CASEBOOK OF ECLECTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

THE TEENAGE PROSECUTOR:

A Case in Pragmatic Family Therapy

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e-Book 2015 International Psychotherapy Institute

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The Teenage Prosecutor: A Case in Pragmatic Family Therapy

Richard H. Driscoll

Conducting psychotherapy involves two related factors: observing and trying to understand, and intervening to promote changes. Any orientation has characteristic ways of proceeding with each of these, and a comprehensive integrative approach must be able to manage both the range of observation perspectives and the range of interventions across the various orientations.

Pragmatic psychotherapy is an eclectic approach that uses ordinary language concepts to structure observations, and a set of procedural guidelines to organize interventions. The cover term "pragmatic" refers, in language analysis, to the social influence of words, and also means emphasizing practical considerations over ideology. The major principles of pragmatic psychotherapy are found in Driscoll (1984) and related readings (Bergner, 1983; Farber, 1981; Ossorio, 1976). A synopsis of the organizing framework precedes the presentation of the case.

ORDINARY LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

Ordinary language concepts are used in lieu of concepts based in theoretical formulations. Our ordinary language concepts readily access the wealth of distinctions used in everyday social concerns, and can be used to organize and integrate the various theoretical formulations. Ordinary language is thus the basis of a common language immediately familiar to all, and provides an answer to the problem of separate and incompatible languages among theoretical orientations (cf. Goldfried & Padawer, 1982). Emphasis is on observation and straightforward description of behavioral phenomena using these concepts.

Behavior is formulated here as purposive action, involving cognition, motivation, and competence (Ossorio, 1969). Action is undertaken *in order to* achieve something, although the outcome is not always what one was trying for and there are numerous ways that things can go wrong. One can misperceive things, have conflicting motivations, misunderstand how to make things change, and so on. Awareness of these related aspects of purposive action helps us identify the troublesome factors in those cases when things do go wrong.

The occurrence of behavior is a function of situations and individual characteristics. Some personal problems arise from inhospitable situations, many from maladaptive individual tendencies, and others from incompatible

combinations of situations and individual characteristics. Situations and individual characteristics were acquired from past events, the former by social transitions, the latter by learning, maturation, and so on. Psychotherapy attempts to alleviate restrictions in ability to participate in meaningful ways of life, by changing (present) behaviors, situations, and individual characteristics.

GUIDELINES

Therapeutic interventions are made in order to influence and change our clients. The various interventions available are organized here by the objectives they can be used to accomplish.

A set of intervention guidelines is used to specify the objectives we find important time and again with a broad range of clients. These guidelines were constructed from an analysis of familiar interventions and are an organized composite of the important objectives found in current psychotherapy orientations. Various interventions have been grouped together by the guideline objectives they are used to accomplish, and a variety of overtly dissimilar techniques from separate orientations may be classed together as a means of accomplishing the same objective.

The guidelines are meant to aid in identifying pertinent objectives and in selecting interventions appropriate to the circumstances at hand. The

guidelines specify the clinical tasks that might be called for in particular clinical circumstances and suggest ways those tasks might be accomplished. In this way, they serve to guide our choices of therapeutic interventions. The guidelines thus specify the *clinical strategies* or *principles of change* suggested by Goldfried (1980) as heuristic connections between the broader goals of therapy and the specific techniques chosen at any given moment.

There are 26 guidelines covering the broad tasks of maintaining a therapeutic relationship, building on clients' existing strengths, assessing what matters for interventions, clarifying situations and the paths of change, instilling new patterns, and motivating clients. These are listed in an appendix at the end of the chapter, and are referred to in parentheses throughout the case presentation to indicate how they are used in selecting and understanding therapeutic interventions. Since space limitations allow mention of only a few of the connections between these principles and the orientations they integrate, readers are referred to Driscoll (1984) for this information.

CLINICAL JUDGMENT

Insofar as eclectic practice involves the selection of aspects from various orientations, understanding the clinical judgment by which we make such selections is especially critical. But the considerations involved in clinical

judgments are often implicit. As practitioners our attention is primarily on understanding and intervening appropriately, and not on articulating what we are doing. It is noteworthy that eclecticism itself emerged from practitioners' needs for versatility and prior to any formal statement of how selections between orientations were to be made.

But a reliable articulation of clinical judgment is important so that we can critique ourselves, improve what we do, and teach others. The concepts and guidelines of pragmatic psychotherapy comprise an articulation of some of the perspectives that are used implicitly by eclectic therapists. The approach here is to clarify our already existing concepts and clinical competencies, and to build on them. Many of the formulations appear commonsensical, in that they try to appeal to our experience and judgment.

In the following case, I have tried to include sufficient information on the grounds on which I made clinical judgments. The case transcripts are meant to portray the process by which case information is attained and case formulations are made. Information that is missing or ambiguous in the sessions is not provided gratis by an omniscient commentator, but is revealed in the manner that it is acquired in the actual sessions.

The interventions follow from my understanding of the case and from the intervention guidelines. In many instances, other interventions might

have been selected that would have been as appropriate or sometimes more so to the circumstances. Ordinary language pragmatism[1] is a way of grasping and comparing the various alternatives that might be appropriate in particular circumstances, and not a general prescription on which ones to use in any specific instance.

I chose this particular case for the *Casebook* because of the variety of interventions involved. One of the strengths of eclecticism is its versatility, and this case required some revision of my initial case formulation and numerous variations and alterations in my intervention tactics. And since one of the clients was a mental health professional, there was the possibility of some additional insights on treatment that might not be otherwise available.

The father called me several months after he heard me speak on family relationships. He was interested in some consultation on what he considered to be family problems.

SESSION 1

My initial objectives in beginning a first session are to set the clients at ease and make them comfortable with the therapy situation (II-2), to establish an alliance with them (I-2), and to convey that this is a safe and reasonable way to look for solutions to their problems (I-3). It is important to win their confidence quickly, to set the basis for further work, and to improve

the probability for their returning. Although there is some attrition in individual treatment, the complexities of couples and family work increase the considerations we must manage to keep clients in treatment.

I generally begin by asking for names and addresses and then for the information necessary to understand the basic relationships between the principals involved in the case. There is Jim, his wife Laura, and his three children from a prior marriage. The father is in his late thirties and the stepmother several years younger. He is a clinical social worker and she an accountant. The daughter, Becky, is 13 and there are sons Tom, age 10, and Robbie, age six. When I ask for the address, one of the boys gives his address and then the father gives his own address and clarifies that the children live with their mother, who is his ex-wife. The boys are adding to the confusion and seem to be enjoying making it a challenge for me to get the relationships straightened out. I make a tongue-in-cheek reference to the amount of confusion in stepfamilies:

> Driscoll [to wife]: Do you have a first marriage?
>
> Laura: Yes. This is my second marriage.
>
> Driscoll: But no children. You just wanted to simplify things.
>
> Laura: Right. [laughs] I wouldn't have married Jim if I had wanted to simplify things. [laughs]

While I would ordinarily want to establish a relationship and get some sense of my clients before trying humor, these clients were being playful with each other, and it seemed natural to join in the playful atmosphere. Appropriate humor can help break tensions and make people comfortable with the situation (II-2; Driscoll, in press).

> Driscoll: Did everybody get told about why you were coming in?
>
> Becky: No. We just found out. We had no say at all.
>
> Driscoll: Are you here against your better judgment?
>
> Becky: I don't really care. I have gone to a psychiatrist before. It's no big deal to me. I'm just not crazy. I know that.

I was looking for indications that anyone was opposed to being in the sessions. We would want to address any such concerns at the outset, to establish working relationships with the various parties (I-2).

The parents were divorced four years ago, and the father remarried last year. Becky had seen a psychologist (not a psychiatrist) for two or three sessions at the time of the remarriage and seems annoyed at her father for taking her to me rather than to the one she saw before. The father explains that he approves of the other psychologist, but wants someone with more of a family orientation. He and his wife saw a marriage counselor for about a year before they got married, to work out some communication troubles before

they became problems. He jokes that if it had not gone well, they probably would not have gotten married. She agrees.

The father and his wife have the children every other weekend plus an additional evening, every other holiday, and for several weeks in the summer. I mention that it is not all that much time and ask if he would want to have more time with them. He says that he is satisfied with the visitation schedule and mentions that work and church take up the other evenings.

The children are bickering among themselves, and I inquire about how they get along:

> Driscoll: [to Becky]: Do you fight with your brothers?
>
> Becky: No. Well, I mean we have 10-minute fights. You know how kids are. Driscoll: You mean sort of *normal* fights. Becky: Really. We don't kill each other very often [laughing], . . . We argue, but two minutes later if we can settle it on our own everything is fine.

By labeling the fights normal I am supporting Becky's assertion earlier that she knows she is not crazy, continuing to try to make her comfortable with the situation (II-2).

Father mentions that the rowdiness gets on his nerves when he is driving the car, but that it is not a major issue. I comment that almost everyone has problems with children being rowdy on trips, again to portray

such problems as normal (II-2). I do an impersonation of some kids in a car:

> Driscoll: Hey, gang. Dad's got the wheel. Now's our chance. Let's get at it.
>
> Laura: You must have kids. Right?
>
> Driscoll: Yeah. Tell me about it.

