affair, need to be understood within this holistic family systems framework. This means that their cognitive-affective-behavioral responses are affected by their genetic-biochemical factors, past learning histories, current perceptions, which reflect current stresses, models of the world, and themselves, values

and spiritual beliefs, family of origin, and their future hopes. All of these manifest themselves in their verbal and nonverbal behaviors, subtle and obvious, which affect one another in a never-ending series of transactions, which feedback on themselves and others who are part of their world.

The TARET model employs a levels approach. That is to say, clients can choose to work specifically on behavioral changes in themselves or the relationships between members of the family (level 1). They can choose to work on understanding the historical and current cognitive and emotional antecedents and consequences for the behavior in question (level 2). Or they can choose to work on discovering the deeper meaning of their lives, struggling with the relative nature of reality, their existential predicaments, and their spiritual selves (level 3). The current case describes primarily the first two levels of work, although we touch on level 3 in the final phases of treatment. The case was selected because the couple wanted to participate in taping sessions, and the problems presented represent struggles that many couples face in a variety of constructive and destructive ways.

Change, as opposed to *understanding* ("insight"), is the primary goal, and contracts are developed in which the client and the therapist are responsible for their respective parts in the therapeutic process. Awareness, self-control, and the development of prosocial personal and relationship-enhancing responses also lie at the heart of the approach. Thus, the TARET

model is primarily a cognitive therapy, with affective and behavioral responses important insofar as they help alter the basic cognitive structures of the client. In this regard, I take my lead from Ellis (1962, 1977), Beck (1976), Meichenbaum (1977), and other cognitive therapists, including Berne (1961). In regard to the systems aspects of the model, the author has been most influenced by the M.R.I. approach to brief treatment (Watzlawick et al., 1974; Fisch et al., 1982), as well as the work of Bowen (1978), Haley (1976), and, of course, Bateson (1972, 1980), who was quite aware that the punctuation of the learning process is based on cognitive operations in the mind of the observer. It was Bateson's writings that provided the link between a theory and functioning of a family and the cognitive operations.

My search for concepts that are applicable to individual and family relationships led me to the work of Piaget, and his concept of *decentering*, as the bridge between intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning (see Steinfeld, 1978). In terms of family therapy, the cognitive-behavioral-systems model is an attempt to integrate different approaches. The client is helped to develop options that can be translated into behaviors whose effects are likely to be in his "enlightened self-interest," and not repetitively self-defeating. Clients are conceived to be either "ignorant," in that they do not know what to do under stressful conditions, or "well intentioned," but often full of "hubris" (i.e., the prideful demand to be "right" even in the face of solutions they have attempted in vain). In this sense, clients have become addicted to a set of

beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that are closely linked to their self-concept, that is, who they think they are or should be (Steinfeld, 1978). Therapists can be similarly addicted when we continue to operate in ways that are not very useful. In this model, therapy is collaborative with the goal of helping clients take responsibility for their lives and become their own therapists.

As Bandler and Grinder (1975) make clear, when people come to therapy they feel "stuck"; they cannot find a way out of their psychological prisons. These clients have learned to block themselves from seeing options and possibilities that are open to them, since these are not available in their model of the world. What is called for, then, is cognitive therapy which increases awareness, expands consciousness, and opens up new approaches to solving their problems in living. In coming to understand how some people continue to cause themselves pain and anguish, it is important to realize that people are fallible human beings and not bad, sick, or crazy. They are, like everyone else, making the best choices from those of which they are aware, choices that come from their own particular models of themselves, others, the world, and the universe.

It should be clear by now that the cognitive-behavioral systems model is based on a perceptual learning foundation, which has been spelled out elsewhere (Steinfeld, 1975), and a developmental notion that families, like individual systems, go through a series of evolutionary stages. One of the

cornerstones of the model is the idea that there is a distinction between an event, as perceived or experienced (seen, heard, touched, etc.), and the interpretation of that event which guides subsequent behavior. The basis for the interpretation of any event is the "sets" or underlying cognitive structures to which the event is assimilated and accommodated. It should also be clear that groups do not perceive anything, that families have no "rules." All we have are individuals thinking, feeling, acting, and reacting as a function of past experience and expectations in consistent ways. These patterns appear "rule-governed" from the perspective of the observer who punctuates and gives meaning to the events in ways that are similar or different from the family. "Wherever we look, we find what we're looking for" (Ram Dass, 1976).

In this regard, a systems approach differs greatly from both RET and the TA/Gestalt model, which focus primarily on intrapsychic changes. Holistic therapists need to be aware of the implications of personal change for the entire social system of which the person is a part—affecting and being affected by the myriad of persons in his life. It is irresponsible for a therapist to facilitate change on a psychological level without regard for the effects of these changes on others (and thereby on the client). This is why it is important for a therapist, before accepting a contract, to discuss with clients the possible long-term disadvantages of personal change. Not only is this strategically useful (Watzlawick et al., 1974), but it sets the stage for helping the client move past his egocentric position toward a more "mature"

awareness of the reciprocity involved in human relationships.

THE CASE OF JOHN AND JANE

Referral Information

John, 48, a middle manager for an international corporation, and Jane, 30, a sculptress, were referred to me because of my experience of working with men who were violent in their relationships. The setting was my private practice; frequency of sessions was once a week. After four sessions, John felt he could not work with the previous Employee Assistance Program therapist. The therapist told me that she felt he "needed" someone with my experience. My hunch was that both the therapist and John felt intimidated by one another. Although I didn't know why this might be so, my hypothesis was that she might have been anxious about his directness and his violent potential, and he might have been uncomfortable about her assertiveness. Actually, he later said that it was her lack of directness that bothered him because he wasn't sure she could deal with him, or if he could learn anything from her.

My goal during the evaluation period is to get a sense of how each views the problem, what form it takes, what has been tried to alleviate the problem, and to establish a treatment contract. This takes about four sessions; following the first couple session, I give each a questionnaire, which I use

during the second and third individual interviews, to explore historically relevant material, their future hopes and fears, and any areas that failed to emerge during the initial interview, or to get further data on areas I sensed were avoided during the couple's first session. This is especially important with cases of violence, since it often is the case that women feel intimidated by their abusive partners and may not share what they really feel and think in his presence. I generally see the man first for the individual session to alleviate his anxiety about what may emerge with his wife in her private session, and to reinforce the idea that he is not "mad or bad," that his anger and abuse are learned behaviors, that they can be unlearned, and that, because of our conditioning histories, many men suffer from similar problems. The fourth session is used to bring things together, establish our treatment contract, and prioritize the treatment goals.

The following pages summarize the first 13 sessions. Although all sessions were tape-recorded, the first 13 are not available because Jane requested access to them for personal listening but failed to return them. Parts of the last four sessions are given verbatim and will comprise the second part of the chapter. The richness of the first 13 sessions is therefore lost, and it is clear that I am selecting certain aspects of the data to present, based on my formulation of the problems, and my own needs at the time of writing this chapter. The quality of the interactional pattern between the three of us is a little clearer in the last four sessions.

Evaluation

Session 1. After brief introductions and some small talk, we moved into the referral issues, current perceptions of the problems, and how they thought I might help. Jane focused on John's angry outbursts and his threats to throw her out, both of which scared and intimidated her. John agreed to the long-standing anger problem, which had gotten him into trouble in his social relationships and on the job. Regarding the latter, his angry confrontational approach had kept him from advancing in his career. He wanted to learn techniques to handle his angry feelings in nonthreatening ways. Jane not only wanted to reduce her anxiety with John, but wanted to be more "expressive with him," socially, and with her family of origin. No tissue damage had occurred.

I began thinking of the learned roles of persecutor, victim, and rescuer (Karpman's triangle) (Karpman, 1968) as we explored their relationship. How did family-of-origin issues and learned patterns fit together within their marriage? Their relationship history was described, including their previous marriages, prior affairs, and triangles. John described his bout with alcoholism, which he was winning, having been dry for more than eight years. The second issue was John's current affair. After they met, and began thinking of a long-term relationship, an open marriage was discussed. Jane was interested, but felt that she could only handle it after their marriage had

solidified. Nine months later he was ready and acting it out; she wasn't. She still wanted a 1:1 committed relationship, whereas he wanted the option of an affair. She couldn't trust him regarding a commitment because of both his affair and his violent tendencies, which could easily destroy the relationship. Trust issues were explored. Jane could not have an affair because, at this time, she wasn't sure she wanted it, and because John couldn't handle it. It was unfair to her, a theme that emerges throughout the treatment process.

My first objective was to negotiate a nonviolence contract, to which John readily agreed. We continued to explore reasons for both the violence and the affair. Both were related to his feeling neglected and threatened with abandonment. These feelings were associated with Jane's previous and current relationship with her lover, although she stated that her current relationship with this man was not a sexual one.

At the end of the first session the issues were beginning to take shape. He wanted an open marriage; he was a sexual person and "needed" lots of sex and affection and physical contact, all of which his current lover gave him. He was threatened by Jane's previous lover still being in the picture, and her emerging success as a sculptress, and he felt that she would leave him when she was economically able to. She claimed she did not want an affair at this time; perhaps later she would be able to deal with it. She was nonsexually involved with her previous lover and could not have an affair and tell John, as

he had told her, because this would threaten him and he would or could be violent around this issue. She was anxious and mistrustful of him. He wouldn't give up the affair; she wouldn't give up her "friend," nor could she really be affectionate toward John because of how she was feeling. Both were not getting what they said they wanted. They had tried talking about the situation, to no avail. Jane had been in therapy for four years and still saw her therapist occasionally. I was searching for both script issues from their family of origin and cognitions that were creating their affective and behavioral patterns. I liked both of them after the first session.

Session 2. I saw Jane alone and reviewed her life history questionnaire. Again she focused on her fear of John and detailed her reasons. Her vulnerability also had a history, stemming from a birth defect, a series of operations, her small, somewhat deformed body, and other issues, namely, her financial dependency on John. She felt she was generally nonassertive. She was unclear about her role in the flare-ups between them. I explained again my belief that each person was responsible for the quality of the relationship and his own behavior. She was not responsible for his threats and his violent gestures, he was. She confirmed that John was not drinking at this time and was a member of AA, and she attended Al-anon meetings for emotional support and to learn how to cope with an alcoholic. When conflict escalates, she is able to control its intensity by crying . . . "he walks away when I cry." In many violent relationships, tears could provoke the abuse. It was

becoming clear that John's anger and threats were reactive, stemming from anxiety, and not "instrumental" with the purpose of dominating and controlling Jane (although it had this affect as well and this needed to be explored with John). We went over her development, her family of origin, sexual history, and current sexual feelings. John was described as a gentle lover; she was orgasmic, but not penile-vaginally. He felt this was a problem, she did not. She had body image problems, but she acknowledged that John was accepting and caring and was not affected by her stature. John wanted more sex; at this time, she was not initiating sexual contact. She was able to describe the positive aspects of the relationship. She confirmed that an open marriage was discussed, but that she wanted sexual exclusivity at this time. She wanted therapy to help her overcome her fears of John, her general feelings of vulnerability, in pursuing ways of becoming financially independent, so that she could, if it ever came to that, leave John if they couldn't resolve their differences. "I want to grow up."

Session 3. John had already begun to read the books I recommended (i.e., Ellis, *How to Live With and Without Anger, A New Guide to Rational Living*, 1977). His agenda included the reasons for his affair with Mary—his sexual "needs," his feeling inadequate with Jane because she was not orgasmic penile-vaginally, his feeling threatened by the ongoing relationship with her past lover, fear that she'll leave when she was financially secure, anger at her withdrawal from him, and general lack of affection. His sexual history

included references to his father, who was a "skirt chaser." He had affairs in his previous marriage. His current lover, older than he, satisfied many of his "needs," physically and emotionally. They do things together and she is a very loving and accepting person. He had told Jane because he values honesty, dislikes having to lie, and prides himself on telling the truth and being direct. He described his parents' divorce when he was 10, and his feeling of guilt because his mother had to marry a man she did not love to take care of them. He has rescue fantasies regarding his mother and several of the women in his life, including Jane. He was concerned and sad over the possibility that he may never be able to make a commitment to one woman. He was confident that he could learn to control his anger and his threats, because he gave up drinking. I labeled both addictions, which he understood and accepted. I described the TARET model, and it made sense to him. He also knew his anger was manipulative at times and was aware of the hollowness of his victories with Jane. He described its history in his family of origin, at college, and at work. His mother had mentioned that his father had hit her. He saw his father as an angry, military man, short in stature, and needing to prove his masculinity through sexuality and his violence. He was easily aware of the similarities between himself and his father. I focused on the differences. I raised the possibility of the fear of closeness—what would it mean to him if he was committed to one woman? He hadn't thought much about that, but added, "Jane accuses me of being incapable of a committed relationship . . . of being

open and loving and maybe it's true." It was said with sadness. I wondered if the same were true of Jane at some level.

Session 4. The purpose of this session was to pull observations and reactions together and to finalize our contract. John and Jane had monitored their thoughts and feelings, as I had suggested. John discovered his ambivalence with Jane, saying yes, and then resenting her. When John was angry, Jane sometimes stated, "You'll get over it," to which he felt discounted. John felt used by Jane, that he rescued her, and will eventually be discarded when she no longer needs him. This leads to anxiety and anger; the sound of his voice is scary to her; she withdraws, and the marital dance continues. Trust issues were evident in his feeling that she will leave:

John: I'm not sure she'll stay.