I was trying to show I was familiar with the issues everyone was dealing with (I-3), and Laura seemed to appreciate my experience.

I ask what some of the more usual problems are that they have together:

> Becky: Laura and I get along fine most of the time when we are talking to each other. But when Dad comes into the conversation, everybody gets mad and gets into a fight.

Laura seems to generally get along with all of the children although she occasionally gets angry and sets them straight. Becky says Laura screams at them, but Laura considers that too harsh. We settle for "raises her voice" as a more acceptable label (II-2). She gets over being angry quickly, and does not hold grudges. She mentions that she has been more angry at Jim on occasion than at any of the children.

> Driscoll: It is sounding like this thing about the wicked stepmother is all a myth. (1-4).
>
> Father: The problem here is that I am the bad guy.

Laura has also tagged the main problem as Father is the bad guy. So there is a consensus here that the problem is that father is the bad guy. Only when Becky says it, she means that he *is* the bad guy, but when Laura and father say it, they mean that he comes out looking like the bad guy. Many ordinary language words can be used in several ways, and we must be aware of what these people mean when they use them (III-2).

> Father: Normally when there is a conflict, there is an [important) value involved. In the last one Robbie had gotten into it with some of his friends and had thrown a rock and broken a taillight on their parents' car. He said that he hated the fellow. But they had been pretty consistent friends for quite a while, and I think that that was carrying it way too far.
>
> Driscoll: I think all kids say "I hate someone" now and again, and then later on they forget it and get on with things as they were.
>
> Father: Okay. Well, we may have made too big of a deal of that. But we did feel strongly that breaking the taillight was his responsibility. And that is what the fight was about.

I was introducing a standard of normative or usual behavior for that age, to use in judging the importance of Robbie's comment (IV-2). I am noting here how readily the father accepted my comment and went on to his other concern. We learn from how clients react to our interventions (III-4), and the father seems to be willing to readily hear my suggestions and to reconsider his positions.

> Father: The argument quickly lined up as "them against us." It started out as the children against me, and that is when Laura came in [on my side] because I

am not really that good of an arguer. Laura is pretty good and can articulate her points and make it clear. But I am not as good in conflict as other people are.

An inability to hold his own in an argument could be a critical factor in parent-teenager relationships.

Father: The children were saying that it was not Robbie's fault that he threw the rock and broke the light, because the other girl started the fight and was throwing rocks.

Tom: She likes to start fights, and she knows Robbie has a temper.

Becky: She does. She picks on him and tantalizes him. And Daddy doesn't want to see it.

Tom: She was even throwing rocks at us. After she started throwing rocks at us she ran into the neighbor's garage, and that's when Robbie tried to throw a rock at her and it bounced and hit the tail-light.

Becky: It wasn't directly her fault. But don't you think that she had a lot to do with it? I mean, you called Mom a "damned bitch" long ago and it was because she was tantalizing you. She made you so mad that you screamed "damned bitch" at her.

Driscoll: You used the "rhymes with witch" word?

Father: We don't normally use that language.

Becky: I mean that wasn't completely Dad's fault, because Mom did push him over the edge.

Father: I will take responsibility for what I say.

Driscoll: But hear what she is saying. She is saying that there are times when you

are responsible, but not completely or fully responsible, because there are provocations or mitigating circumstances. . . .

Father: But if my ex-wife wants to sue me for slander, then I would not have much of a case. I know that is carrying it to the hilt.

Driscoll: Yeah, but even carrying it to the hilt there, I would say that since you were clearly provoked that you would have a case.

Father: Okay. That's good to know [laughs]. Just in case I ever want to go through that again.

While one orientation holds that you are responsible for your actions and another holds that you are not, our everyday conventions suggest various conditions under which you are held to be fully or somewhat responsible or not responsible for particular things that you do. It seems that father is being too "all or none" here and is in a poor position against Becky and the brothers who are arguing the more appropriate standards for attributing responsibility. The argument Becky made is overtly supportive of father, but the illustration she used of his cursing his ex-wife is a clear violation of his own standards and so makes him squirm. She seems to be exceptional in her mastery of the verbal joust. In clarifying mitigating circumstances, I am in the fortunate position of being able to be supportive of Father while also backing the children's argument (1-2).

The everyday concept of responsibility that I am providing for Father makes allowances for mitigating circumstances and is generally easier to live

with than the concept on which he makes his judgments. Your concepts are the distinctions you know how to make, and in clarifying concepts we try to improve on clients' abilities to make appropriate distinctions themselves (IV-2). Concepts are termed "constructs" in Kelly's construct theory and "schema" in Piagetian and cognitive-behavioral approaches.

The conversation continues on the issue of responsibility, and I rephrase and repeat my clarifications. Some reiteration is generally necessary to familiarize clients with any new viewpoint (V-2).

> Driscoll [to Becky]: If he were to see your point, would you find it easier to see his point?
>
> Becky: Yes, probably. I have told him before that I would be willing to meet him halfway. . . . He has said to me, "Well, Becky, I guess I am just not a good father, and I just give up." And I will say to him, "Okay, Dad, you have finally got something right." [everyone laughs] What Dad really wants is the easy way out.
>
> Father: No, I don't think so. Although I will say that it takes a lot of energy to stay in there and argue with you. Becky: I am a good arguer.
>
> Father: I know. [All laugh.]

I mention to father that he may be seeing things as too strictly black or white, but he has another interpretation of the problem:

> Father: I used to be very flexible and very easy to manipulate, and that is not as true as it used to be. I think that I have changed in that I am better at making stands. That is a very difficult change for me to make.

Driscoll [to children]: Your dad is saying that he used to be too permissive and would let you get away with too much. Tom: He still does.

Becky: Oh, he doesn't either.

Father: It should be possible for us to have differences of opinion and for me to still have a little more authority because I am the adult. That is where I am coming from. That is what I am saying.

It is healthy for parents to have an appropriate amount of authority over their children and proper for us as therapists to try to support their authority. I am looking for a firmer sense of how he is mismanaging or otherwise restricted in his exercise of authority.

Becky complicates the matter by painting a glowing portrait of their mother as more lenient and much easier to get along with, while father is impossible. Father sees his ex-wife as too lenient and failing to uphold reasonable standards of conduct. Since the children are with their mother most of the time, she is in a position to have more influence on them.

Becky complains that Father does not trust her, and that she was in trouble with him because he wanted her to sit where he could see her in church and she sat beyond his sight. I interpret this as a concern that the children will appear fidgety and unruly. I give my impression that he is concerned with how the children appear in public:

Father: That is true. I do care how they appear.

Becky: Sometimes I just dress as ratty as I can. I just want my friends to like me for who I am rather than for how I dress. . . .

Driscoll: You are just the opposite of a lot of teenagers, who really can give their parents headaches because they have to wear the right clothes and have the right makeup and the right purses, and they can wind up costing their parents a lot of money. . . . What Becky is saying would be a breath of fresh air if you had been dealing with this other sort of problem.

A stand on neater apparel is often a losing position for parents, and it seems especially so here. Some defiance seems to be involved, and making an issue of dress could elicit further resistance from her (VI-2). In focusing on the opposite problem, I was introducing a comparison to try to temper everyone's concern for casual dress.

Father is also concerned that the boys want to wear punk haircuts and have talked about piercing their ears:

Father: Robbie had trouble in the last school he attended. Maybe this is old-fashioned, but I think that there is a chance that a teacher would react negatively to Robbie because his hair is punk and not give him a chance. And I am concerned about that.

Becky: But, Daddy! Nobody thinks anything about haircuts nowadays. Driscoll: You really stand up for your brothers, don't you.

Becky: Yeah. You shouldn't have to wear your hair a particular way just to please someone.

Driscoll [to Becky]: What I am hearing is that when Daddy wants you to conform it flies all over you, because you do not want to have to do it any particular way just because everyone else is doing it. Becky: Well, we are about like

everyone else. We are not trying to break any laws of nature here I laughs].

My comment was a simple rephrasing of her position (1-4), but she responded to it with a reaffirmation of normalcy. I am aware of my lack of any working alliance with this youngster. The issue of conforming continues, and father's original concerns seem to have gotten lost:

Driscoll [to Father]: I think that you were concerned about his hair because you would not want him to get on the outs with his teacher.

Father: Right.

My comment is essentially an active listening response again (1-4), although it comes several comments after his original statement. This sort of statement is supportive of Father without alienating the youngsters (1-2). It is clear that everyone wants something from Father:

Driscoll [to Father]: Sounds like you are real popular.

Father: Right. I am popular. That is very important. Even though I am the bad guy, I am popular. The message is "We want you, but damned if you can do anything right. We are going to get you either way." [laughing]

Becky complains about the ways Father treats her when she is with him, and she complains about the time that he spends away from her. She complains that he never gives her hugs.

Driscoll: Sometimes when you give him a hard time, is it not so much that he is a hard-nose but that you miss him?

Becky: Yeah. Just because he is not with us enough.

Driscoll: You have been complaining about the things that your dad does, and then you seemed to change a bit and you were saying that what really upsets you is that you miss him.

Becky: It is a combination of things. He bugs me when I am with him [laughs], so I wish he would stop bugging me. And then when he does stop, I wish he could do more with me.

Becky is seeming to be mothering her two brothers, with her arms around one and the other with his head on her lap.

Driscoll: A lot of this is that you are missing your dad.

Becky: Yeah. He didn't even come in and kiss me goodnight. But my little brothers do. I say, "Come here," and they give me a big hug. They are my little support group.

I ask if Father can be more physical with the children and suggest that he might do so (IV-6). He says that that would be no problem and that he would be comfortable with it.

Becky argues that her mother has reasonable standards and that she feels freer around her mother because Mom does not object to how they dress or to occasional cursing. Father feels that the cursing is an indication that he has not done enough or is not bringing them up properly. I invite Becky to focus on the uncomfortableness her father experiences:

Driscoll: Let's look at it this other way. [The cursing] makes your father

uncomfortable or it makes him feel like he has not done a good job in bringing you up.

Becky: I never thought of it in that way. . . .

She complains that he seems mad rather than uncomfortable, so I have him talk about how and when and why he is uncomfortable. Initially he does seem more angry than uncomfortable, and I point that out and invite him to show the other side of his feelings. It is an attempt to appeal to whatever concerns Becky might have for her father's feelings (VI-1). The tactic is suggested in the "I" messages in

Gordon's parent effectiveness training. But she does not seem to be affected by his comments, indicating that concerns for his feelings are probably not high on her priorities (III-4). We focus again on Becky wanting more of her father, and she turns the discussion into criticism against Father:

Becky: [My father] doesn't ever criticize me. He has humiliated me before really well, but he has never really criticized me.

Driscoll: Humiliated you? Give me a for instance.

Becky [to Father]: You want me to go into that?

Father: That is up to Richard [the therapist].

Driscoll: I am the only one who is in the dark. I think it would be helpful [to tell it].

Becky: I asked Daddy if I could sleep with him once. Innocently. I mean just *sleep* with him.

Driscoll: Sleep in the same bed.

Simple responses such as these convey that we understand the message and facilitate further responses (1-4).

Becky: Yeah. I mean, I'm no sexual pervert here.

Driscoll: Okay. [Everyone laughs.] We do not want to make any mistakes here.

Becky: I said, "Daddy, is it okay if I sleep with you?" And you acted as if I were some kind of alien here. You made me feel really bad about it. I was just considering it an innocent question. You said, "Becky, you are almost a woman."

Driscoll: You were just wanting to sleep with him for the comfort of it. (1-4, II-2)

Becky: Yeah. But you made me feel awful. What was it you said? You said that some girls, well, have some secret desires for their fathers, and they kind of want to have affairs with their fathers.

Father: No, I don't think that I said that.

Becky: Yeah, you said that. That's what got me.

Father: I did say that I feel like you are beginning to develop sexually.

Becky: But that doesn't mean that I'm a pervert.

Father: And I did say that I think that it is inappropriate. And I will go with what Richard was saying. It is something that I was uncomfortable with.

Becky: Well, you didn't have to make me feel like a total jerk.

Driscoll [to Becky]: Catch this. Your dad is saying something important here. He is saying that he is uncomfortable with it. (IV-1)

Becky: I know. But that's not what he said.

Driscoll: You did not know before that he was uncomfortable. Because all you knew was that he made you uncomfortable. (IV-1, V-2)

Becky: Yeah, he made me feel really terrible. . . .

Driscoll [to Father]: Talk a little more about feeling uncomfortable. I have talked with other fathers who also feel uncomfortable, who ask, "How do you relate to girls who make you feel just a little bit sensual toward them?"

By suggesting that sensual feelings are relatively normal, I was trying to make such issues more acceptable so that he would be comfortable enough to talk about them if they were important (II-2).

Becky: That is when he said, uh, what was that word that you used that I had never heard before?

Father: "Erection?" Did I say, "What if I had an erection?"

Becky: No. You said "ejaculation."

Father. No. I would not have said that.

Becky: You did too, Daddy. I didn't even know what the word meant.

Father: I find it very difficult to believe you, Becky.

Becky: I swear to God.

Father: But. . . .

Becky [interrupting]: [I know] you said that because I had never heard it, and I went home and asked Mom what it meant. And she said, "I have never heard

it either, Becky." We couldn't figure out what it was. We had to look it up in a dictionary.

Driscoll [to Becky]: See that he is saying that he is uncomfortable because he doesn't want to make you uncomfortable.

My sense was that something in Becky's argument is not adding up properly but, still focusing on calming the situation, I missed the giveaway clue about having to look it up in the dictionary. I was observing that Father was trying to make amends for whatever ways he hurt her feelings, but that Becky was continuing her case against him and unwilling to let the thing go. She was arguing her position as the victim and so casting him as the perpetrator of sexually improper comments against her. At the same time I felt that Father should have been more circumspect in his comments to her.

Something more than the conventional hour is generally useful for a first session with families, because of the sheer number of individual and relationship concerns. This session goes about an hour and a half, and the animosity over the sleeping-together incident remains unresolved.

I have gotten some sense of the concerns and a good sense of the interaction patterns of the family together. But family interaction creates its own pressures, and, in some ways, restricts the focus of a session. I want to get a better sense of the parents and want to be more directly supportive and affirming of them in their role as parents. The father seems to have gotten the

worst of the session, in several places but especially in that last sexual-proprieties interchange. And the lengths of their prior treatments suggest that he is interested in strengthening the bonds with his wife, but maybe not supportive of individual treatment for Becky. I scheduled with the parents only for next week, when Father does not have the children, and schedule the appointment after that for the whole family together. In alternating between whole-family and parents-only sessions, I am trying to reap the benefits both of family interaction and of parent consult approaches. Sessions are a week apart for the first six sessions, and two to three weeks apart for the next three sessions because of the family's busy schedule.

Impressions

The specific stands Father has taken here suggest that his standards are too strict or that he is not flexible enough with the children, although his willingness to alter his positions when I suggest he do so indicates considerable flexibility. Although he says that he has not been strict enough with the children, my initial impression is that he is making too many stands on the wrong issues, and thus inviting failures. I surely agree with the consensus that he is not a good arguer. He needs to be more careful on the issues he is willing to do battle on, and to learn better tactics for the ones he does fight on.

Laura was relatively quiet in the session, but seemed sensitive to what was going on. The comments she did make were consistently supportive of her husband.

Becky is quick-witted, loves the verbal joust, and is more than a match for her father. I appreciate her wit and social savvy, and I am sympathetic of her wanting more time with her father. Although I have been supportive of her, my impression is that she does not trust me and that she is eager to do battle with her father.

The sexual-proprieties interchange strikes me as quite pernicious and as something of a reversal of the common child-sexual-abuse issues. It is the daughter here who is pushing for more intimacy, and she was making accusations of sexual improprieties against her father for his somewhat awkward attempts to maintain proper limits with her.

The boys got lost in everything else that was going on, but seemed to be a part of the clear children-against-adults alliances in the family.

SESSION 2[2]

I mention that this session should be easier without the youngsters around and offer my sympathies to Jim for the pressure he is under from Becky. I am trying to build an alliance (1-2). Father says he is being somewhat

more physical with the children, and that they seem to be getting along better.

We discuss what went on in the last session. Father makes a case that Becky was wrong in her comment about an ejaculation: As an analogy he had said that her brother should not sleep with his mother or he might get an erection. But he maintains that he never used the word "ejaculation." Becky's contention that was the word because Mother had to look it up in the dictionary does not hold together, for their mother would obviously know what it meant.

Being a social worker, the father might be expected to talk about issues that would be easier to avoid. But mentioning having an ejaculation seems too inappropriate, and he seems too concerned with social conventions to have introduced something like that with his daughter. I rate him more credible generally than Becky. Some aspects of assessment are a matter of playing junior mystery detective, and weighing the character and motives of the participants together with the plausibility of their stories.

I introduce the concept of the pragmatics of statements, in contrast to the content. Words are also deeds, and in understanding Becky's comments we should ask, "What is she *doing* by saying those things?" Clearly, she was making a case against her father and placing him in an extremely awkward position. I am thus presenting a critical concept (IV-2) and using it to help the

parents better understand the situation (IV-1). Concepts such as these are obvious once they are introduced, but too readily overlooked under ordinary circumstances. My interpretation avoids buying into Becky's presentation of herself as merely a victim (II-4), but confirms the control that she is exercising with her father (II-3).

Moreover, Becky is willing to reach into areas of sexual improprieties and apparently to fabricate to strengthen her case, suggesting an absence of appropriate boundaries and a poor regard for the truth. She is being the prosecutor, and her father is left with the role of defending himself. One can only continue as a prosecutor so long as the opposition continues in the complementary role of defendant, and one of my objectives is to help Father to be something other than the defendant.