T: What do you mean, John?

John: She'll leave me one day.

T: Say more.

John: I'll drive her away . . . if I'm unable to control my anger and continue to threaten her, I know I'll drive her away.

T: Anything else?

John: When she's financially independent, she'll leave . . . I'm expendable.

Jane validated some of what John felt, but added that she did not want to

leave John at this time. She did not feel John would leave her even though he had a lover. In describing their experiences, John was more concrete; Jane had more difficulty putting her feelings into words. "When I feel special and important, I feel secure with John." I tried to get her to describe how she'll know she is special and important to him. Even when he does what she asks, she never knows whether she can trust it. . . "is he laying a trip on me . . . manipulating me?" We discussed how she could know what is "real" and what's a manipulation. She wanted to be "seen and heard" by John and "touched by him." His behavior was not an indication of his caring. The "be spontaneous" paradox started to emerge as a relationship trap. "If I'm clear about what I want, and John gives it to me, I get what I want, but I can't trust that he's giving it to me because he wants to or because he's manipulating me to get what he wants. . . . If I'm unclear, I may not get what I want, but if I do, if John gives me what I say I want, especially if I don't actually say it, then it's spontaneous."

The session ended with a reaffirmation of the contract—the elimination of violence and the exploration of relationship issues, especially whether Jane wanted to be in a relationship in which her spouse was having an affair. I suggested two tasks: to keep monitoring their interactions and to use the TARET model, which we had gone over; and for both of them to think about the pros and cons of being clear in asking for what they want from one another. It appeared that John had little problem with asking and was more

able to see the relationship as an exchange of services. Jane had more romantic notions, at least as she presented during these sessions. My not confronting the disadvantages of what each was asking for early in the treatment may have been an error that haunted us later.

Treatment

Session 5. The interactional monitoring continues. No violence had occurred. Honesty as a value in the relationship was discussed. My focus was on "choice" being the issue, not necessarily expressing or not expressing themselves. The choice needed to be based on what each wanted to achieve at any moment in time, evaluating ways of getting what they wanted, as separate from what they "needed," while also respecting what the other wanted. We kept focusing on the consequences of their behavior, in an effort to increase responsibility and choice. TARET was discussed in more detail, separating "wants and needs . . . cause and effect." In line with the latter, the focus was on the intent of messages and their effect, with each person being responsible for the congruency in the sending and responding to one another. Both continued to claim that the relationship was "sound" in many ways, but that John's womanizing could destroy it. The "self-fulfilling" aspect of John's behavior was discussed in regard to his family of origin. Was he in fact driving Jane away? Was Jane living out her victim's role? My task to them was to think about their relationship in regard to any "scripty" messages from their

families of origin. At this time, levels 1 and 2 of the TARET model were being employed—focusing on behavioral change, with exploration of the cognitive antecedents, historical and current, to the behavior in question.

Session 6. We continued working on priority 1, John's anger, and explored its history, its costs, and its benefits. John validated Jane's feeling that it sometimes is used to control her, yet his anger distances him from her. I focused on its alienating effect on Jane and himself. Using the examples they had brought in, we discussed, in more detail, how messages were sent and received, the relationship between their perceptions, interpretations, feelings, wants, and behaviors that get played out in their marital patterns. Each was "sensitive" to the different aspects of the sent message; John responded to her tone of voice, Jane to his tone and his facial gestures. He scared her, and he playfully said that the next time he got angry, he would draw an angry face on a paper bag and put it on his head to help her not to be afraid of him. We discussed other ways in which he could keep from creating further anxiety in Jane when he got angry. We had further discussions of the expectations that each had for the other, letting themselves and each other down; their family of origin as creating much of the basis for their unrealistic expectations was clarified.

Much of the session explored what was behind John's anger and her fear. My hunch at this time was that they were playing out a victim-

persecutor game, each being the reciprocal of the other. They were not in touch with the reciprocal part of themselves; namely, John was not aware of the pain regarding the loss of his father, and the softer aspects of himself, including wanting a close relationship with men. Jane was not aware of her anger at being born crippled, some of the ways she was treated as a child, and felt in touch with the victimized part of herself, but not with the controlling aspects of her behavior. In my work I look for ways in which people are denying the reciprocal parts of themselves, believing that by owning and balancing the various aspects of ourselves we can become emotionally healthy, accepting of our total selves as fallible human beings, and empathic to others. Owning our entire selves facilitates, in my thinking, truly accepting, nonjudgmental beliefs about ourselves and others, and the relative nature of reality.

Session 7. What emerged in this session was that each wanted unconditional love and acceptance. They were looking outside for what could only come from within. In this regard, we explored their families of origin, Jane doing most of the talking. The difference in the way her mother and father expressed their love to her was discussed, Jane feeling that her mother was more conditional than her father. It was clear that she was looking for the unconditional love from John that she had experienced with her dad; we discussed the four stroking patterns: conditional, unconditional, positive, and negative. Jane's mother was perceived to be less honest: "You can catch more

flies with honey.” My thoughts were that John was perceived to be more like her mother, with his manipulations, and that she chose not to see these aspects of herself. Differentiation from her mother was the goal of her previous therapy, especially around her not having a child. The doctors had told her that her body couldn’t handle the birth process. She had a tubal ligation, feels all right about that decision, feels that through sculpturing she uses her creativity to “give birth” to things, so that having a child is not as important as it once was. The session focused on how each was both similar and different from their parents. An exercise I encouraged them to do was to list all the qualities they perceive in themselves, and which they perceive in their parents. They can note the similarities and differences, as well as which are positive and negative to themselves; further, they can accept the positive, and use therapy to modify those aspects of themselves they are uncomfortable with. Differentiation from one’s family of origin is thereby facilitated, as we focus on the observable aspects of their “personalities.” The session ended with my giving them the additional task of monitoring their stroking pattern in their relationship, and noting how these are similar and different from the stroking patterns—the giving and receiving, the kinds of strokes—from the interactional patterns that existed in their families of origin.

Session 8. Pursuing the theme of the previous session, Jane felt that she could give and receive unconditional love and acceptance if John stopped

threatening her with ending the relationship and throwing her out when he got angry. He had not been violent or threatening since therapy began. She also wanted him to end the relationship with his lover, and to do more things together. Although he had been caring this past week, she still didn't trust him—was it because he cared, or because he wanted her to act in ways that were satisfactory to him? Thus, even though they were more sexually active this week, and he was loving in his behavior, she was mistrustful: "Does he mean what he does?" Jane was struggling with the separation of behavior from its motivation, fearing manipulation, that she would be set up to care, only to find at a later time that he was still bullshitting her and exploiting her for his own ends. John readily acknowledged his desire for reciprocity in behavior; this still did not feel right to Jane. As we pursued these issues, her anger emerged: "Why should I give him anything?" Power and control issues emerged as defenses against their feeling vulnerable with one another. Although I pursued trying to get specific behavioral indicators of her concepts, Jane found this hard to do. Words could not explain it, and I tried getting her to picture ways that could describe her feelings. Finally, John, in an angry outburst, said, "We're picking at shit. . . I don't feel I'm insensitive . . . and I feel attacked by you [Jane]." I focused on his interpretation of what Jane was struggling with, his misreading it as an attack, the hurt underlying his anger, and his frustration and feelings of inadequacy at not being able to please her. This was clearly John's issue and connected with his feelings of

sexual inadequacy in regard to Jane not being orgasmic penilely.

Despite his hurt and angry feelings, he still would not give up his lover. I was still uncertain as to whether Jane couldn't trust him because of his behavior (anger, threats, lover) or was projecting her own hidden agenda regarding trust and honesty issues. The conflict escalated during the session. She decided that she wouldn't have sex with him anymore, till he gave up his lover; he was feeling deprived of sex and closeness. At the peak of his anger, he yelled, "She wants me to cringe and crawl . . . and apologize . . . she's trying to control me."

I pointed out to John and Jane that they were both feeling anxious about being manipulated and controlled. The session ended on a very pessimistic note regarding the viability of the relationship. John was angry and wondered whether he could ever feel close to Jane; she was fearful and angry. I suggested to them that, since they both knew what the other wanted, they imagine apologizing for the hurts they inflicted on each other, forgive themselves and the other, and, via a small, almost insignificant gesture (not words), start to overcome the breach in the relationship. Both had expressed deep hurt and anger, had regressed to painting general portraits of one another. As they left, I, too, was wondering if they wanted to, or could, heal themselves and the relationship.

Session 9. Jane's hurt and anger continued to increase at John and me. She felt I cut her off during the last session and was able to express it to me directly, albeit a week later. She had been experiencing her anger more of late, as well as her sense of betrayal, her own feelings of inadequacy in relation to John wanting a lover. No, she realized that she could not accept this relationship, even though she had been trying. I, as I had done often, expressed that I felt it would be hard for anyone to accept a triangle. She had wanted to see if she could work within this framework, and she was realizing that she could not. In her own anger, she wanted to have her own lover, felt John couldn't handle it, and would regress to threatening her again. She was getting stronger and more determined to show him that she would not die if the relationship ended.

They agreed to my suggestion that Jane could have the choice of an affair. If John asked her whether she had a lover, she could say "yes" or "no." But whatever she said, John would know that she was lying half the time. He agreed not to discuss his lover in her presence. This agreement gave her the power and freedom she needed, without feeling threatened. He could continue his affair for the time being, while they worked on other aspects of their relationship. They would see whether developing the positive aspects of the relationship could make things work out for them.

We also explored, at this stage, the positive and negative aspects of the

triangle. Jane was able to acknowledge its positive qualities . . . she could use it to avoid sex and physical activities she did not like, and couldn't do, but his lover could, and his lover could give her the time she needed for herself. On the negative side, it tapped into her fear and insecurities regarding abandonment, interfered with intimacy and the safe feeling she wanted, fed mistrust and anxiety, and robbed her of the "sense of usness" she wanted. Although we had worked out an agreement that gave her power and relieved the threat, the session ended in sadness for everyone. We had covered much this session. All I did was let them know I would give this session much thought, as I knew they would.

Session 10. Jane's anger continued to increase, and she was more expressive as she was becoming more secure. John could hear her, and wouldn't threaten her when she became angry with him. Jane was still ambivalent. Intellectually, as an enlightened and independent woman, she felt she "should" be able to deal with John's affair. Emotionally, she couldn't. It still hurt, and she felt like a "jealous bitch." John wanted full acceptance and love, despite his lover, yet realized this was a lot to ask of anyone. He couldn't accept it if the reverse were happening. This was a tough test for Jane. If she could love and accept him with his lover, this would mean she really loved him, and he would be lovable. Jane, for the first time, discussed, in detail, a three-year triangle she had been involved in. This gave her a family, with love and acceptance, but she felt used as well. I wondered about triangular

relationships in her family of origin, mother-father and her. Jane discussed her past and her ambivalence regarding the triangle, and John mentioned, for the first time, "maybe" he could give up his lover and entertain thoughts of a committed, sexually exclusive relationship. Despite (or because) of our heated sessions, he had been feeling closer to Jane over the several weeks. Jane was still hurt and angry and withholding sexually.

I confronted both with what they wanted to be the foundation of their relationship. Was it honesty? If so, they needed to be careful of what they asked, they just might get it. Were they prepared for total honesty in their relationship? Both were confused at this time; they were struggling with defining the basic values they wanted to underlie their relationship. Jane was finally able to ask for time while she worked out how she could be close again. The session ended with some clarity. She would not ask about his lover; he would not mention her; more important, they would think about a committed relationship and what it would mean to both of them. At this stage of therapy, John "appeared" more honest than Jane in being able to state what he thought and felt. However, there was a quality of "*de besten ligen ist die emmess*" (the best lie is the truth) in John. (My mother used to say this; it appears she had great insight.)

Session 11. Several weeks elapsed, and John and Jane were feeling good about the relationship; they were getting along extremely well. Anxiety and

anger had decreased. John was appreciative of Jane's efforts at home, and she was more relaxed. She had agreed to accept John's lover as a fact, although she did not like it. She was coping well, and they were doing fine at this time. She was still uncertain as to what she wanted regarding a monogamous relationship. She was less angry, and when she did express her vulnerability and her anger, John's accepting response helped her feel less threatened. Now she was aware of her fear of abandonment and the sense that perhaps she wasn't lovable. "How could someone really love me? . . . How could I be sure they won't leave me? . . . I feel with John as I did as a child."

She related a host of memories related to her hospitalizations, especially her mother telling her that the nurses said that Mom couldn't come if she couldn't control her child. A flood of related memories came, leaving her with a sense that she could not express her real feelings without the threat of being left. She had felt like an object . . . powerless . . . vulnerable . . . with people making decisions about her and her body when she was a little girl. Her early decision seemed to be: "Don't feel, don't express, or you'll be left." She also learned to suppress her sexuality and angry feelings . . . nurses stuck her with needles, no one explained anything to her . . . she was a frightened child and much of this remained in her. John listened as Jane used the session to describe these early experiences, her feelings of vulnerability, her mistrust, her anxiety about expressing her feelings and the ultimate self-blame: "I always wondered what I did to deserve what happened to me." My job during

this session was to listen, to facilitate the owning of her feelings, and to help her to differentiate the past from the present.