Father takes Becky too seriously, and I suggest that he might do better to let her know that he understands her concerns or to joke with her some, but not to tangle on every issue. I use some of the active listening comments I made in the last session as illustrations and suggest some active listening and other responses for him to consider. Most active approaches suggest alternate actions for the clients, and the particular ones we suggest must be geared to our understanding of what will work for the clients in their specific situations (IV-6).

Father is also concerned with the boys, particularly the younger one, and is angry at Becky for dominating the session so that other concerns were not heard. Robbie had trouble in school last year and had to be placed in another school which gave more individual attention, where he is now doing well. Father is concerned that the school problems indicate underlying personal adjustment problems of a more general nature. I inquire if there are adjustment problems now, and do not find sufficient indications. If anything, he seems to be relatively well adjusted to the circumstances. I suggest to the parents that he seems relatively well adjusted and mention that we can look into it further if some signs of problems show up later. My aim is to reassure, to keep the focus on the obvious problems, and to avoid introducing uncertainties into areas of apparent strengths (II-5).

SESSION 3

Father mentions that he felt good about the way things went the last weekend with the children. They walked in the woods together, played soccer, and went shopping. The boys enjoy themselves telling about the weekend activities, and they talk more and seem more comfortable than they had in the first session. They both say that things are fine with their Dad and Laura, and when I inquire specifically, they have no complaints. There is evidence, not found in the first session, that Father and the boys enjoy being with each other.

Becky complains again that Father never hugs her. I focus on the issue of hugs, as a way of moving Becky's concern out of the bedroom and into the arena of public and appropriate physical affection:

Driscoll: We have a hug-me sign here. Would that help?

Becky: No. Because then he will hug me because he sees the sign and it will mean nothing.

Father: I'd like to understand a little better. We went for a long walk and my arm was around you when you didn't ask for it. So when you say I never hug you, I'm not clear if really you want it all the time we are together or what you are saying.

Becky: But that was about the only time you put your arm around me.

Driscoll: You like lots of hugs?

Becky: Yeah. I get hugs from everybody but him. My brothers hug me, my mom hugs me, and everybody else hugs me.

I try to lighten it up:

Driscoll: Is she pretty huggable?

Father: Yeah, pretty huggable.

Driscoll: How would you rate her on a huggable scale?

Father: I would probably put her about in the middle.

Becky complains again that he never hugs her; Father says that he is

comfortable moving over and hugging her right now. I suggest that he do that, to see what will come of it (III-3):

> Father: Here we go. [He hugs her.] Is that a good hug? How do you rate that hug?
>
> Becky: It's irritating.
>
> Father [joking]: Oh no. I can't even do a hug right.
>
> Becky: It is a waste of time.

Becky complains that the hugs are too seldom or are only to appease her. She has a hurt and hysterical quality in her voice not present in the first session. Becky says she wants hugs yet refuses to accept the ones she gets, and I try to show her the sense she makes or might make in her contradictory position (II-l):

> Driscoll: Even when you do get a hug, it surely doesn't make up for all the times that you have felt neglected by your dad.
>
> Becky: That may have something to do with it. But I don't get them that often, so there is no point in thinking of it that much.

She appeared interested, but then rejected the idea. Becky is arguing opposite sides against her father, and I try a paradoxical prescription to point out the probable purpose:

> Driscoll: Try to get him confused, and then get a couple of steps ahead of him.
>
> Becky: I'm not trying to get him confused. He's already confused enough.

Paradoxical interventions may be used for any of several understandable objectives (Driscoll, 1985), and this one was intended to make an unacceptable pattern conscious to Becky by appearing to support it. But she saw through it, was not amused, and turned it against her father. Perhaps a more elaborately constructed paradox might go somewhere, but I am not optimistic and do not try it again.

I talk with Father more about the importance of staying steady with Becky. He is doing better with her this session, and I compliment him on staying calmer and joshing with her instead of getting defensive. He gets in at least one humorous comeback of his own:

> Becky: . . . .I prefer being with my friends or with my mother. [Dad] is an oddball.
>
> Father: Having one strange parent really adds flavor to things. Think of how boring life would be if everybody was the same as your mother. . . .

Becky complains about various concerns with her father. She wants more time with her father, but when her father is available she wants to be with her friends instead. She is sounding quite upset and close to crying during much of the last half of the session. As I actively listen, the focus of her concerns changes and nothing gets nailed down. I mention that the issues she is concerned about were changing.

SESSION 4

The father asks to borrow the tape from the last session, to try to get a better sense of what was going on. Reviewing a session tape is one way to promote carryover of information from sessions (V-3).

> Father: There was a lot of hostility that night after we left here, even from the boys. Becky was saying that she feels like a fifth wheel around the home and was listing things that were more important to her. Tom added money to the list, and he was also angry [at me].
>
> Laura: I was pretty overwhelmed after hearing it. I have been hearing it for two years, but so much was concentrated into an hour that it wore me out.
>
> Driscoll [to Father]: How much was Tom really throwing in? Was he just making a few comments? Both boys seem very supportive of you.
>
> Father: Right. Maybe it was just that he knew what he was doing and it surprised me. . . . Let me share a contrast to that. Becky spent the night with a girlfriend, and there was not any conflict with the boys in the time I spent with just them. It makes me wonder what is going on. I am kind of lost here.

The boys had seemed to be ganging up with Becky against their father. I explain that from an adult that might indicate more, but that children would not be sensitive to how much it hurts when you are already under fire and that they could easily add something simply because that is when there was an opening. The point is to clarify the relationships that he has with the children (IV-1). Father has been seeing them together as a single alliance and needs to separate them into the individuals that they are.

Clients can get hurt in family sessions, and the parents' comments about

being overwhelmed are a reminder that we need to maintain the peace between warring family members and to protect each of them as much as possible. Since I am unable to allay Becky's attacks, it is fortunate I have the alternate sessions to support the parents. I try to support Father by lowering the credibility of specific arguments Becky makes:

> Driscoll: My impression is that you are a little sensitive about getting criticized by the youngsters.
>
> Laura: There is the weight of it and the vast quantity of it. It is hard to treat it lightly.
>
> Father: There are three of them at me at once, and it is hard to treat it lightly.
>
> Driscoll: Becky did keep after you the whole session last time. . . . I mentioned this in the session, but it is really important: The issues that she was criticizing you on were changing during the session. One issue would blend into another. She was complaining that you did not spend enough time with her, and then that she did not get enough time with her friends the weekends she visits you. . . . My responses were all essentially attempts to clarify for her what she was saying, and she would change a bit each time . . . I am not sure that we ever really traced it down to a final point, and I am not sure that she has either. . . .
>
> Father: I could see that the way you have of not arguing with her was getting to her feelings. If you keep going with her that way, she eventually has to change.
>
> Driscoll: And if you enter into an argument with her, you may be arguing about something that she does not really care about.

I explain more about actively listening as an alternative to argument and recommend that they use it. But I am not so optimistic as the father is

that Becky has to change. I went quite a while actively listening with her last session and saw no signs of anything changing.

Father tried hugging Becky over the last few days and felt that was what she was wanting. She did not respond, but she did not resist either. I mention that when he hugged her in the session she was not gracious about it. I comment that we will have to see whether she really wants him hugging her more and if anything is to be gained by doing that. I thus invite him to collaborate with me to find out whether more hugging is going to do any good (III-3).

One of my main goals is to make Jim more comfortable and adept, and less touchy and defensive, in his role as a father. His defensive responses may be contributing to her tirades against him in several ways. His arguments against her are provocations that she responds to with further anger; she is out to nail him, and his reactions give her the satisfaction of hitting the mark; and his seriousness confirms for her that all this is to be taken quite seriously. To the extent that he can maintain more confidence with her, he could allay some of her continuing accusations. And not fighting with her so much would also make his life easier.

Some of these contributing factors are covered under the behavioral principle of reinforcement, although there are some contrasts as well.

Behaviorists might consider that it is the attention that is reinforcing and so tend to recommend no response or isolation. Seeing the contributing factors as they are listed above allows us to consider actively listening, joking, or other responses as plausible alternatives. My impression is that the father does not yet have the confidence here to try something like isolation with her and make it work. As his confidence increases and if other things fail, I might suggest a more authoritative approach.

I suggest that his status as the father is more secure than he considered it to be:

> Driscoll: There are some ways in which you can loosen up and let go of some of the power struggle. You do not have to win every argument. You can even give in some things now and then. But the last line is that you always remain the father. . . .

I use an image from animal social behavior to introduce the concept that a youngster should not count as so much of a threat (IV-2):

> Driscoll: I heard something which may be just a myth, but it makes a good point. In a wolf pack there is a strict hierarchy of authority. A lower member does not bark at a higher member, get out of line or take his food, or in any way challenge his authority. Or if he does, there is hell to pay. But a puppy can do just about anything he wants. A puppy could growl at the leader, or even snap at him, and the leader might just push him away or walk away himself. The puppy is *ineligible* to threaten the leader's position in the pack. So nothing that he could do is taken as a serious threat, and the leader remains the leader. . . . I am suggesting that with Becky you need to get to where nothing she can do really threatens your positions as father and stepmother. You need to get the sense that she remains the child and you remain the

parents.

The parents ask for some clarifications, but understand the analogy. They mention that there are issues on which they cannot give in, specifically Becky's demands for more time and money. I draw distinctions between those arguments which are mostly hot air and those where something of substance is involved. You can give on the former and not lose anything, but not on the latter. The parents support the principle of real limits to the time the children can have to visit.

There is some benefit from the earlier sessions:

> Laura: We practiced what you were working on last session. There were a million things that Becky said Ito get at us], and we just made jokes of them or ignored them, and she could not get one thing started. She said [in our last session] that she just ignored us all weekend, but that was not what happened. We did not give her anything to get her teeth into.

And she offers a reasonable interpretation of the continuing anger:

> Laura: Becky would like to intimidate us and is used to doing it. I think that she is real mad about it because she has lost her power.

It is common when the parents become firmer for the youngster to escalate her attacks. It is important that parents see this as an understandable stage and not as a failure of the program (1-3).

Father says that he has become more sympathetic to Becky since the

first session and feels good about being able to see her position with some sympathy rather than anger. My presentation of Becky has been balanced rather than strictly sympathetic, and his change in attitude may be due to increased self-confidence.

The parents see Becky as trying to be the caretaker for her mother and sometimes for her brothers. They note that Becky often takes the positions her mother has in the arguments between the parents over financial and other matters. Family loyalties are at issue, and I suggest a way of managing them (IV-6):

> Laura: There are some fights that don't even involve her, which she enters into just because she has overheard her mother complaining about something.
>
> Driscoll: You might just comment to her that she is doing that. Say something like "You are taking your mom's fight here. Let your mom fight this one out on her own." Do not treat her as somebody to argue with. Treat her as a non-combatant, no matter what she says. It is the idea of ineligible again. She is a noncombatant, so whatever she says is just kibitzing.

In response to Becky's complaint last session that she was only a visitor, I mention that a 13-year-old is old enough to be by herself and explore whether they can allow more visitation. They see Becky as irresponsible and quite willing to go through their personal belongings and to otherwise abuse any privileges. They agree that it is not her house and that she is essentially a visitor there. It is apparent that they cherish the little time they have alone,

and that managing the children can be a full-time responsibility with considerable strains and too few satisfactions. Although additional visitation might help allay Becky's anger (IV-4), the option of adding visitation hours is just not there.

They mention that the problems really began last year when they got married. Becky wanted to be more involved with the wedding and was hurt and angry that she could not be. She refused to visit for several weeks and has still never fixed up her room with any of her personal belongings. Information such as this is interesting, but it need not be a basis of our initial interventions. It may be acquired in later sessions as we try to fill in the missing pieces (III-4).

Father mentions that he has been uncompromising sometimes because he feels that Becky can overwhelm him, and that if Tom and Robbie asked for the same things he would be over the edge. I mention that having someone attacking you that way would easily make you feel you have no room to maneuver (II-l). His explanation helps account for his initial appearance of being inflexible.

SESSION 5

I was seeing the two boys somewhat as captive observers, but Tom surprises me by mentioning that he likes coming because we talk about what

is going on. Becky says she does not like coming, which does not surprise anyone. She comes because she does not want to miss anything. She leads off against Father, but fails to gain the advantage:

> Becky: Last time you gave me a "hug-me" sticker. And I really think that if I have to have a "hug-me" sticker, then he may hug me but not because he wants to. I hate fake hugs. . . . And I don't want to be hugged when there are other people around. . . . It is okay in front of my family, but why does he have to hug me in church?
>
> Father: I am being more and more hugging. But I can leave it out at the church. That is no problem.
>
> Becky: Well, why do you always have to be hugging me in public places?
>
> Father: Right. No problem. No hugging in public places. I can handle that.
>
> Driscoll: Is that the response you want?
>
> Becky: I don't know. It doesn't matter anymore.
>
> Driscoll: Does your dad hug you enough now?
>
> Becky: I don't even notice.

Father is clearly more adaptable and less combative than in the first session. She is no longer able to best him in the verbal joust. The hugs become a bogus issue, which I was suspecting earlier but could not know for sure until we tried it out (III-4).

Becky complains again about not having enough time with Father, and

he tries another angle:

> Father: What you don't have is so important that you don't even [enjoy] what you do have.
>
> Becky [sarcastically]: Oh God bless you, Daddy. You give us so much. I mean, you are just so wonderful.
>
> Father: No, I don't expect you to say that. But it would be helpful if we focus on what we do have together. I could live with that a lot easier.
>
> Becky: If we looked at all the good things in life?
>
> Father: I tend to do that. Did you know that about me?
>
> Becky: That would be just like having pollution and ignoring it. If you sit and look at the blue sky, it is just going to get worse.

Becky is arguing for more hugs and more time together, but she does not appreciate what she gets of either one. She is making a case that her dad does not give her anything and were she to appreciate what she is getting she would obviously weaken her case. So the pursuit of her case prevents her from enjoying what she says she is wanting.

The children agree that they are easier on Laura:

> Becky: We don't expect Laura to want to see us more. We feel that is dad's responsibility. . . . We feel we are her guests.

Is this why Becky is so much easier on her stepmother? Standards for

expressing oneself are mentioned:

> Father: I think I really value expression of feelings. Becky says I don't care about it, but I think I do. Maybe not to the extent that she means. . . .

It is important to gauge how much expression he has allowed, and whether the principles should change. Since he is a social worker, it would make sense that he does value the free expression of feelings.

Becky complains that her dad gets them dinner sometimes before he takes them home, but not other times, and we touch again on her concern for her mother:

> Driscoll: Is that a problem for your mom?
>
> Becky: Yeah. Mother never knows whether we are going to eat or not. He doesn't give her any definite time.
>
> Father: Your mom can usually take care of her own issues. I don't think that you need to fight over her issues. If she doesn't like it, then she can tell me and I can deal with it then.
>
> Becky: What bothers my mother bothers me.

The last comment confirms the impression Father offered last session that Becky fights her mother's fights. Father is following the advice I gave him last time in clarifying that it is her mother's fight and not fighting with Becky over the issue.

Becky is close to tears and has come to tears in several sessions when nobody is fighting with her and I am actively listening to what she is saying. So the anger may be a reaction to the uncomfortable sadness, and I try to see if we can go anywhere focusing on the sadness.

> Driscoll [to Becky]: I think that much of this is really painful, and rather than try to sort through it all, it is easier to just lash out.
>
> Becky: Well, I just get so tired of it. I try to be decent to him but. . . .

I try to provide a gentle interpretation to Becky that she is actually hurting her father by the things she is saying:

> Driscoll: When you are talking about the negative so much it can come across as an accusation. And it can hurt.
>
> Becky: I could care less whether I hurt his feelings or not. I used to care, but he hurts my feelings all the time. . . .
>
> Driscoll: Since he hurts you, you cannot care that you hurt him [back].
>
> Becky: I'm not sorry. I don't want to hurt his feelings but I feel that I have no choice.
>
> Father: I think that my sadness has been in terms of the children. The saddest time I can remember is when they used to cry when I left them [with their mother],
>
> Becky: You don't care if I cry.
>
> Father: I do care. But I have a harder time relating to your sadness because of your anger.

It is hard to focus Becky on the sadness. She feels justified in her accusations, and I showed her the sense it makes for her to lash back (II-l). This confirms my earlier impression that she has little concern for her father's feelings, and I do not try to appeal again to any concern she should have for him (III-5). This youngster wants to nail him and feels quite justified in doing so.

> Father: I'm not sure this family is going to change that much, but I think that just understanding what is going on is helpful. Tonight I found out about the sadness. I knew about the anger, but I did not know about the sadness. Driscoll: The sadness comes out when there is nowhere to go with the anger. The sadness comes out more here I than at home].

This is an essentially psychodynamic interpretation of one emotion as a cover for another emotion, and it seems to fit well here. I will try to follow it up in a later session, but I am not sure where to go with it. Becky is quite uncomfortable with the sadness, and she does not see me as enough of an ally for me to support her through it.

> Father: I feel some responsibility for the sadness. I think that some of your sadness is my fault because of the divorce. I think that the divorce is part of why the sadness is there.
>
> Becky: If only you weren't divorced but you are, so what does that have to do with anything?
>
> Father [to Becky]: I feel sadness that you and I cannot relate in a more fun and more understanding way. I probably have as much trouble accepting you as you have accepting me. You are just better at saying it.

Driscoll: Some of that comes from how much you blame yourself for the problems that are going on.

Father: Yeah, I do that. I would really rather not do that.

Driscoll: It doesn't seem to get you anywhere. Even when you can look and say, "My doing this caused these problems," you're spending a lot of time blaming yourself does not make you a better person. You are saying, "I may have messed it up, but at least I care enough to suffer for it." And things just get worse.

Portraying it as self-affirmation through penance shows the sense he makes in suffering for his wrongs (II-l), and from there he can understand the failings of suffering as a means to indicate caring (IV-5). Conducting penance for wrongdoing is one of a variety of purposes that may be involved in self-criticism (Driscoll, 1981, 1982; Driscoll & Edwards, 1983). My objective is to lessen the self-condemnation.