Session 12. Now it was John's turn. He discussed themes of honesty and trust. Being tactful is perceived as not telling the truth. His father was direct and tactless. "I have a reputation of being brutally frank." We discussed Mead's concept of the "me" and the "I," with John sorting out where he was coming from regarding the honesty issue. In business, he doesn't play politics, and this has interfered with his career. The rewards, however, have been self-respect and the respect of others. As he feels more secure with himself, he has less need to "beat people over the head." His Unitarian church affiliation, with Jane, is useful to him spiritually, and he feels calmer of late. He has been using the RET model at home and at work. He is less defensive, and he feels less threatened. Jane has been better able to express her anger, and he has been better able to accept it. Jane has been better able to own the "right" to be angry, and vengeful. John was moving toward not needing to be angry and owning more of his vulnerability. John was feeling more guilty regarding the relationship with Jane and his lover. My focus is usually to help people move from guilt to regret and to own their responsibility for change. Jane was still struggling with what she wanted. Sometimes, she could even tease him about his lover: "Sometimes I wake up swinging." John is more accepting of her hurt and anger, and when she asks for something she needs, he generally gives it to her: "I'm starting to feel more important to him." At times, she still

wondered whether he was manipulating her. They were talking more specifically about what they wanted, giving each other more, but there was still an uneasy quality to their relationship. Jane was still ambivalent about the monogamous relationship, still trying to live within the triangle. They were both struggling as the year came to an end.

Session 13. As we moved into the new year, several weeks elapsed between sessions. We reassessed our original contract. Anger and anxiety had markedly decreased, but communication and relationship traps were still present. John's hurt and anger emerged again. He was feeling deprived of love and affection, but Jane wasn't "buying into it." She stated, "He wants too much from me now . . . he can take care of himself."

They were feeling stuck again. John was wondering whether Jane really loved him or was staying because of her economic dependency . . . he was aware that his rescuing her was also his emotional downfall. He felt embarrassed, but "admitted" that he liked kissing, hugging, and touching Jane: "Jane makes fun of women who flirt, kiss, and stroke their men." Jane felt uncomfortable engaging in this behavior. John claimed to give physical stroking freely, whereas Jane was perceived to be somewhat repulsed by this: "I don't ask for it as much as I would like, because I know Jane doesn't like to give it." Jane claimed that she didn't like kissing at this time. "I'm staying, but I'm angry . . . I like snuggling, but kissing is too intimate for me . . . I can't kiss

now . . . I don't feel I can trust John."

John felt that Jane was reneging on their agreement: "When we first came here we were in a bad way . . . violence . . . then for a few months, things were okay . . . now I feel we're apart . . . cut off . . . and I don't want to kiss . . . to be intimate with John." Jane was feeling confused and trapped, as was John. She was not ready to end the relationship, but was not ready to accept John's desire for an open marriage.

The power relationship was also shifting. I tried to reframe John's dilemma to help reduce his anxiety and his resentment. As Jane was becoming more economically independent, if she decided to stay, it would mean that she really loved him and didn't "need" him. John was willing to struggle with this idea and my suggestion for him to use the marriage as a vehicle to work on himself. He could continue to give to Jane the caring he felt like giving, but without attachment to getting much back from Jane at this time. Jane was sorting out her feelings. He could learn patience and feel good about himself. We discussed the difference between suffering as "grace" (as a way toward emotional growth) and as a "virtue" (which could lead to self-righteousness and anger). I shared the belief that "suffering is optional" . . . they had a choice.

Jane at this point was beginning to wonder about her own level of guilt. Was she, in fact, purifying her soul (through suffering) by staying in this

uncomfortable relationship? Though she was feeling more economically powerful with her new job, she still felt confused about what she really wanted, with John, at this stage of her life, and what specifically was unsatisfactory in her relationship . . . his "fucking" another woman, his "caring" for someone else, his intimacy with his lover, his closeness relative to theirs, her fear of losing John, his time away from her. . . .

I made no value judgments regarding her decision to stay or leave the marriage. I did, however, share my experiences that I had never seen a triangle that "worked" when affection and specialness were at stake. I had worked with "swingers," where different sex partners were acceptable and even added to the relationships. However, when "caring" came into play with one of the spouses, the triangle broke down. In my experience, sexual exclusivity was a value for most, but not all, committed relationships. The decision was up to them to work out the basis for their relationship. In general, I feel comfortable sharing my experience and myself with my clients. Feedback from them indicates they find this useful, as is my "leading without pushing." I struggle with trying to maintain this balance. I generally answer all questions directly, asking its relevance to them. I try to establish an egalitarian relationship with my clients, although some prefer to put themselves in a one-down relationship to the "doctor." I challenge them on this because I have found that people feel and do better when they function from their adult ego states. My experience in a therapeutic community for

drug addicts in a prison setting reinforced this idea.

This session ended with both John and Jane feeling badly about what had transpired; he was feeling deprived and angry; she was feeling confused and ambivalent regarding the relationships, what she was willing to give to it.

Session 14. John and Jane had celebrated their third anniversary and things were going well. I wondered how it got that way since they were both "hot" at the end of the last session.

John: Depressing is the word I would use.

Jane: Right!

T: I almost called, but decided not to rescue . . . I felt that you guys could work it out. I'm still interested in how it got to be better.

(The audio transcripts that follow have been slightly modified because of lack of clarity of recordings.)

John and Jane describe how they worked on their relationship by *not* discussing the previous session. Instead, they became absorbed in their individual lives. As they did things for themselves, they started to feel better about each other. Jane expressed her feeling of appreciation for John, his understanding and accepting her anger regarding a ski trip that he was planning with a mutual friend. He was sensitive to her feelings, and she said,

"Good, great, someone is finally hearing the things I'm coping with."

At this time in their relationship, both are feeling that they are sensitive to one another; Jane is more open in expressing her anger, communication is flowing, and problems are getting resolved. Jane is not as threatened as she is doing more for herself and is feeling more independent. This is not to last very long, as the session moves into more of the feelings generated by triangles. They wanted to discuss the problem of jealousy, something both had experienced and which got in their way. John described how he felt when he thinks about Jane being "playful" with her past lover. What bothers him is her intimacy with him, not the sex act itself. John feels envious when he thinks that someone has something he feels he lacks in a relationship with Jane. Going further, John felt that jealousy had to do with the potential loss of Jane to someone who has more to give than he does on the spiritual, intellectual, and physical levels. Jane will feel this lack and eventually leave him. In terms of their sexuality, John claimed not to feel threatened and jealous if he believed Jane's sexual life with him is equivalent to her sex with her lover. If he feels that her lover is "better," he would feel the threat and, thus, jealousy. It makes him feel inadequate to imagine Jane has something with someone else that she doesn't have with him. Jane not being orgasmic penile-vaginally is threatening since he feels that she could be orgasmic with someone else, and this is important to him. It was not that important to her. John's feelings continue to emerge. He feels that Jane perceives him as forcing her to have

sex and emphatically states that this is something he does not want. He wants to let her know he wants sex and wants her to make her own decision once she has information about what he wants.

We then focused on Jane's feelings about jealousy and sexuality, attempting to clarify the thoughts and feelings about these issues. Jane related to jealousy as loss, and to her anger as what she perceives is unfair in the relationship. She's also threatened and jealous when she feels she'll lose her special place with John. When this is felt, she gets angry and has thoughts of ending the relationship. We continued to discuss fear, anxiety, and how angry they feel over the triangles that have intruded into their marriage. This is followed by the next exchange. . . .

John: . . . what I think the immediate reward is. I mean we fabricate these . . . we . . . I fabricate these feelings in myself to create pain and anxiety in myself, but what's the reward? I'm sure there's some immediate reward that motivates me to do that. I could think of some long-term scenarios and historical reasons for me to feel that, but I can't understand why I fabricate it. My parents were divorced over relationships my dad had with women, and that was really painful. But why do I recreate that? . . . that's an interesting question.

Jane: Could I just toss this thing in here that's sort of related to what John's saying? And it's a feeling I have that's just generated from me. But sometimes I have this feeling that John is reenacting something that his father got, and now I've been cast in the role of, in this situation, his stepmother. And almost testing me to see if I'm gonna do for him what his stepmother did for his father. Now that's. . . .

John: That may be pretty accurate.

Jane: But that's coming from me and based on things John has said.

John: That might be pretty accurate.

T: Can you go over that some more because I'm not sure I understand. . . . "John is reenacting something that his father got—I'm cast in the role of the stepmother."

Jane: Oh, okay . . . in other words, coming from me, what I see is, John's father divorced his mother, married another woman and continued to fuck around and this woman stayed with him through the end and John told me, and has said on occasion to me, and they really care for one another now, and he got it out of his system, and it's okay, and, and so I have thought to myself, I am now, not that I'm in a stepmother role, but I'm in the role of that woman who stood by the man who fucked around and all of that. Yeah . . . and that would mean a woman who does that, who sticks around despite that, okay, is, what? Is really proving what?

John: That she loves me.

T: Yeah . . . yeah . . . yeah, this is the thought that came to me as I was listening to Jane. What are the reasons for this extramarital affair? There is John, in a sense testing the strength of this relationship: "How much you really care about me, and if you really care about me, you'll hang in there." I didn't put it into a past relationship. That was a thought. Because you said, "I really don't feel that she cares." You said that a number of times and this is an ultimate test, you know. Because if she doesn't stay, which is very hard for her, it's a really tough test, I mean if this is a test, it's a tough one. Not too many people are going to make it through this one. If she doesn't, if she says, "I can't deal with it," which is what we struggled with the last . . . few sessions . . . you were concerned about whether or not that was happening, okay, "Will she leave me when she gets independent?" And you know . . . that is one of the things you fear, and yet it's almost if you're creating the condition where that could happen. You almost push her, and if she leaves, what will you say to yourself? What's the payoff in that way? If Jane leaves, what will you say to yourself?

J: I knew it all along.

T: I knew it all along, yeah . . . I knew what?

J: I knew that she didn't love me enough all along and that she wouldn't last.

T: Which is a very interesting conclusion to come to.

J: I don't see where the reward is for me. T: What will that show you for yourself? J:
I'm not worth loving.

T: Okay . . . now the question is . . . no I think the issue is, because you said it a
number of times, you said it on the phone, you said it here, having to do with
questions, of "whether I am lovable. Am I somehow lovable and can I in fact
love?" Those two questions concern you.

The implication is that John has some early "not okay" messages stored in his child ego state since he has to put women through this severe test. It also has the quality of the reenactment of the oedipal triangle in which John outdoes his father. This is validated by another example in which John wants to "show off" to his father that he can have two women with both wanting him and loving him while each knows about the other woman.

To pursue the historical antecedents, their current cognitive sets, and their potential consequences, the following task was suggested:

T: If you would like to, both of you, ask yourselves the question: "Where do you think you're gonna end up in your life?" If we hypothesize that there may have been some scripty messages that you took in, you may want to take a good look at them . . . especially if there are "not okay" messages. . . . These can be changed if you like . . . if you have some irrational ideas about not

being okay, these can be modified. I want to add that I feel all "not okay" feelings are irrational, when these apply to evaluations of the self. In other words, a child has some painful experiences and translates them into a personal "bad" feeling, usually based on feedback he's getting from "irrational" grownups who give the kid "mad or bad" messages just because he isn't living up to their unrealistic expectations. . . . The kids take it in . . . believe it. . . start to own the shit. . . and live it out. . . . They live out their lives like that. . . I think that's irrational and destructive. . . . Some of these ideas could lead you to project some outcome . . . what's gonna happen to such a not okay person or persons. . . . Do you understand?

[John and Jane state that they do.]

T: Let's take a look at these messages, these irrational ideas, these future projections . . . so we can say. . . . "Wait a second . . . slow down . . . these outcomes are based on some irrational assumptions" . . . we can reframe them . . . we can change your personal history . . . its meaning . . . so that these experiences don't mean the same things they mean to the "little kid" in you thinks it means. . . . The little kid may be leading you to play out your life in certain destructive ways. . . . Maybe we can modify that. . . . Do you understand what I'm asking you to do?

John: Right. . . almost. . . we're gonna create a mental projection of where we will end up, either personally or as a couple, with those "not okay" scripts we're carrying around in ourselves . . . so we can work on those scripts . . . and modify the interpretation of our personal history . . . our experience . . . so we can create a new personal history . . . so we can end up feeling okay with a different projection of the outcome . . . constructive . . . not destructive. . . .

T: That's great, John. . . . You've been doing the reading . . . I playfully] you're definitely corporate presidential material. . . .

The rest of the session is spent reviewing the issues related to separating interpretations of messages between one another in light of their expectations. We further discussed how they both wanted validation from

one another, and how each is hurt by their responses which do not meet their expectations.

Jane was still angry when she left. I suggested that they continue to monitor their interactions in light of what we had been discussing, to get in touch with their expectations, trying to separate adult from child ego states, and furthermore, to continue to realize they had options, which, if exercised, might lead to different outcomes where they get what they want in the short run, as well as in their long-term outcomes, in and out of the relationship.