Becky asks what we will talk about in the next sessions and seems uncomfortable with things going on when she is not there. Father had mentioned that he was uncomfortable with anger, and I explain that we will talk about ways that her dad might get more comfortable with anger, how they can be better parents, and things like that.

SESSION 6

I ask how things are going. Father comments that he felt good about the

time he spent with the children on their last visit. They sang Christmas songs together, and he took Becky shopping. He felt he was quite patient with her. Laura comments that Becky can be quite critical in general.

I comment that the critical mood will lessen when she realizes that nobody is reacting the same way to it anymore. I explain to Father that as he has a steadier mood with Becky there will be fewer provocations for her, and she will see that she can no longer control him with her moods. I also suggest that he is the one who will have to make the changes here, because he is the one with the interest and commitment to try something else, whereas Becky wants to have it her way by antagonizing him, and has little motivation for giving that up. I am appealing to his sense of responsibility as a father (VI-1).

Laura says that Jim does get angry and that anyone would get angry in that situation, and asks what he is supposed to do with his anger. One of the things they do now is talk together about their angry feelings and support each other after the sessions and after the children are gone. I support that as a reasonable way to let go of the angry feelings without taking them out on the children (II-5).

I mention that they seem to be having a much better time with the boys:

> Laura: We always have a good time with the boys, and nothing ever seems to go wrong.

Driscoll: That's my impression. You don't have problems with [all] three children. The other two are real easy children. You get a warm gleam from them much of the time. Tom said he actually liked being here because he liked seeing what was going on.

Laura: We were watching them play a basketball game. Becky was making all the rules and [the boys] just walked off into the woods and left her because she was so controlling. We were wondering how they would be when they grew up, and I said maybe they would be really adaptable.

Driscoll: I think you missed that when you brought them in and said that you were having problems with them. You are not having problems with the two boys.

Laura: I used to say the children were a problem when it was not the children [together] at all. Now I catch myself when I am doing that.

This is confirmation here that the parents are separating the children in their minds and that the old alliance between Becky and the brothers is no longer solid. It is important to identify the strengths in the family and to separate them from the actual problems.

Father is still inwardly jarred by the accusations, and I offer him a *light-shielding* meditation to inoculate him against their impact (IV-3):

Driscoll: I have something I wanted to run through with you and see if it will help. It seems to make quite a difference for most of the people I have tried it with. I take you into a meditative state or trance state and have you imagine a light and make the light into an actual shield that it is a protective shield with the strength of steel, so that nothing harmful can get through it. And you will see Becky on the other side, and that she will be hurling verbal attacks at you and that they will hit this shield and bounce off and you will realize that they do not hit you. . . . It is your capacity for self-suggestion that makes it work. . . . Those with Christian beliefs can imagine that the light is

the love of Jesus and that the protection is God's protection. . . .

Whenever possible I try to give information on a procedure beforehand so that the client can give informed consent and does not have the feeling of being tricked into something. This maintains our own credibility and appeals to the client's interests in having some say in the treatment.

I have him close his eyes and relax, and we go through a seven-numbered sequence of breathing in deeply, imaging a color of light, letting the air go, and relaxing. Suggestions are given that he is moving comfortably into a trance state in which he can give himself positive, constructive suggestions, and that he is becoming closer in touch with his "unconscious" mind:

> Driscoll: I want you to imagine that Becky is there on the other side of the shield. She is angry and upset and she accuses you of something. Ordinarily, the accusation would come right at you and hit you in the face or in the chest or in the gut. Imagine that the accusation comes hurling at you and it just hits that shield and falls to the ground harmless and loses its force. And you realize here that you have not been hit, and you let go and relax. . . . Imagine she is throwing something again. . . . If you need more protection, you increase the intensity of the light shield. You realize again that you have not been hit and you begin to relax. . . . The shield is something that you can practice at home and take with you. You will feel protected and be calmer while facing the accusations.

After the procedure I ask him what his experience was:

> Father: I had the image of the shield clearly in my mind, and I felt relaxed. It was easy to imagine Becky throwing stuff at me, specific things, and [me] not getting at all upset at them.

The shielding procedure is adapted from the familiar relaxation and imagery procedures from behavior therapy combined with light imagery from meditation practices and the power of trance suggestions. Persons ordinarily experience anger and accusation as coming at them and hitting and hurting them, so the image addresses directly the actual experience of being hurt by a verbal attack. The shielding procedure is something I spliced together earlier from available methods and I found to be apparently effective[3] in brief applications, and so continued using.

Imagining the light as the love of Jesus is an integration of a Christian tradition into an otherwise ordinary mental health procedure. It suggests a bridge to something that matters to the clients with strong Christian beliefs and may make the procedure more acceptable to such clients.

We talk some more about child management techniques. I contend that yelling at Becky increases the tension and conflict because there is so much argument, but that in a calmer atmosphere a very strict statement can go a long way. I am again supporting Father in limiting what he is willing to fight over, so that the stands he does make carry more weight.

SESSION 7

The children are in a soccer league and enjoy telling me about some of their experiences. Becky mentions that she called her father something after

he let her off at Mother's house, and he could not do anything about it. He had not heard what she yelled at him, and he refuses her invitation to fight about it. He does not want to know what she called him and contends that what she does when she is with her mother is not his business. Becky resumes complaining that Father is spending time with Laura and leaving her out:

> Becky: It just makes me mad because he is going places with her.
>
> Driscoll: And you are feeling left out. Becky: We are being completely excluded. I don't see why we can't all go as a family and work on our relationship.

Her continual complaints are getting old, and other family members are not taking them that seriously anymore. I have no confidence that the active listening responses such as the one above have any real therapeutic value, but I give them here and there out of habit or simply because I am not coming up with anything else to say. It has become relatively easy to steer the conversations away from her complaints and onto other issues. I mention to the boys that they seem to be holding their own with Becky:

> Becky: If I get mad at Tom or Robbie, they gang up on me. But I don't care.

The earlier children-against-adults alliance really has vanished. The issue of standing up for their mother comes up:

> Becky: My mother asked Dad a favor to babysit us, and he said no. He is being a real jerk. . .

Driscoll: You are very loyal to your mom. You stand up for her.

Becky: Yeah. . . .

Driscoll: Does it ever get hard on you doing that? You are fighting your mom's battles. It would be easier on you if you weren't fighting them.

Becky: It would be easier on me if I just stand here and play dead. . . .

Driscoll: You are not doing this whole fight just for yourself. It is a matter of principle for you. And loyalty to your mother. . . .

I continue emphasizing that she is in the fight out of principle and loyalty, to show the sense it makes for her to continue fighting even for a losing cause (II-1) and to acknowledge what are essentially ethical considerations for her action (II-2). Perhaps credited already with being loyal to her mother, she could find a way to ease out of the battle. I press the issue and continue talking with her on this for several minutes. She changes the subject to Dad is a jerk, I change it back, she changes it again, and I allow her to continue with it. She does not acknowledge that my interpretation is of any importance to her.

Family loyalties, such as seen here, are a focus for some family system orientations, and my interpretation is a reframing or positive connotation. I focus on the issue not because I am of one of the family systems schools, but because the conversation revealed that that was what was transpiring in this instance. As a general principle, we should make case formulations not

because of an adherence to any theoretical orientation, but because that is what is revealed from the cases themselves.

Becky is a good student in school and is apparently somewhat more stable with other people than with her father. Clients who are in such turmoil when making angry accusations sometimes calm down when the adversary is not present.

I spend perhaps 20 minutes with Becky individually, to try out this remaining possibility. I actively listen and she continues the complaints; she mentions that Dad prefers Laura because she is easier to get along with, and I follow up on this, but she ignores her own insight. I try placing her in charge:

> Driscoll: If you were me, what sort of things would you do with your father?
>
> Becky: I would tell him that he is the stupidest person on earth. And he needs five years of counseling.
>
> Driscoll: After five years of counseling, you will be grown. We have to get something [that works] faster than that.
>
> Becky: I could care less. My life can go on without him.

She is on a tear and apparently unresponsive to anything I do. I have the sense that I am relatively interchangeable with her father, and that she is having some of the same emotional reactions to me as she has toward her father. One of the guideline principles is to counter transference reactions

such as these (1-2), but I have not found a way to do it. Being with Becky alone for any length of time would wear me out.

SESSION 8

I ask Jim how he has done with the light shielding. He says that he had forgotten about it and did not practice it. Laura says that he has seemed calmer with Becky since we did the procedure, and she thinks that it did some good. He says he feels detached from Becky, which I suggest might be because some of the turmoil is gone but has not been replaced yet with a positive relationship. He agrees that he has not been so over-concerned about her, but is not sure whether to attribute it to the procedure. Clinical interview assessment can be frequently inconclusive, leaving us with impressions but not clear confirmation.