Session 15. John started by talking about his aunt in California who was dying, but had to move into this subject by preceding it with an intellectual discussion related to the irrational ideas behind various emotional states. The mood quickly changed as he expressed his guilt for not going out to see her while she was alive and well. The impression was clear that John was struggling with grief and potential loss of a loved one, but when I asked him about it, he said: "That doesn't really bother me." The session waxed philosophical for a while, but later, when questioned again as to his feelings, he expressed the desire to tell his aunt that he loves her and misses her and "stuff like that."

T: She sounds kind of special. . . . What do you admire about her? . . . What will you miss when she dies? . . .

John: All her independence, and her "they can kick me but they can't whip me"

attitude.

[This is dealt with for a short time, before Jane expresses her own feelings that she is feeling heavily weighted in relation to "us" (the marriage). We pursue this in some detail, as Jane continues to express deep concern about the relationship.]

Jane: I think we're running on the same tracks . . . parallel, but I don't think we're crossing over too much.

She continues to discuss her unhappiness in the relationship with John, adding that she doesn't know what she really wants . . . her new job and her projects are taking all of her energy right now.

Jane: I don't feel John, and I don't feel real close to one another. . . . I feel sort of distant and unattached . . . I feel guarded. . . .

[I try to clarify what Jane feels—the difference between unattached, distant, guarded. It's difficult going, so I pursue what Jane's ideal is.]

Jane: My ideal is a very loving, secure, comfortable relationship . . . one that has some joy in it . . . and no pain. . . . It's an ideal . . . no pain. . . .

Clearly Jane is struggling to sort out the way she really feels, what she wants, what is idealistic . . . what is realistic to expect with John or any relationship. . . . Jane goes on to say that when they were away for the weekend, it was very good . . . they were feeling close . . . but coming back to

reality was difficult. I try to point out to Jane that sometimes we are not very clear about what is important. I relate it to the process of dying . . . when it happens, suddenly we become clear about the stuff we were caught up in and realize what really is important. . . . I continue to discuss how we allow ourselves to get trapped by the "stuff" of life, our ego attachments. I ask, "What kinds of things do you allow to get in your way of feeling good?" As we continue to discuss these issues, I notice that John is uninvolved and rather tense. I decide to say nothing, waiting for him to say what he feels. Finally, he expresses his anger . . . his not wanting to hear for the umpteenth time all of the problems that Jane is unhappy about. He feels that Jane has her job, her sculpture, and "she's got a place to run." He comments that he doesn't want to give any more in the session . . . and that Jane and I should work alone. He's depressed and doesn't want to get into Jane's disappointment with the relationship.

T: Is there anything we can offer you now, John?

John: No . . . I can take care of it myself. . . . Well . . . I'm sitting here feeling an awful lot of loss and what do you and Jane get into . . . all the shit about what's wrong with the marriage again. . . .

He doesn't want to talk anymore and withdraws, as Jane continues to discuss her reading of Edward Albee works, which deal with sex, love, and marriage . . . as well as existential issues. . . .

I try to relate these to the existential issues brought up in the session, especially being alone on one's path . . . how we are alone yet need to reach out and connect with someone (relating to the feeling Jane expressed earlier regarding parallel tracks). . . . We go on to talk about the issue of bonding which Jane brings up, bonding with others. . . . Jane can relate to this . . . we struggle with the feeling that although we may not feel the bond all the time, it doesn't mean the bond is broken . . . people can reconnect. I describe my work with incestuous families where many bonds have been broken, yet in some cases, through hard work, the connections can be reestablished. . . . The session ends with Jane reflecting on how important it is to connect with something larger than the self. I relate this to John's reconnecting with his dying aunt. . . an important part of his earlier life. . . . I raise the question of how they can connect with other, while still being on their own path. I give them the task of trying to create some images that would represent their current dilemma, and to change some part of their images to represent a way out relevant to the issues of connecting.

Session 16. Both had not followed through on the task, and we spent some time discussing issues of responsibility for the client and the therapist. I let them know my thoughts about the concept of resistance, that it is not useful as it was traditionally used because it implied "blaming the victim." I mentioned that the concept of counter-resistance is equally applicable in relation to therapists. Resistance is better conceived of as a relationship issue.

This moved us into a discussion of the reciprocity involved in all relationships.

T: Let's apply these ideas to our relationship here, and to relationships in marriages as well . . . the question that I feel is important to ask is "what am I doing or not doing that is facilitating or not facilitating the direction that we all want to go in?" You come here for service. I'm paid to provide it. If I'm not doing my job from your perspective you tell me. I listen . . . we work it out. . . if I continue without considering what you told me, you have the right and the responsibility to fire me. The same processes applies to marriage and the family, but it's clearly more complicated. It's hard to fire a spouse, or a parent or a kid . . . but psychologically we can cut loose . . . but if you stay, you can ask, "What is it that I'm doing that may be contributing to the way my partner is behaving toward me?" I think if you ask those kinds of questions, you begin to see the reciprocity in all relationships, as well as the need to differentiate. . . .

John: At least you're in the analytical mode, instead of anger and blaming . . . disowning responsibility . . . you're challenging your assumptions . . . whatever you call it . . . debating . . . debating your assumptions. . . .

T: Yes . . . there could be a danger here too if we're not careful . . . you might wind up blaming self. . . which, of course, is equally destructive . . . the issue is responsibility without guilt. [John moves to connect with the previous session.]

John: Well, in our last session . . . if you remember our last session . . . I was really down in the dumps. . . Carrie had a lot to do with it. . . I was feeling bad not seeing her before she died . . . but of course what we were talking about was pretty grim too . . . Jane leaving . . . she can't stand this and that . . . I think that what we were talking about. . . but after I made the decision to see Carrie, I felt a hell of a lot better . . . and I grieved for her . . . I've seen her . . . I've done what I needed to do and what I can reasonably do. . . .

[There's some additional talk about his aunt and the family.]

T: Are you okay now?

John: Yeah . . . yeah. . . .

Discussion moves to their "attachment" to concepts of themselves, who they think they are, which aspects of themselves they identify with. John relates to his intelligence, with the idea of "dumbness" being a big one for him. It would be hard for him to think of himself as dumb and still feel good about himself, still feel lovable. Jane's identification was in the areas of creativity, being approved of by her family, and being a "good" person. Through work on herself, she feels that she can accept that she will never be famous, and that she has done "some very not nice things." Still, she claims to feel okay about herself. What images do they want to project to one another? John relates to wanting to be confident and capable (part of the rescue fantasies) and able to communicate with Jane. He admires her creativity and respects her for her intensity and dedication to her art. Jane validates John regarding his intellect and his creativity, and they ask me about my attachments.

T: Yeah, I'm always thinking . . . my fear of Alzheimer's relates to that. I drive my wife nuts: I wake up in the morning, we're having coffee, she's trying to wake up, and I'm into my ideas about this and that, her eyes aren't even open and I'm talking concepts. . . . Fuck off, George. . . .

Our discussion moves to the concepts of polarities and complementarities, and Jane states that she is attracted to intellectual people

to complement her creativity and emotional parts. John talks about how he is trying to balance those parts of himself that involve being alone, with their being together. He's comfortable sharing time with Jane, and enjoys time with his lover . . . being alone is hard for him (we do not at this time get into the anxiety that is associated with being "alone"). Jane is feeling okay now that she has other outlets, namely her work, and wants to spend quality time with John. She rejects the idea of a lover . . . "it's too dangerous." Going further . . . "it's a dangerous game . . . it would be regressive . . . putting the relationship back a year. . . . Right now I'm doing okay . . . if I started an affair, things would go downhill fast. . . . I'm not willing to take that risk." Her anger at the "unfairness" in the relationship is still there, and thinly veiled.

T: You said he can do something that I can't.

Jane: I mean he will not give me something I give him. So I can't do what he's done . . . he has a lover knowing I'm not leaving him because of this other woman . . . I don't have that luxury.

I pursue the feelings related to "he can do something I can't do" and "he won't give me what I give him," to see if they are familiar. Did she ever experience these feelings in prior relationships, in her family of origin, or as an adult. At this point I'm wondering whether the "intensity" of her feelings is related to past unresolved feelings about herself and others, added to the current "injustice" and unfairness in her relationship with John. Jane acknowledges her envy of men and their power in our society, but doesn't

connect with past feelings. We return to the triangle.

T: Well, it seems that there are two elements. . . . First, that "I don't want to deal with John's reaction to my having a lover," and second, "I don't want that kind of relationship."

Jane: Actually, when I imagine having a lover, I say to myself, in a fantasy, too bad, I'm sorry you're in pain buddy, fuck you. . . .

T: Now you know how I feel. . . .

Jane: Now you know . . . welcome to the . . . club . . . you know . . . all that kind of real angry, screw-you feeling, it's too bad you're in pain. And that's a real indication to me of real anger on my part about what's going on here.

T: That, and then there's another piece of. . . .

Jane: Then there's another piece. . . .

T: Which is what you've been saying, you want to have a one-to-one relationship with someone.

Jane: Mhmm . . . I want a relationship and it doesn't necessarily exclude what John is doing, but I want the bonded, committed relationship; if he wants to go out and fuck around, I'll deal with that, but I'm not gonna deal with it when he's out fucking around and I'm still not getting what I feel and need inside the relationship. That's my bitch.

T: So, the issue is, if you could feel that bonded, committed closeness . . . and John gives you what you want, then maybe the affair is manageable. John, you want that closeness from love too, and sometimes you have not felt that we've talked about it the last time . . . what could you do to get that. . anything happen, did you . . . think about it?

Jane: Yes, as a matter of fact, I went home and thought about what you said and decided that I really was gonna go ahead with trying to do some things for

John, but I also recognized that it would have to be things that could be comfortable for me too. I said, well, you can get out the black garters and you can do the whole thing, and I thought, no I'm really not up to that . . . that would be too far for me to go . . . but I did much more . . . I cleaned the house and prepared a nice dinner . . . and for 24 hours everything was fine. . . .

Everything went well until Jane mentioned what she was doing. At this point Jane reports that John said he was going skiing with his lover. She felt that he moved away, just as she was moving toward him (the pursuer-distancer dance). To her, she did what he wanted, and he pulled back. His perception was that he moved away when she wouldn't share time with him. She felt as if she were "slapped in the face" and was left feeling that he "could never do enough . . . it's never enough . . . it's never fucking enough." John said that he had appreciated the meal, but felt manipulated by Jane, as if she were saying, "You owe me . . . I can't be here emotionally . . . but wait. . . and be available when I'm ready." Jane and John were stuck—she was feeling hurt, angry, and inadequate ("not giving enough"); he was feeling manipulated . . . waiting for her to get around to him. But John also adds, regarding Jane's feeling, that he induces that feeling of "it's never enough."

John: That's what Amy [his first wife] used to say about me.

I point out that both play a role in the trap. John feels that nothing is enough, yet he feels manipulated by Jane. Jane buys into that feeling and that expectation of John's, feeling inadequate, hurt, angry, and resentful . . . but that is her issue . . . she doesn't have to feel bad . . . the question remains how

to identify and get out of these emotional traps. . . .

T: John, you often feel that Jane doesn't give enough . . . in this situation, you felt on call, as if you were being manipulated. . . . Jane, you felt as if he wants too much from you, but no matter what you give, it's never enough. How can we work with these feelings . . . not giving or getting enough, and feeling manipulated . . . how can we get past these feelings? . . .

Jane: Could you go over that some more?

T: I think you need to separate the issues. John's behavior indicating to you that what you do is not enough is his issue. Your issue of "I can never do enough," that belongs to you. If you could get clear on what's enough for you, that you're doing things for you for clear reasons, John may or may not accept that. If John doesn't feel that it's enough, that's regrettable, it may be negotiable . . . but you could still feel okay about yourself and you wouldn't have to be angry . . . a little disappointed, maybe, but you wouldn't have to be angry about it . . . your intense anger may come from another place. . . .

Jane: I don't understand when you ask, "How can you work on those pieces?" I can answer that: "How can I work with him myself?" I don't understand how to work with John. . . .

John: You don't have to solve my problem. My feeling manipulated is for me to work on. . . .

T: . . . although there might be certain things that you can request of Jane, the basic work on feeling manipulated is yours, John.

Jane: Right. Okay. I can say to you, I know what to do within myself, to get past that. . . .

T: To get past the. . . .

Jane: It's never enough . . . but I don't know if that's enough to straighten out what's going on between him and myself. When I say I know how to work on that,

what I'm saying is that I know I do enough, I've known all along I do enough, your saying I get angry. I think I'm frustrated because I'm trying to prove to myself and the evidence is there.

T: I'm trying to prove to myself what?

Jane: I'm trying to prove to myself that I do do enough and so extend myself some more and then...

T: And then you feel hurt and rejected and put down when John doesn't appreciate all that you have done, and it hurts you and then you get angry. It's that issue. Not laying that expectation on John that he has to appreciate...

Jane: I didn't lay it on him, I didn't lay ... he's just hearing it now...

T: But, you ... you got angry...

Jane: Sure.

T: Okay, so that's what I mean...

Jane: Okay. Yeah.

T: "He should" have appreciated all that I have done...

John: More than that... I should have behaved in a certain way...

T: In response to that...

John: In response to it... I should have been content to stay home and wait for Jane to make her time available to me.

T: Okay. That's what you hoped for, expected, and wanted. That would have been an indication to you that...

Jane: What I want... wanted and still want... is something that I don't feel I'm

getting in the relationship. John's going skiing is sort of neither here nor there. I mean I keep. . .

T: What could he have done that would have made you feel that you got what you wanted from John?

Jane: In truth, right now . . . nothing. Nothing. I'm not willing to. . .

T: No, at that moment. . .

Jane: At that moment?

T: What could he have done? Which would have symbolized to you what you say you need from him?

Jane: At that moment he could have said, "Okay, I'll spend . . . you know . . . just hang out here and work" . . . you know, he says about all the work he never gets to. And we'll be in the house together.

T: That's what you would have wanted from him. . .

Jane: Right . . . that's what I wanted. . .

T: . . . and that would have meant to you that gee, John. . .

Jane: That would have really said, gee, he was really happy to be home and so he would have been happily home but didn't necessarily need me to entertain him or be his companion because I had something else to do.

T: Could we . . . 'cause I promised myself that I'm gonna be on time because what happens by the fourth hour is it's 11:30 and . . . but I would like to pursue this if. . . okay, the task is to go inside yourself and to ask yourself, "What would I need from my partner, not to feel badly like I sometimes do with him or her, okay, and how can I work on myself, while at the same time making my messages clear to my partner that I would prefer rather than demand it, from one another. So that we can help each other with that."

Jane: I'm leaving here feeling great now. [sarcastically said]

T: Good. . . . No, I know it doesn't feel good to you, Jane, but . . . we'll continue next time.

Session 17. We pick up where we left off in the previous session.

Jane: And you said, you know, what you were saying, does that, is that tied into your past? And when I got home and I realized I was angry at you, because that was too easy a reason. I thought, you know . . . come on guys . . . that's just too easy . . . I mean it's a part of it, sure . . . but it's so much a part of my makeup we can't really use it. What I thought you were saying to me was that this is tied to your feeling sorry, being a cripple, that whole routine of I can't do what he can and. . . .

T: "You can't do enough. . . .

Jane: No it's different from I can't do enough. It's what I thought I heard from you was the question of whether I can't do what he can? In other words. . . .

John: You can't do what other people can. . . .

Jane: Right. . . right. . . .

John: Because I'm handicapped. . . .

Jane: Because I'm handicapped. Like something I slip into or it's a way of perceiving what was going on with John and saying to myself I can't do it too. Now, you may not have been saying that to me, but that's what I read, and part of why I got pissed.

John: No. He doesn't say anything until he tries to get you to say the right thing.

[Rescue attempt.]

T: I don't know what the right things are.

What are you talking about?... .

Jane: So anyway....

T: Because the theme. . . . Because the theme was that you guys seemed to be struggling with . . . as I listened to you . . . was John's sense of being manipulated, that was his issue . . . and your issue was the not doing enough thing . . . it seemed to me, well, we can listen to it [the tape] again, maybe you can even take the tape home with you

Jane: Yeah, I'd like to take the tape home and listen to it.

T: Now what I thought was that you had an overreaction, or what I assume to be an overreaction, to your feeling that you "can never do enough to please him."

Jane: Yeah, well that's also part of it.

T: And that's why I was asking whether or not your overreacting was due. . . . Jane: . . . tied. . . .

T: . . . to some old business of never being able to please someone . . . to do enough to please someone.

Jane: Okay. Well then, I misread or misheard, but I thought I was hearing you say that I can't do what John can, and okay, so we got some crossed signals. . . . And the other part of it was that I was angry because . . . and this I didn't realize until later on . . . I just felt, he feels manipulated! Jesus Christ. . . .

T: He feels manipulated. What should I say?...

Jane: Yeah, I feel manipulated too. I'm the one who *is* manipulated.

[At this point I bring them back to the task we left off with at the end of last session. John recalls part of it; Jane was so angry that she forgets the assignment.]

T: Yeah. There are two parts. What can you do, John, because the feelings of

manipulation were real, and it was your issue? If you feel manipulated, that's your issue. Okay. Then what can you do for yourself that you can alleviate feeling manipulated—and then, maybe, something you can request of Jane to help you in that process even though it's your issue? . . . Jane, your issue was the not doing enough . . . that feeling seems to me . . . we seemed to say that John may say "you're not doing enough," but you don't have to buy into that. Your buying into it, is your issue. And. . .

Jane: I don't buy it. . .

T: You don't buy into it. . . Then what is it that you do. . .

John: What's the issue. . .

T: So what is it that you can do to keep you from feeling like there's more that you can do, okay, and what is it that John can do that will give you what you want? . . . which is always the issue because you're always wondering or saying that John isn't giving you what you say you need. Your question always is, "What can he do?" So last time you went through a thing in your head and the outward work, okay, to provide something that you felt was for John and the hope that he would give you back what you needed; John misread it and, from your point of view, things didn't work as well as you would like. The question is, what is it that John can do to feel connected with you emotionally, which is what you want from him, without your feeling, "I could never do enough"? And that's the question that I was wondering about.

John: Okay, well, basically the way to not feel manipulated is to make up your mind on what you want to do and then do it. Regardless of what the other person does. This is one approach. It is in essence you give yourself more independence and you don't let the other person define what allowable behavior for you is, I mean you decide it, you take charge of it and you decide what allowable behavior is, and you do it. That's one. That's what I can do for myself. I've done that. Jane may not like it, but I do it. Jane . . . what Jane can do to keep me from feeling manipulated is basically not make what she does conditional on what I do. Or not make her behavior conditional on what

I do. For example, she cleans the house, but expects me to stay home because she cleans the house, that's making the work that she does conditional on what I'm going to do so I feel manipulated. What I'd like is . . . you know I clean the house and cook meals because I love you and because I want our relationship to work and because I like a clean house and I like a good meal with you. That's fine, that's not making it conditional on my behavior. Now she says, now I've done this so you've got to stay home and not see Mary, that's making it conditional.

Jane: I, uh . . . I want to defend myself about that Saturday. In fact there are a couple of things I want to say, I mean that episode of my doing something for John. I realize the anger stems from what we talked about, partly came out of that episode. I don't feel that I manipulated you at all because what I did I didn't even do this consciously, but I realized it afterward; maybe if I had told you before I did anything, in other words, if I had said to you, I'm gonna be nice to you for the next 24 hours and you can't go out with Mary. But I didn't do that. After 24 hours I said, "Okay, this is what I've been doing." I don't think I was manipulating you, I think I was just disappointed.

[Jane describes how she feels set up by John.]

Jane: I'm not your mommy. You know I feel like a mommy to you. "Can I go out and play?" Remember, I even said that to you, when you were sitting there and you were pissed at me because I said, please don't, and you needed to ask me . . . to say no. Okay, okay. But you put me in the position of "can I" and I said no. The thing is I know when you are lying, I can see right through it. Most of the time I know. But I don't want to be in that position. I don't want to be asked. I don't want to know. . . .

T: You don't. . . if he asks. . . .

Jane: And I say no . . . and he gets pissed . . . and then he goes anyway. . . .

T: Then you're the bad guy. . . .

Jane: So I wind up being mad and he goes anyhow. . . .

T: You're the bad guy and he is like a . . . deprived child and he gets mad at you and does it anyway, and then you really get mad because you were set up to be asked and then it doesn't hold anyway.

Jane: Right . . . right. . . .

John: That makes sense . . . in fact, it sounds like it's consistent with the first thing I said. The way I feel not manipulated is taking charge of what I do and not asking permission.

Jane: I said to you tonight, and I feel and have felt since the impact of Mary in our lives, the one thing that I feel better about is that there's a lot more looseness in our relationship. I don't feel obligated to get home and cook supper or be there at a certain time, or go away. You're doing and I'm doing what we want, and that's one of the things that's okay about this. Some of the pressure is off of me.

T: Pressure for what?

Jane: To be there.

John: Perform as a wife.

Jane: To perform as a wife, yeah. . . .

John: You don't like the concept of being a wife anyway. . . .

Jane: I never have. . . .

T: Well, it has a certain connotation. I mean, if you have a connotation, it depends on what wife means, to perform as a wife. It has a certain image . . . every wife or husband has a certain image of what those words mean. So you have

a certain image of wife . . . when you hear it, you don't like it as applied to your own ideal self, but that's not what wife necessarily means . . . one of the things we're struggling with is how can we define husband and wife in more creative terms, so that you can be a "husband and wife" without the negative aspects of husband and wife that you both carry around. See, that's a piece of being manipulated. If we identify with the role, we manipulate ourselves . . . we just got trapped by our concepts . . . learned ideas about who we think we are. . . .

As we discuss issues of manipulation, we move into the areas of power and control. We discuss negotiation versus manipulation, and how these get worked through in their relationship . . . how they work out times being with and away from each other. Jane is sensitive to John asking for what he wants, and then still doing what he wants, despite what she feels.

John: Well, in our institution of marriage, we are institutionalizing the process whereby we both have a lot of freedom. I mean I have some freedom to go with Mary or some other playmate, and you have the freedom to go and do whatever you want to do during that time period. . . .

Jane: Or when I choose, pal. . . .

John: Or when you choose, right, and then when you choose.

Jane: It's not gonna be set up at convenient times for you.

John: Well, if we were going on vacation together, it might be, we might want to coordinate our schedules. . . .

Jane: We might want to. . . .

John: Well, we wouldn't want to deliberately antagonize each other. . . .

Jane: We might want to do that too. . . . John: I figured we might want to. . . .

T: Deliberately, deliberately as a payback or deliberately for one's own benefit.

John: Deliberately, for payback or a little bit more. . . .

Jane: I'm not sure of that John.

T: Well that's the question, you know . . . do you want to have that freedom of time, which feels good to you and that makes me feel good with John? Do you want that because it feels good to you or because you think, "fuck you, John"?

Jane: Well, both probably. The time thing really does feel good to me. But I am afraid, and with respect to what I was talking about last week, if I were to start a relationship with someone, John would be in there manipulating and bitching and carrying on, claiming I don't have enough time for him, and you'd be going to go away for a weekend and leave me home. I play out all these scenarios.

T: Well, that's in a sense what you're saying too . . . you're worried John's gonna say some of the things you are saying . . . because you have said what concerns you about John's relationship with this other person, it's not necessarily the threat that she poses, or the time that they do certain things you *don't* want to do, but that you want certain things from him. And when you're not getting those things, it starts to upset you because you feel deprived. And when John wasn't feeling he's getting what he needed from you, he might feel deprived and then hurt and angry. The question is, when you start to feel that way . . . like you're not getting what you want, you're not getting the closeness that you want. . . how do you let each other know that, in a way that is not restrictive, constricting, and not manipulative? How do you ask for those needs to be considered in a way that still gives each other the space that you both claim you want?

Jane: I don't know. I know that I don't know.

John: . . . ask each other for time . . . ask her to do things. We can go to a matinee one Saturday or Sunday.

T: Would you say that you are better, do you think you're better at asking for what you want than you think Jane is? You think she can ask like you can?

John: I wouldn't say either one of us was really that good at asking for what we want emotionally. I ask for more specific things, like I want to go to a movie, do you want to do this, want to do that, but Jane's pretty good at that when she's not busy. Lately she's been so busy that I felt like she couldn't make any commitments at all.

T: But when you ask for specific things, are you asking for specific things or are you asking for those specific things which represent something emotional that you want from Jane?

John: Well, I don't say specifically, hey, I'm lonely . . . well, sometimes I say, hey I miss you, I miss us, it's not often. . . .

Jane: That's rare. . . .

John: That's rare . . . usually I'll say something like want to go to a movie. . . .

T: If you do . . . if you are feeling like you're missing the contact . . . and if you are feeling that, what would get in the way of your saying that?

John: I think we do say it, I think we're both missing contact . . . we haven't had it for a long time.

Jane: I think Mary right now is the biggest reason, it's more a feeling of, hey, I'm not going to show him I'm vulnerable if he's doing this to me. I think the truth is that I don't really want to get a boyfriend, but out of pride, at this point, I'll show you my power. But I don't believe in power games in relationships. But there's just enough anger floating around in me and stuff for me to say, "All right, okay, I'll show you. . . ."

John: What's good for the. . . .

Jane: What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

T: I think you've been saying that from the very beginning, Jane, and that's not your preference. Your preference is for something else.

Jane: Something else. . . .

T: Something one to one. I want a one-to-one relationship with John, I want that to be our primary relationship, but I also want my time alone. That would be your ideal somehow. Negotiating your own space in the context of a one-to-one relationship with John.

John: Well, why don't we talk about getting rid of Mary. I've proposed that, I've talked it over with Mary.

T: You have?

John: Mhmmm . . . I told Jane we talked it over . . . I told Mary that I thought the marriage was bad . . . things were getting so bad that either give her up, give up the relationship with Mary or give up the marriage. And she agreed. I also said I didn't want to do it until after the Killington trip. . . .

Jane: So, I said fuck that. . . .

John: I can understand. . . .

Jane: My response was not all that John wanted it to be.

John: How about shit! Little bowel movements there. . . .

T: . . . cocky-duty. . . .

Jane: Cat cocky.

T: Well, what about that idea . . . I mean. . . .

John: I'm trying to give her what she wants. . . .

Jane: Well, I got a lot to say about that too. . . .

T: Okay, let me hear. . . .

Jane: First of all, I don't buy it. I don't believe it.

T: Oh. . . .

Jane: I don't believe it.

T: What don't you believe?