I review my impressions of my time with Becky individually. I mention that Becky went on and on with the accusations and seemed to have no real awareness of me or of my reactions to what she was saying. I mention that it wore me out to be with her that long, and I do not recommend an individually oriented course of treatment. I believe we can do better with parental management tactics.

Laura mentions that Jim has always been stricter on the two boys than he is with Becky, and he realizes that is so. He now realizes that he would

never allow the boys to get away with saying some of the things that Becky says all the time. Laura notes that she is firmer with Becky than Jim is and suggests that is why Becky treats her more respectfully than she treats Jim. I consider this as a good account of why the children are so easy on their stepmother.

Father mentions that he has given Becky too much power over his life. There was a lot of conflict in his family when he was growing up but he never learned to deal well with conflict. He had a sister who fought with him a lot and often got the best of him. Laura mentions that he once called Becky by the name of his sister. He mentions that when Becky calls one of the boys "stupid" or "dummy," it makes him absolutely furious. Such taunts against the boys would be a reminder of what he was subjected to growing up.

So here we see a way the relationships in his own family of origin contributed to the present family patterns. Taunted growing up, he is easily intimidated by smart-mouthed females, and his being easily intimidated contributed to Becky's getting the upper hand in their relationship. The etiology is interesting and useful. It legitimizes his being intimidated by his daughter (II-l), and it helps confirm my impression that his being intimidated is at the core of the problem. Intergenerational family theorists would look for interpretations such as this and focus on them. But notice here that uncovering the origins is not in itself a solution to the problem. Moreover, I

have formulated the problem and have been working it for some time now without knowing the etiology. The key factor is that Father was intimidated by Becky, and much of what I have been doing has been to build his confidence with her. The past can be interesting in cases such as this, but is not critical either for the formulation of the problems or for their treatment.

I feel it is time for some stronger measures to control the accusations. I do not have any reservations left that Father would be inappropriately strict with her: I see him as appropriately strict with his boys and unusually lenient with Becky. He seems to have the savvy and confidence to wrangle with her, and she no longer has the support of her brothers against the parents. I mention that the parents must set the standards for what is allowed in their house:

> Driscoll: You have to look at your own standards. You can look from one family to another and see that no two have the same standards. But what they have in common is that they all do have standards. You have your choices as to where you can draw the line.

But at the same time I suggest that Becky really has gone beyond what seem to me to be reasonable and appropriate limits. I suggest that Father should make a stand. I outline a child management program and deal with their objections (IV-6):

> Driscoll: You need some sort of consequence. For general complaining or for condemning someone you could give her a warning. Like say, "Becky, I don't

> want you doing that and I want you to stop." And then if she continues she gets a point, and if she gets three points then she has to go to her room for 10 minutes.

Both parents are apprehensive about the flack they expect they will get. Father says he feels that he can do it. I have them practice some of the statements they might say to her (V-2). I mention that if they think it will be hard with a 13-year-old, they could wait and try it with a 16-year-old (VI-1). They vote for trying it now.

I give an illustration where the firmer use of authority was of considerable benefit. I tell of a 16-year-old who accused her mother of not loving her, in order to get her way, and found that Mother buckled under the accusation and gave her whatever she wanted. When she wanted to get out of school, she began complaining that her teachers did not love her, which was a new application of the earlier tactic. The problem cleared considerably when the mother saw through the manipulations and refused to allow the complaints. Illustrations such as this promote confidence in the program (V-l, 1-3).

The parents are concerned that Becky is running the boys down too much. I mention that Tom seems to hold his own, and I comment that they could support Tom by complimenting him on holding his own with Becky. I want to support a reasonable alliance between the parents and the boys. Laura is concerned that Robbie is too much like Jim, in that he lets everyone

walk over him. Father still has some concern that the children are allied together against him, but sees Becky as the sole instigator.

Father says that he grew up with parents who were very strict and had not wanted to be that way with his children. He had become too lenient because he had not wanted to repeat the pattern of his own childhood. Here again, the past is helping us make sense of the present problems. He had come to see the use of authority as oppressive, and I portray a more balanced concept of authority (IV-2).

They mention that they have been doing more things with the boys when Becky refuses to participate. They come back and say it was really fun, and the implication is that she missed out.

SESSION 9

The tougher line seems to have done the job, and relatively easily:

> Becky: We haven't been arguing lately. Dad and I have gotten along. Everything's okay for the time being. As far as I am concerned he may have given up on me.

In the last week Father called Becky once or twice on smarting off to him and told her she was out of line. He raised his voice to her and told her to stop in a more forceful manner, and she gave up. He says that she has not

been making accusations since then, and that they have been getting along considerably better. He once made her clean up her room for smarting off, but he never put her in her room as an isolation technique.

I had prepared the parents for more of a struggle, but she gave in more easily than we expected. She had been receiving little support for her positions for quite a while now and should have been growing tired of fighting the losing battle.

The parents have gotten what they wanted from therapy and decide to terminate treatment. The family patterns seem to be relatively normal and appropriate ones at this time for a stepfamily. I respect their feelings of completion and agree with their decision. I schedule a final session a month later to ensure that the program continues to work and that no new problems develop (V-3).

SESSION 10

The family confirms that things are still going well a month after the last session. Father judges that "everyone is doing pretty good," and Laura concurs. Becky goes on a tirade later in the session about the school bus driver being such a jerk, which I tend to consider about normal, although I sympathize with the school personnel who must operate in that sort of atmosphere. She does not lash out once at her father in the entire one-hour

session. We terminate the sessions, with the understanding that they will contact me if these problems recur or if there are other problems.

CLIENTS' IMPRESSIONS

A counseling evaluation questionnaire was completed by each of the family members approximately eight weeks after the last session. The questionnaire asked: "Overall, how much do you feel you benefited from the counseling you received?" and "How much do you feel that [each of the other individuals] benefited?" The responses were on a five-point scale, with 5 = a great deal, 4 = moderately, 3 = some, 2 = none, and 1 = was harmed. The amount of reported benefit is indicated in Table 1, with the respondent on the left and the persons being rated listed across the top.

Table 1

	Person Rated				
Respondent	Father	Laura	Becky	Tom	Robbie
Father:	great deal	great deal	some	some	some
Laura:	great deal	moderately	some	some	some
Becky:	some	some	none*	some	none
Tom:	none	some	none	none	none
Robbie:	some	some	some	some	some

**None is an average: Becky circled some, none, and was harmed.*

There were three open-ended questions, which are listed here with the comments from those who responded to the questions:

"What Were the Strengths of the Counseling as You See It?"

Father: You were easy for all family members to relate to, and therefore freedom to be expressive was established. The mixture of every other week being couple only and the next week the entire family aided communication. Your sense of humor was used effectively. You were direct with me and paradoxical with Becky.

Laura: Alternating sessions: one week family, next week couple. Counselor's relaxed attitude. Everyone seemed to feel comfortable to say what they wanted to.

Becky: Let me scream at Dad.

Tom: Let me play longer.

"What Were the Weaknesses or Problems?"

Father: At times I didn't follow the drift of a personal example enough to make it applicable.

Laura: No problems that I remember. Becky: Telling me to shut up when I got mad. I came there to express my feelings.

Tom: Becky crying or screaming.

"Please Make Any Other Comments You Feel Might be Appropriate."

Father: I felt confident in you as a therapist throughout. I felt your ideas and

insights and directives were helpful. I did not feel a bias toward any family member but I do feel you communicated the parent-child hierarchy well. I feel I could very comfortably recommend you as a therapist. Thanks for your help.

Becky: It made me mad as something to go there and made me upset so I hated it. I didn't need to put myself in that kind of mood.

In a later conversation, Father adds that through therapy he found the strength to set the limits, and that he feels that was a lot to have accomplished.

These evaluations were consistent with the appraisals the individuals had been making during the course of the treatment, and so were about what I might have expected.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Many themes weave through the course of these sessions. Some were resolved with apparent gains, others seemed to lead nowhere, and still others were resolved satisfactorily but the benefit remains un-assessed. One characteristic of the pragmatic approach is the willingness to look into various aspects of a case, find out where they take us, follow up on the ones that hold promise, and let go of the ones that do not pan out. Judgment and experience are obviously involved in telling how far to carry an intervention and when to let it go.

Issues and concerns may be considered for a while in the sessions and then the focus moves on. But we can often benefit from returning to the apparently pivotal factors over and over through several sessions, until they are resolved. My support for the father on parenting approaches took various forms, but was included in several ways in each session throughout the course of treatment. The objective is to familiarize the clients with the new patterns until they take hold (V-2).

Although I usually try to balance individual sessions with the parties on each side of a family conflict, I did not have an individual session with Becky until later in the treatment. Although there were time limitations, I suspect that my early view of Becky as hard to manage made it easy for me to put off trying to fit in an individual session with her. She was as hard to manage in my individual session with her as I suspected she would be, although I cannot tell if she would have been easier to relate to earlier—before I became identified too closely with her parents.

Although my initial impression was that Father was too strict, I came to see him as trying to maintain appropriate authority but too easily intimidated and in need of the skills and confidence to make firmer stands with Becky. My concluding formulation was that, because of his inadequate control, he had allowed Becky to continue in angry and inconsiderate social attitudes toward him. He appeared overly strict and rigid in the first session as he was trying

unsuccessfully to regain some semblance of control over the children.