Jane: Oh, I believe that John will sincerely try for a while, and the first time I say I don't want to have sex with him he'll say, "For this I gave up Mary. . . . For this! Who needs this?" . . . and then he'll go and find somebody else, it'll be Mary and I won't know or it'll be somebody else and I won't know, so what I'm saying is I think that John would lie to me and just keep it under a hat, fooling around down the road.

T: Is that your perception of John, or of any relationship. . . .

Jane: Both. . . .

T: That if a person doesn't give the other what he wants, the other person, the other person is going to hurt her?

Jane: No. I don't think it has to be that way. I believe that there are some people who don't do that, but I really am convinced, and this . . . to come back to this last week again, I felt when I left last week that you didn't get it. That John didn't want closeness even though he did say that when we were together last week, and John and I got it, like "come on George" . . .

T: Well . . . say that to me again. . . .

Jane: Okay, what I'm saying to you is that. . . .

T: I may get it or maybe I'm operating in a completely different world from reality ..
.. but the reality for you is ... go ahead. ...

Jane: What I felt was and feel is that really John is much more contented with the situation as it is set up now with Mary and me, and a lot of distance between both of us and doesn't really want that closeness that I want. And to push him into something that is monogamous . . . I don't think he's all that enthusiastic about it. I think he's doing it to save the marriage maybe, or talking about it to save the marriage, or to give me the feeling that I'm safely in a monogamous relationship. But my sense is that that's not really what he wants.

T: Let me raise another question to you. That may be valid, maybe you and John can even agree that that's valid. I'm not saying you *are* agreeing with that, but I'm trying to say that. . . what if I raise the opposite? That in fact John does want that and you don't. . . even though you pretend that you do . . . there's also anxiety attached to that, and in fact, probably there is . . . I can ask that question . . . I can ask, then, just to turn things around, okay, I'd rather make a statement because my question is not answerable right now. The question is only answerable when one gives a lot of time to it to sort through, and I, my suggestion is, that there are parts of all of us that want both, that want and don't want.

Jane: Yep. I agree. I know it.

T: You know. And we all struggle with that. I think every relationship that I've seen, including my own, and that everyone else struggles with, do I want that committed relationship, one to one, total vulnerability. Sometimes you want it, it seems to me, and sometimes you don't want it.

Jane: Well, I agree with you about that, and when I say that John doesn't want closeness, when I think of that, I think that on a certain level he doesn't want closeness. Down deep, he might.

T: And down beneath that he. . .

Jane: Might not. . .

T: There's another part. . . I don't know if it's down beneath, or side by side, or aspects of, or parts of, or fantasies about, you know that raise anxiety . . . but maybe, a generalized question around that issue is "What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are the pros and cons? What are the dreams and fears that get connected to a one-to-one relationship?"

Jane: It's a big thing. . . .

T: It's a biggy because we generally don't think about it; when we have it, we sometimes don't want it; when we don't have it, then we want it. . . let me give you an example.

[I share a case of a client who is struggling with similar issues.]

John: Did he marry this other lady?

T: Well, he's living with her now and . . . packed up his suitcase and walked out and.
...

John: Sounds familiar. . . .

T: And living with this person, and even though he has a marvelous relationship, he doesn't know whether or not, what's gonna happen, because there were some certain aspects of his other relationship, that despite his uncomfortability was not totally uncomfortable for him. For a long time it was comfortably uncomfortable . . . now it's the reverse. . . .

Jane: Some stuff he was getting.

T: Some stuff he was getting, which we talked about, and then there was stuff that he wasn't getting, and now, here is this marvelous relationship with a lot of interaction, a lot of give and take, a lot of sex . . . but he doesn't have some other things that he had with his wife . . . so be careful of what you want, you just might get it. . . . So, these forces operate . . . something to think about. . . .

John: It sounds like a full-time fucking profession, George . . . [very loud laughter]

We continue to discuss the polarities of experience . . . what we want and what we fear, the roles of victim and persecutor in relationships and in ourselves . . . issues of the fair exchange in marriages . . . what we feel we give and what we get. . . . Jane discusses her feeling of holding back from John because of her mistrust of him and her vulnerability. I ask if she ever surrendered emotionally to anyone. She describes several people in her life whom she felt totally safe with, including an incident with John on a boat when he saved her life. At that moment in time, she completely let go and placed herself in John's hands. He rescued her.

T: I'm struggling with this question of surrender and commitment and the pros and cons of that kind of relationship. I wonder if you can think about it, either metaphorically, I don't care how . . . with people or nonpeople. Some people deal better with images of animals. . . . If you could depict this experience of both pros and cons of this relationship with animals, or other objects, or nonhumans based on past experience, or what you imagine could be the pros and cons of having this kind of relationship . . . a committed, surrendered relationship . . . use your creative imagery that would help you get in touch with that part of you that wants it, and that part of you that doesn't . . . that maybe is afraid of it. . . the goal would be to overcome the fears associated with this kind of relationship.

[Both John and Jane claim they understand what I'm asking them to do, as the session ends.]

EPILOGUE

Several weeks after the last session, Jane moved out of the bedroom, stating that she was angry, needed space, and didn't want to be involved with John sexually. She also terminated therapy. She did both without any discussion. I, of course, discussed this with John when he showed up without her, going over his thoughts, feelings, what he wanted to do now for himself, what he felt it meant regarding the relationships, did he want to continue in therapy, or wait until Jane came to some decision.

He wanted to continue therapy. Since this would require a switch in the therapeutic contract from the relationship being the client to John, I called Jane to check things out with her, what she wanted, expected, what she was feeling, etc. Jane said she wanted time and space to think about what she really wanted. She also requested the tapes since we were recording the sessions, claiming she wanted to go over them to see what had happened and to help her understand the issues more. She picked them up a few days later, and did not want to discuss the situation further. (She ultimately failed to return the tapes to me.) When I confronted her directly about the nature of the therapy, she denied being upset or angry. However, things did not "smell" right, and I felt there were certainly unresolved issues between us.

John, as he stated, continued to see me. He reported that although they

were living under the same roof, it was feeling more and more that they were going their separate ways. Occasionally, they would get together to talk about their relationship, for dinner, and for lovemaking. John stated that at times Jane would initiate sex by coming to his room during the night. He accepted the offer, but it made little sense, and he didn't feel it meant any change in their relationship.

This arrangement went on for a couple of months. Then, over a long weekend, Jane moved out, again without notice. She left no forwarding address or telephone number, although John could certainly contact her since he knew where she worked. She informed him that she was filing for divorce. They had been moving in this direction, so that neither of us was shocked, but we were surprised that she had said nothing of her intentions. Further reflection made it less surprising. This was her style, and she was, in all likelihood, scared of John's response if he knew what she was planning. I called her at her office, with John's permission, and arranged for a follow-up session by phone a few days later. I was up in the air and wanted some understanding of her thinking and what she was going through emotionally. Jane told me she was surprised that I had called, that I was interested (which surprised me), and wondered if I were going to charge her for the session (which I wasn't since I initiated the call). She stayed on the phone for a long time, sharing a great deal of information and feelings with me. Basically, she reiterated that she wanted a monogamous relationship and couldn't deal with

John's having a lover. I wondered why she had chosen this time to end the marriage, when John was starting to entertain the idea of a commitment, and she said that she could not trust him. He had never been faithful, and she didn't feel he could carry out the commitment, and it was too painful to try.

Did she have any feelings about our work that she wanted to share, I asked. All she could say was that it helped her clarify her real feelings. Why hadn't she shared her movement toward her final decision? She was fearful of John's reaction and needed protection. Therefore, she told no one except for a few friends who helped her move when John was away on a trip. She said that she would get back to me so that she could go over the process again when her life became more settled. There was no mention of the tapes. I doubt that I will see either Jane or the tapes, and am left with the uneasy feeling that there is a good deal of unfinished business between Jane and myself. Did I miss some vital aspects of the relationship based on countertransference issues? Was Jane acting out with me some unresolved transference issues? Was it as she claimed? I have presented the material to colleagues; they have as many opinions as there are people, and their reactions are as much a projection of their own ideas and feelings as what the "data" indicate ("wherever we look we find what we're looking for").

Meanwhile, John continues to come to therapy for the purpose of developing a "deeper" understanding of his feelings and behavioral patterns.

In addition to discussing how the divorce is going, he is getting in touch with all of the losses he has experienced in his life. Since Jane has moved out, John has lost a close aunt, a father surrogate has died, and the meaning of friends and relationships has emerged as a therapeutic issue. The scripty quality to John's womanizing has also taken form. "Mom used to say that I wouldn't be ready to settle down till I was through 24 women. . . . Well, George, I've counted them all . . . and it's been 24 counting Jane . . . maybe I'm ready." Then, a few minutes later, he would counter, "It's 24 depending on when I start counting . . . maybe I still have a few to go." Thus, John's mother may have given him the injunction prohibiting a commitment until he experienced two dozen close relationships that didn't work out, and his father may have taught him how to do this through his own behavior, and his message that "we Joneses have always chased the mossy bush."

Nevertheless, John has been experiencing his loneliness and isolation more and more. This despite his continuing to be involved with his previous lover, who is older than he is, and his beginning a new sexual relationship with a woman much younger than he. Both are married, and I've wondered whether John is setting himself up to get hurt physically. We continue to explore his feelings about himself, his divorce, his sexuality, his conflictual feelings regarding a commitment to one person, his fears (loneliness, financial problems, aging body—"will I wind up like my father," who has had a long-term relationship with a woman, being married for the past 20 or so years).

I've encouraged him to reconnect with his two children, women in their twenties whom he loves but who have not been the subject of much conversation in our sessions till now. I also want to pursue the meaning of sexuality in his life.

Unresolved issues with his father still crop up. In one session, as he was angrily disparaging his father for what he did to the family, John suddenly broke down and sobbed . . . and through his tears, he said, "That son of a bitch . . . no matter how I hate him . . . I still always wanted to be close to him." This surge of emotion surprised him, as have other "softer" feelings of sadness, tenderness, and guilt. John recently wrote a poem to Jane describing his feelings. Poetry has always been a way for him to express parts of himself he could not express directly. It seems appropriate to end this chapter with his thoughts as he moves through the divorce process:

these are harsh times
when it seems that the only thoughtful words
that flow between us
are lawyers' letters with copies to . . .

yet for all the fear
and bitterness and losses that we are counting
I still yearn
to see you, hear you, and sense your presence

there are softer words
that should be spoken if only I could dismiss
some vanity and pride

and take off this facade of strength

words like

I feared your loss so much
that I could never admit your importance to me
and so made the loss I feared happen

other words like. . .

I tried to hold on to the free spirit
that I loved
and the holding turned freedom into escape

it is somehow easier
with time and distance between us
to admit those vulnerabilities that I could not speak of
when we were close enough to touch

I who tried to appear knowing
did not know how to learn from you
nor could I patiently teach you the little I knew
without vain pride rearing his ugly head

I who wanted to be thought of as competent
had so little control of the child-driven tapes inside me
that I helped to destroy
the relationship that could nurture that child

I who wanted to enjoy the rest of my life
with someone I wanted to die with
inflicted more pain on both of us
and left more scars that take precious time to heal

for this and more
I am truly sorry
yet with all this to grieve for I can still say
I am glad to have known you.

My question still remains: "Do you really mean it, John?"

John's Notes on the Therapy Process

Therapy started pre-George, with several sessions with Paula. She wanted Jane and me to negotiate an agreement. We did . . . an open marriage for me and total freedom for Jane (if she had the courage to take it). Paula didn't think the agreement would work. She was right. She died three or four months after we switched to George, in a car accident, at the age of 35. So much for the spiritual influence of therapists . . . poor Paula, I don't think she wanted to die.

We interviewed two therapists, including George, and picked him. He seemed smart, had a sense of humor, didn't view his profession as a sacred cow, and appeared goal oriented. I thought he would force us to think, read, do homework, set goals, check our progress, give us insights, be proactive, and do it in a way that had some fun in it so the work wouldn't seem too hard.

I feel I've flunked therapy again. . . . My goals were: (1) learn to control my anger so I did not scare Jane with it, and (2) work on the relationship with Jane [implied was the desire to improve a faltering marriage], to determine what kind of relationship we could have in the future. Creativity was encouraged. Possibly we succeeded. After about 6 months of therapy, I suggested a divorce to Jane, after a very angry argument. A little while later, Jane moved out of the bedroom and then quit therapy and moved out of the house. She took the therapy tapes with her. We both got lawyers. We are now fighting it out. She's not at the house, so I have no one to be angry with. I don't miss the anger, and only occasionally miss Jane. In a perverse way we accomplished the therapy goals.

Still, I feel like I've flunked therapy because:

I have few if any new insights into my behavior.

I haven't motivated myself to change much of anything (except a tendency to fall in love and get overcommitted too soon; and this seems to be a result of a painful divorce, not what we discussed in therapy).

I'm not sure I've really learned to control the anger . . . it's just that the frustration went away.

I haven't taken any action yet to do the things George thinks I should do. He's not this directed, but I think I can detect his bias, e.g.,

get more spiritual

get more involved in AA

quit using two relationships at a time

to avoid intimacy

give up the relationship with married women

learn to love myself.

I still haven't written much about the process, only my perception of the results and a scorecard for my performance.

Therapy seems like a catch-22 system to me. If you are really committed to change yourself, you will; but if you don't change enough, then you were not really committed enough. The therapist must strike a balance between

progress and client satisfaction. If he pushes too hard, he'll end with very few clients because most of us don't want to change anyway. It is easier not to push at all, or very little; in that way you collude with the client to let them think they are really doing something about their problems . . . they are partially satisfied, and you have more clients. The process seems very open, undirected and non-quantitative to me. It's hard for this ex-engineer to believe that it ever leads to much.

We talk about the work of therapy, and we make an issue over it. I guess I haven't "worked" enough because I have no sense of accomplishment.

George has cast doubt on my sincerity with his "Do you really mean it?" comment after my poem to Jane. I, too, doubt my sincerity toward her. At times I would like to see her dead . . . at other times I miss her presence, of a person, but I'm not at all sure the person is her (sometimes, almost anyone will do), and sometimes, I long for a chance to start again with Jane and am truly sorry for the loss of our relationship. If sincerity must equal consistency, then I am guilty of insincerity, but when I wrote the poem, the feelings evolved as it was written.

It's hard to talk about the therapy process because it doesn't seem to have much structure . . . doesn't seem to be much more than George and I getting together and talking about intimate things, like I do with some friends.

Over the years, I have learned that I have little to hide, and a lot to gain, by being "open" and loving. I may have learned a lot of this through the following "therapy" situations: two sensitivity training labs; three therapists in the past; several one-to-three-day workshops in the AA program, a very close Unitarian minister friend, women who have loved me and taught me that the sensitive side of me is what they really value. . . .

Oh, George . . . it is hard to write about the therapy process with you when I view most of life as therapy. I can't hide from the pain of life, and I seek the grief that helps heal the pain, and I seek the friends who will listen, and I seek the love that will soothe. . . . Possibly there is a better way but I don't know how to see it yet. . . .

Jane's Notes on the Therapy Process

In early December, Jane agreed to join John and me for a session, during which we discussed what had transpired during the previous months prior to the divorce, which had just been granted. John admitted to doing some things during the divorce process which infuriated Jane. She called me to express her feelings. She also agreed to write her thoughts about the therapeutic process. These follow:

December 29, 1985

Dear George:

Here are my thoughts on the therapy process, which I promised you a zillion months ago. This year has left me depleted—hence the holdup.

I enjoy therapy. I see it as the process of learning about my internal world, which has always been more real to me than the outer one. So I start from a positive position. For me, therapy is an internal restructuring of the ways in which I understand.

When I began the counseling sessions with you I was looking for help with my relationship with John, and privately I was struggling over the labels Susan (my therapist) had assigned to John ("somewhat psychopathic, a person with an impulse disorder"). Her ability to predict what John would do after we married was uncanny because it turned out that she was correct most of the time. (She warned that he would stop treating me fairly once we were married, that he would turn me into a mother figure, etc.) I had resisted what she said, choosing to marry John, only to find it happening right in front of me. Susan was the one who encouraged me to seek marriage counseling (but later she felt that you did not see the full picture about John). You were suggesting that there was indeed hope if we could be more honest with each other. While I agreed with the idea, I

wasn't (and still am not) sure what is possible for me with John.

I wanted the sessions with you to somehow disprove or change what I was indeed living with. But I felt as though I had two therapy philosophies warring with each other and I was caught in the middle.

In the end I turned to Susan, because I did not feel, in this area of my life, that I could see clearly enough on my own. I allowed myself to believe what she was saying, that John is a deeply troubled person and that there was no hope for the marriage straightening out. Also I was at the point of a breakdown. (I do not use the word lightly.) I was in trouble and the only thing I could think of was to get away and stop the pain.

It has been a lifetime habit of mine to not speak up for my needs and then flee when I'm unhappy. I'm aware of this, but I lost my ability to believe that the marriage could change swiftly enough for the pain to stop. I know it's a problem that I create, but I just felt too uncertain and desperate about this situation to be patient.

All of this, George, is really background for who I was when I walked through the door over a year ago. What we did in those sessions was good, but it seemed to skim over the surface of the situation. I was in extraordinary pain, but did not feel safe enough to get out what was truly happening in the depths of me. I was too scared of what John was pulling when we were not in the safety of those sessions. I was complaining about John and Mary, but uncertain in my soul who this character was that I had tied myself up with, and deep down inside I felt so utterly rejected. It was, in short, too late for me and I used the sessions as a staying mechanism till I could flee.

As much as I would like to, there is no point in saying, "if only." There is only now.

I have seen John a couple of times since the last blowup. As you predicted, I have softened. I'm afraid I always do, and I am not sure it is a good quality. It seems to lead me into trouble and does not often generate a like response from the outside world. Perhaps I ask kindness from unkind

people. I don't know.

I do see that John has remained in therapy with you far longer than with anyone else. And he does seem better, less driven to manipulate the moments we are together. But then I don't know if those moments are real or the enactments of someone who is psychopathic in nature.

The way he is treating me now, the responses he is giving me are what I want to hear. They are good, really good, maybe too good and that's how I was drawn in before. I care about

John and I care about what happens to him and I am pleased that he has remained with you. I see that as the best proof of the process at work.

I felt the sessions with you had such wonderful moments, and I felt then, "If only I was married to someone who wasn't quite so warped, this would really help." I think you are good at what you do. You bring an element of gentleness to the therapy that is comforting and reassuring. It gave me hope, even though that hope was confusing and frustrating. I would not have bothered to write to you, except that I really believe in that gentleness and patience you hold out. It broke through my shield of being so defended and forced me to take a look at my "flight mechanism." I struggled over the question, "Is this one more excuse? Am I afraid of intimacy or is this more than I can handle?" In the end I was blinded by too much pain and opted to get away from that.

Now, after six months of living alone, the worst of the pain has receded. What's left is manageable. I can see John and not flip out over slights, and I have learned to set limits on what I will tolerate. I will call the police or whatever, if he goes too far. I would like to see something good happen between John and myself, and I am willing to try again and to try to not flee.

However, this is also an old game of mine, usually based on the fear of taking on the other parts of my life. So while I say I would like to work on my relationship with John, I am being cautious with myself to find out what that truly means (also to consider what, if anything, John wants and

is capable of). At the same time, I am trying to face those other parts of me that I have avoided for so long.

Writing this letter to you has been good for me. I've enjoyed it. It's really the first time I've sat down to write in months. I thank you for that also, since I know this effort at writing leads back to the other writing. I hope it will offer you some insights. It's raised a lot of thoughts for me and I would enjoy hearing your reactions.

Thanks for your help. I hope to see you again.

A healthy and prosperous new year to you and your family!

Sincerely,
Jane

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Commentary: Marital and Treatment Triangles

John F. Clarkin

We are treated here to an experienced therapist dealing with two very difficult and frequent themes of troubled intimate relationships: aggression and triangulation involving sexual infidelity. The therapist's theoretical eclecticism involves transactional analysis, cognitive/behavioral, and systems approaches to such situations. But, of course, his clinical acumen goes beyond that, in the way he structures a supportive atmosphere and helps the couple frame their difficulties. This is not an easy case. I hope my comments, which will focus mainly on areas of uncertainty in order to further an eclectic orientation, will not detract from the overall expertise of the therapist's approach.

ASSESSMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

It is not clear what information in the assessment process led to the specific combination of intervention format and techniques described by Steinfeld. Is Steinfeld a cognitive systems behaviorist who applies this

approach to all cases of marital interaction involving violence, or only under specific situations which were not totally detailed? When would he not use this approach? To advance eclecticism as an articulated approach, such is needed.

We do not get much of the history of the relationship, though time is spent in obtaining histories of each individual. This apparently helps Steinfeld in understanding earlier "scripts" as they influence current interaction. We are not given the diagnoses of the two individuals, nor are we given enough clinical data to make our own. This lapse is probably related to a typical bias of systems therapists, who eschew individual diagnoses. The individual diagnosis on the male client may have been important for treatment planning, as he has a past history of alcoholism and one would wonder what associated personality traits.

FORMAT

The author has an interesting set format for intervention with couples who exhibit potential or actual violence. Session 1 is a joint one, followed by sessions 2 and 3 which are held individually with each spouse. Session 4 is a conjoint session used to summarize problems and goals and form a treatment contract. Subsequent sessions are conjoint ones. The conjoint treatment ended abruptly upon Jane's initiation, and subsequently the therapist saw

John alone.

A key issue in recommending the particular format (who comes to the sessions) of treatment, in this case individual therapy for either or both or couples therapy format, is to assess whether or not the problem behaviors are under the control of the relationship interaction. In his assessment of the violent behavior on the part of the male client, by session 2 the therapist had determined that this behavior was reactive, stemming from John's anxiety, rather than instrumental in dominating or controlling Jane. Of course, one could ask what Jane does that precedes John's anxiety. At any rate, a functional analysis of the key behaviors must be done to determine whether interactional patterns are controlling or largely contributory to the occurrence of the behavior. In most situations, when a chief complaint concerns the relationship pattern, conjoint treatment format is indicated.

THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

The therapeutic alliance is central to all therapies, and we can ask: (1) what was the nature and tenor of the alliance established here; (2) what was the contribution of each of the three participants; (3) how did the alliance contribute to the outcome? The therapist reports that he liked both clients, but does not say what he found likable. The therapist discussed more specifics with John in the early evaluation sessions, showing possibly a

greater like and interest in John. One would expect that the triangles formed by John, his lover, and Jane, and Jane, her former lover, and John, might be replayed in the therapy. In the therapeutic triangle formed by Steinfeld, John, and Jane, it appears that the first two were seen as a collusive pair by Jane, who bolted without explanation from both the therapy and the relationship with John.

The therapist suggests that there might have been some unresolved alliance issues between himself and Jane. I agree, and one can only wonder as to what strategies and techniques, especially in the early sessions, could have been used to foster a better alliance with her. Did the male therapist need a female co-therapist? Would a husband-and-wife therapy team model some interpersonal commitment for John and Jane?

The therapist says that he values and tries to establish an "egalitarian" relationship with his clients. Does this mean equal rights but different roles for therapist and client? The therapist seems to take the role of a caring teacher, who by definition knows more than his clients at least about interpersonal behavior and its causes. Behaviorally, he calls his patients by their first names, and shares some of his own personal experience with them, behaviors that could be seen as building an "egalitarian" relationship.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

Strategies and techniques mentioned by the therapist or labeled in the actual transcript by this commentator include: (1) negotiation of a nonviolence contract, (2) exploration of current and past feelings of anger and violence, (3) searching for "script" issues from the family of origin, (4) instruction and teaching (e.g., recommending books, instruction in the TARET model, and Mead's concept of me and I), (5) interpretations (e.g., fear of closeness), (6) assignment of tasks (e.g., to monitor thought and feelings, think about pros and cons of communicating clearly, thinking of current behavior and scripts from the past, listing ways they are like and different from parents, monitor their stroking pattern, separate adult from child ego states), (7) reframing, and (8) sharing of the therapist's own experience.

In order to compare this intervention to some outside standard, we will use Beutler's (1983) classification of techniques based on their goal of insight enhancement, emotional awareness, emotional escalation, emotional reduction, behavioral control, and perceptual change. There was some use of insight enhancement (interpretations to John about his fear of intimacy), some fostering of emotional awareness, some emotional reduction via contract and exploration of feeling around violence, and some induction of behavioral control via teaching and homework tasks of monitoring. The main emphasis was on perceptual change through the teaching of transactional concepts.

Since this is a brief therapy, the focus of the intervention (how the focus is formulated and pursued) is of central importance. It appeared to this reader that the issue of violence was handled initially and rather easily. Subsequently, the central focus became the sexual exclusivity of this relationship, which overtly the female wanted and the male did not.

Of particular interest was the way the therapist, who has years of clinical experience with violence in family settings, structured the treatment at the beginning with a contract to control this behavior. This contract was laid out in the beginning sessions, was reassessed and renewed in later sessions, and seemed quite effective. Once the behavior was thus controlled, the therapist explored feelings and cognitions around the behavior.

Why didn't the therapist use a comparable contract around behavior that breaks the boundaries of the couple's sexual exclusivity? One could argue that John would have never accepted such a contract, as he wanted to continue his sexual liaison with a second woman and made that clear. By raising the issue, however, the therapist could have even indicated this kind of contract would be a goal in the treatment. I wonder whether it is possible to explore the meaningful cognitive and emotional aspects of a couple's relationship when one partner is sexually active with a third party. This therapist may have accepted a situation that precluded or limited his ability to explore in any depth the interaction between Jane and John.

The author's notion that one must proceed through various levels of intervention is clinically useful. However, we do not get a sense of what levels to approach when, and what signals the need to shift to another level. Gurman (1981) has described what he calls an integrative marital therapy and provides guidelines for sequencing of intervention, which I find helpful.

ACHIEVEMENT OF MEDIATING AND FINAL GOALS OF TREATMENT

The outcome of the therapy can be assessed in terms of the accomplishment of the mediating and final goals of the intervention. Was this a successful outcome, and what criteria could be used to assess it? One level of assessment is the patients' satisfaction. John seemed satisfied that he had established a relationship with the therapist that enabled him to discuss his problems and life issues. Jane seemed less satisfied, was angry at John and probably the therapist early in the therapy, and ended the therapy and the relationship without prior discussion.

Was the problem that was central to the focus of the brief treatment solved? The answer to this is complicated, as the two patients probably had different goals in the treatment. As reported by Jacobson et al. (1984), often the happiness of one spouse is increased through marital treatment while that of the other is not. At the beginning of treatment, John had several female relationships and had several at the end of treatment. From a behavioral

view, he did not change. Apparently, Jane came to the realization that John would not join her in an exclusive relationship and, having realized that, was able to leave the relationship.

Did symptoms decrease? The interpersonal violence attributed to John apparently decreased. Since we do not have a baseline of the behavior prior to intervention, it is not clear whether the intervention was effective. It may, however, have been effective in preventing future violence or in reassuring Jane so that she could behave more freely.

What were the mediating goals of the treatment as articulated by the therapist? As articulated by the theory, I think the mediating goals included a contract to control violence, increased perceptual awareness by each partner of their interactional patterns, and how these patterns were influenced by their "scripts" from the past.

THERAPIST RATIONALE

In order to approach the case without preconceptions and to assess the congruence of techniques to rationale, the present commentator read the session-by-session transcripts before returning to read the authors rationale and theoretical orientation. The therapist describes his orientation as a cognitive behavioral systems approach to intrapsychic and interpersonal relations. The therapist's TARET orientation utilizes the conceptualization of

transactional analysis and rational emotive therapy with systems thinking. The essence of the approach is a cognitive one, says the therapist, with the goal of teaching the client a system that will help him increase his awareness of internal processes linked to behaviors.

It seems to this reviewer that there is consistency between the therapist's stated orientation and his behavior in the therapy hour (basic, but not always found to be the case). As noted above, an analysis of the sessions indicates that the therapist spent much effort in perceptual change techniques. In this particular case, however, it is not clear that the patients' cognitive expansion by focus on scripts from family of origin or monitoring between sessions was helpful in solving their specific interpersonal dilemma.

The conceptualization of scripts, for my taste (and it may only be a matter of taste, unrelated to outcome), is quite simplistic when compared to an object relations approach (Dicks, 1967). I do not think such "genetic interpretations" will have much impact unless they are preceded by interpretations of the current interaction patterns between spouse and spouse, and spouse and therapist.

Is this an integrated approach to therapy? On the theoretical level, Steinfeld combines cognitive, transactional analysis, and systems thinking. Why did he choose these theoretical systems to integrate rather than others?

Around what principles are these theoretical stances integrated for Steinfeld? Of course, much ink has been spilled over such questions and little practical value has come from it. Of much more interest and value is the attempt at practical, clinical eclecticism in order to form an approach tailored to the individual case or client. Do the data from the assessment lead to an integrated approach for this case? At key choice points in the therapy, why is one type of intervention used as opposed to another? The ultimate criterion (in addition to outcome data) for any eclectic or integrated system is whether or not it can be taught to others. What are the principles of action in this system? When does one utilize strategy A as opposed to strategy B? If these principles with clinical illustration can be enunciated, they can be taught to others. Steinfeld's approach (like that of the rest of us) is partway there.

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Commentary: Is it Possible to Make a Happy Marriage of Cognitive-Behavioral and Family Systems Approaches?

Michael A. Westerman

This case presentation represents an ambitious undertaking on two counts. The case appears to have been a very difficult one. In addition, Steinfeld has set for himself the difficult goal of integrating diverse theoretical perspectives. Although discussion of the case runs the risk of stumbling over a number of pitfalls (e.g., misusing the benefits of hindsight, misunderstandings about what went on given that any case presentation can provide only a limited amount of information), the case material raises interesting issues, and several important points emerge from a consideration of what transpired. I believe that the approach taken in this case was limited in several notable respects at the level of clinical practice, and that these limitations reflect problems in the theoretical goal of integrating cognitive-behavioral and systems approaches.

There were many positive points about the approach taken. For example, the therapist recognized that both John and Jane contributed to their marital difficulties even though the presenting problems, John's abusive

treatment of Jane and his infidelity, might have led to an exclusive focus on John's role. In addition, there was an appreciation of the role played by conflictual motives. The presenting problems did not simply reflect John's moving away from (or against) Jane but more complex processes that included a wish for closeness and fears about being unlovable on John's part and a similar conflict in Jane. Also, in certain respects the therapist engaged the couple in useful discussions of the interpersonal dynamics that played a crucial role in their difficulties. An example is the discussion in session 16 about how John responded when Jane made a special effort to clean the house and prepare a good dinner as her way of trying to change her approach to the relationship.

These features of the therapeutic approach represent real strengths, but what theoretical perspectives do they reflect? At least in broad terms, it is possible to see the influence of the systems perspective. This is reflected most clearly by the therapist's appreciation that both John and Jane contributed to the marital difficulties. Other than this very general (albeit extremely important) idea from systems theory, the theoretical perspective that seems to figure most prominently in the positive aspects of the case is one that supposedly does not play a significant part in the TARET system. The influence of a psychodynamic orientation can be seen quite clearly, especially in Steinfeld's understanding of the conflictual nature of Jane's and John's motivations.

Can we find in the actual clinical work the influence of the theoretical orientations that, in addition to systems theory, are supposed to be present? This question can be answered in the affirmative with respect to transactional analysis, which provided the therapist with a useful language for labeling certain interpersonal phenomena (e.g., the "pursuer-distanced" pattern identified in session 16). However, I believe that it is not possible to discover a role played by the cognitive-behavioral perspective when one considers the positive aspects of the case material. On the other hand, the influence of a cognitive-behavioral approach appears prominently when one considers limitations in the work that was done.

This approach provided a general perspective that was reflected in many ways in the work. This perspective focuses on how an individual thinks about his/her life and the world. Unfortunately, it contributed to making the therapeutic process overly reflective or abstract. This made it difficult for both John and Jane—but especially Jane—to stay involved in the work. Also, it appears to have been very difficult for the couple to make use of those parts of the sessions that were most strongly characterized by this problem. Indeed, the focus on how one thinks about things was especially likely to appear once an issue was identified, at which point it took the form of exhortations about how one should think about certain issues, feelings, events, etc. I have suggested elsewhere (Westerman, 1986) that the cognitive-behavioral approach frequently leads to these kinds of problems, and that it

may even be more prone to these failings than is true for traditional forms of insight-oriented therapy.

The influence of this perspective can be seen in another and even more important way. The cognitive-behavioral approach focuses on processes in the individual, not primarily on interpersonal relationships. As noted above, at a number of points constructive work was done on the interpersonal dynamics in the marriage. This involved discussions of events that took place between John and Jane outside the therapy situation. However, the approach taken was much less successful when it came to dealing with in-therapy occurrences of problematic interpersonal processes between husband and wife. For example, an exchange took place in session 17 that appears to have been the mirror image of an interaction discussed in session 16. As noted above, there was a discussion in session 16 about an incident that occurred at the couple's home regarding how John responded when Jane made an attempt at changing her behavior toward him. There was a crucial juncture in session 17 when John tried to change (he opened the question of ending his relationship with Mary) and Jane rebuffed him. The therapist appears to have been much better able to deal with the extra-therapy events as compared to the in-therapy occurrence. I believe that this limitation in responding to in-therapy processes reflects a view of the therapeutic exchange between husband, wife, and therapist as a third-person enterprise in which three individuals "collaboratively" (see Steinfeld's introductory remarks) engage in

thinking about extra-therapy phenomena.

The issue about how interpersonal phenomena were handled also includes questions about the therapeutic relationship. The most obvious points here concern the relationship between the therapist and Jane. I suggested above that it was especially true in Jane's case that the abstract quality of much of the therapeutic work led to difficulties in her becoming involved in the treatment process. But it would be a mistake to view this simply as a poor fit of styles. This mismatch of styles should be viewed in terms of a larger framework that includes therapeutic relationship issues. Specifically, Jane may well have experienced the therapist's suggestions that she think about certain issues in a particular way as demands that she was unable to meet. She may have felt that she could "never do enough" for the therapist in much the same way that she felt she could "never do enough" for John. In her marriage, this feeling reflected her sense that she was unworthy (deformed) and also a deep resentment about not being accepted as the person she is. There is good reason to suspect that the resentment played a powerful role working against cooperative involvement in her relationship with the therapist just as it did in her relationship with her husband. It is important to note that when the therapist turns to the question of his relationship with Jane in the Epilogue he resorts to the psychodynamic concepts of transference and countertransference, not to cognitive-behavioral concepts.

The relationship between the therapist and John also warrants consideration. Here, there was a match of styles in that John was in many respects quite ready to engage in discussions "in the analytical mode" (session 16). But again, this match needs to be viewed in a larger framework. John's active participation in the sessions may have reflected a wish to gain the therapist's acceptance rather than straightforward cooperation with the therapeutic process. The abstract, reflective parts of the therapeutic exchange gave him an opportunity to pursue this objective, but this motivation could not provide the basis for real change in his relationship with Jane.

The case material also offers considerable evidence that the issue of a relationship triangle, which was the presenting problem that proved most recalcitrant to treatment, was replicated within the therapeutic context. In the therapeutic context, John had a positive (at least overtly) relationship with a third party with whom he appeared to be more ready and able to establish a constructive exchange than he was with his wife. Jane was once again left out. I believe that an adequate understanding and response to the issue of a therapeutic triangle was the single most important thing missing in this case. Interpersonal processes involving relationship triangles are well recognized—in fact, they are put on center stage—in the systems perspective (e.g., Haley, 1977; Westerman, *in press*). What got in the way of an adequate appreciation of this crucial feature of the in-therapy process in this case was the cognitive-behavioral perspective with its focus on individuals thinking

about extra-therapy events.

It should be noted that it is one thing to recognize therapeutic relationship phenomena and another thing to decide how to intervene. In particular, once one recognizes that a particular process is taking place, it is an open question whether the best way to respond is by making observations along these lines to the couple. The view that responding to a problematic process must involve pointing it out/explaining it/interpreting it itself reflects central commitments of the cognitive-behavioral perspective. In my opinion, though such strategies might have been of some use in the present case, other ways of responding would have been more helpful. In particular, the most useful strategy for avoiding a therapeutic triangle would have been the appropriate tuning of the therapist's responses on a moment-to-moment basis. The therapist could have established greater balance in his stance in terms of the direction of his attention and an even-handedness with any comments that might have been construed by either Jane or John as "blaming."

A final comment concerns another feature of the therapist's response to a therapeutic relationship issue. Steinfeld appears to have been well aware of many appearances of resistance on the couple's part, especially in terms of their frequent failure to work on homework assignments. Nevertheless, it is not clear from the case material how and, indeed, whether he attempted to

respond to this resistance in some way. One idea that has been the subject of considerable theoretical attention within the systems perspective (e.g., Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), which has now received empirical support (Kolko & Milan, 1983; Westerman, Frankel, Tanaka, & Kahn, in press), is the view that paradoxical interventions are useful in cases involving high levels of resistance. Although I do not think I would have employed what might be called a "molar" paradoxical intervention in the present case (e.g., prescribing continued infidelity on John's part), homework assignments based on "small scale" paradoxical strategies might well have been useful. For example, for one assignment the therapist might have urged both husband and wife to decide on something each really wanted the other to do and then experiment with some new strategies for "getting the other to come across." This paradoxical frame, which emphasizes "getting" or "taking" in a relationship, might have served as one useful strategy for helping John and Jane move away from their self-defeating patterns of making requests to what would actually be more considerate and non-coercive ways of getting their needs met.

But my main point here does not concern the pros and cons of paradoxical interventions. What paradoxical approaches clearly reflect is the readiness on the part of systems-oriented therapists to identify and respond to resistance. There are many other ways to respond to resistance. In the approach taken in the present case, however, little therapeutic attention

appears to have been directed to this concern. I believe that once again this reflects the influence of the cognitive-behavioral perspective. Although some therapists working within that approach have shown some interest in resistance (e.g., Meichenbaum & Gilmore, 1982), the underlying philosophical commitments of the cognitive-behavioral approach point away from such concerns. The model of an individual thinking about the world suggests an ethics of individual choice (it's up to the patient whether he/she wants to change) and not an ethics of interdependence (what the therapy can do to open up new alternatives for the patient even though he/she is likely to work against this opening up at first) as is true for the systems perspective (Westerman, 1986).

Is it the case that there is no way to bring together these perspectives so that the strengths of the cognitive-behavioral perspective can be employed to enhance a systems-oriented approach to a marital or family problem? I imagine that there is one way of doing this that would work. It should be possible to integrate specific cognitive-behavioral interventions within the context of a systems approach in a way that would lead to an overall improvement in effectiveness (for example, interventions modifying self-talk might be useful in certain cases). The points that I have made above, on the other hand, suggest that there are fundamental disparities in the two perspectives at the level of basic orientation.

The present case reflects an attempt to forge a therapeutic approach that reflects both basic orientations. Viewed in this way, I believe that the attempt to integrate the two approaches is ill conceived because the general perspective of the cognitive-behavioral approach involves ways of looking at things that detract from the systems perspective. Perhaps the most important point that emerges from consideration of this case is that it is critically important to keep in mind that therapeutic orientations involve underlying, basic commitments, not just a set of techniques, and that these basic commitments must be taken into account when one tries to develop an eclectic approach (cf. Messer & Winokur, 1984; Westerman, 1986).

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