My initial impression of Becky was a positive one of quick wit and social insightfulness, but I gradually came to see her as very out of control and in need of parental management. I would have preferred a resolution in which she felt she was gaining something for the concessions she had to make, but I was unable to arrange such a compromise.

Although I eventually recommended time-outs with Becky, Father never used them but brought her under control by simply raising his voice and demanding that she stop her accusations. His authority was increasing and hers decreasing over the course of the sessions, so that by the end he could get her to stop by merely commanding her to do so. I wondered later if my treating her accusations as an ethical position may have made it easier for her to give them up, although this cannot be confirmed.

Many of my observations and interventions are associated with familiar therapeutic orientations. The active listening responses used for clarifications are from client-centered counseling. The concern for alliances and family hierarchy is found in family systems approaches, as is the focus on loyalties. The specific parenting suggestions used are similar to the assertiveness training and child management recommendations of behavior therapy. There are smatterings of other orientations as well, and the light-shielding

technique is a smorgasbord all by itself.

My observation of Becky's comments as "making a case against her father" is pivotal. I portray it this way because it seems to be the most straightforward description of what she is doing by saying what she says. Note that her comments could also be formulated as "expressing her feelings," which might be preferred in humanistic approaches and which Becky herself prefers. But seeing the comments as "making a case against" recognizes the social influence aspect of her comments and invites us to try to understand their purpose. Although I originally assumed that she was making a case in order to get more affection and time with Father, her later responses and the loyalty issues make another motivation more plausible: She was trying to bring her father to justice for abandoning her and her mother. It can be important to talk about the concerns, but it seems clear that the issues would not have resolved here by allowing her to continue in the role of prosecutor.

In making her case against her father she focused continually on his abandonment and neglect and ignored indications of his concern and love for her. She exaggerated his faults, to the point of apparently fabricating some of her evidence against him. Although hurt is inevitable when parents' divorce, her overemphasis on the negatives undoubtedly extended and heightened the hurt she experienced. The viewpoint she argued became a critical aspect of the experience she had of her life. Blindly perpetrating her case against her

father, she became also a victim of her own propaganda.

Although there were more immediate and apparent benefits for Father and Laura, I suspect that the benefits for Becky could be quite significant in the long run. Father became more assertive with women, and he and his wife have a more peaceful relationship with the children. But the accusations Becky was committed to were causing continuing turmoil for her as well and could have led to significant social and emotional impairments were they to have continued through her teenage years. Through family therapy she adjusted better to her two-family situation and began to look for some benefits in her relationship with her father.

In conducting psychotherapy, my attention is on understanding the case and on obtaining my intervention objectives, and not on the controversies between theoretical orientations. Observations and interventions are made because they seem to fit in the case, and not because they are associated with any particular orientation. As pragmatists we can borrow freely from whatever is available to fit the requirements of our cases.

Pragmatic psychotherapy is one attempt to organize and clarify what we must actually attend to in the conduct of eclectic psychotherapy. The concepts are the distinctions we use, and the guidelines organize the objectives we seek as we work with our clients.

The breadth of the concepts and guidelines encourages versatility, and there are obvious advantages in having so many options organized into a single integrated approach. We have a range of choices in what to use and alternatives when our initial interventions do not provide sufficient therapeutic leverage. As a pragmatic psychotherapist, I am using aspects of various schools of therapy but am practicing from a single comprehensive orientation.

Appendix: Outline of Guidelines for Pragmatic Psychotherapy[4]

Guidelines are prescriptions for interventions focusing on major therapeutic objectives and the usual ways to achieve them. Specifying general objectives, the guidelines require clinical judgment on when and how to implement them.

I. The Therapeutic Relationship

1. *Be on the client's side.* Act in the best interest of the client. Avoid or resolve attitudes and feelings which interfere.

2. *Maintain an alliance.* Act so that the client can see you as an ally. Begin where you are welcome. Be personable and active. Correct misunderstandings, and counter transference.

3. *Maintain credibility.* Show the sense of what you are doing. Show how therapeutic procedures contribute to improvement.

Avoid statements that are untrue, and be careful with those that appear naive or false to clients.

4. *Convey an understanding* of the client's position. Share your impressions of the client's feelings and concerns.

5. *Share responsibility* for improvement. Take responsibility in ways that enable the client to take responsibility. Provide what clients are unable to provide themselves, and encourage them to do what they are able. Tailor interventions to individual clients.

II. Affirmation and Accreditation

Identify existing strengths. Treat the client as one who in important ways already makes sense, is acceptable, and is in control.

1. *Legitimize (show the client the sense he or she makes).* Misunderstandings or unusual situations may make sense of puzzling feelings or behaviors. Learning histories can make sense of unusual individual characteristics.

2. *Make it acceptable.* Decriminalize. Interpret characteristics in ways the client can accept. Create a comfortable atmosphere. Use humor. Select acceptable phrasing. Emphasize positives, underplay negatives. Introduce norms for comparisons.

3. *Confirm the client's control.* See the client as someone who is already in control of his or her actions. Show the legitimate reasons clients have for the control they maintain. Show the

ways they are successful.

4. *Don't buy victim acts.* A client may present himself or herself as a victim in order to avoid responsibility or to gain sympathy. Interpret and legitimize the reasons for the act. Challenge the ideology that affords special privileges to the sufferer.

5. *If it works, don't fix it.* See strengths as strengths. Avoid introducing uncertainties into areas that are already appropriate and functional.

III. Assessment

1. *Assess what matters*. Assess what is needed for effective intervention, including areas of strengths. The pivotal factors are those that contribute significantly to the overall problems and that can be readily altered by interventions. Stay with specifics. Omit extraneous information.

2. *Use ordinary language concepts.* Respect conventions of word usage, and avoid overly generalized concepts. Recognize what individual clients mean by the words they use.

3. *Collaborate.* Ask for specifics from clients. Outline plausible interpretations and collaborate on which ones might fit best. Monitor judgment. Recreate key episodes; invite interactions with family or friends.

4. *Learn as you go.* Weave together assessment and interventions. Intervene early, and learn from the reactions. Successes may

confirm initial assessments. Use failures to further understand the problems. Begin with the simplest adequate explanation, and elaborate as more leverage is needed.

5. *Don't expect the client to be somebody else.* Realize that problems are often entrenched and may survive your initial or most obvious solutions. Avoid holding clients responsible for what they are unable to do.

IV. Clarifications

Help the client understand what is happening and how to change things to gain advantage.

1. *Clarify situations.* Identify the client's confusions, and suggest clearer views of the real world. Weigh alternatives with the client, and encourage clients to observe for themselves. Legitimize misunderstandings. Emphasize understandings over misunderstandings.

2. *Clarify concepts.* Introduce and apply distinctions that the client can see and use. Build and elaborate upon concepts that are already familiar. Untangle confounded concepts.

3. *Address emotional reactivity.* Deal with the tendencies to overreact to things as bad, wrong, unmanageable, intolerable, and catastrophic.

4. *Deal with the reality basis of emotions.* Fear and anxiety are related to perceived threat or danger; anger to provocations; guilt to

wrongdoing. Deal with the circumstances generating the emotion—not merely with the experience or feeling.

5. *Clarify operating premises.* Look at the means by which the client is trying to get what he or she wants. Analyze the premises that are the basis of impractical attempts, and show how such premises are invalid.

6. *Present alternatives.* Clarify how the client can better get what he or she is after. Deal with objectives, and weigh the risks involved.

V. Instilling New Patterns

Take measures to maintain new views and new behaviors.

1. *Use illustrations and images.* Used to present material, a strong image may imprint and hold a concept in the client's mind.

2. *Familiarize (bring it home).* Support, restate, and deal with objections, so that the client may truly assimilate the information rather than merely hear it. Involve clients: have them try on more positive statements and practice new approaches.

3. *Structure carryover* of session gains into the client's everyday life. Make notes for clients to review. Have clients talk to others about key insights, or include family or friends in the sessions. Assign homework activities which maintain the suggested changes.

VI. Motivations

1. *Appeal to what matters.* Values change slowly, so that immediate motivations are best changed by appealing to what already matters to the client. Show how your suggestions are ways for clients to get what they actually want.

2. *Avoid generating resistance.* Coercion elicits resistance. When resistance appears, look at what you are saying that the client may see as unwarranted force or pressure. Re-describe interpretations to make them more acceptable, bypass objections, or leave the issue until later.

3. *Exceptions.* Minimize resistance, unless using it paradoxically to motivate healthy reactions.

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NOTES

1 As there are other candidates being proposed as common languages not based in ordinary language, the cover term "ordinary language pragmatism" is more descriptive and is preferred now to the "common language pragmatism" title I used originally.

2 There was no recording on session 2, and the comments here are from notes made immediately after the session.

3 I have used this procedure with perhaps 10 individual clients and once with a meditation group of 12 members. There was clear benefit for most of the individual clients and possible benefit for the others. Ten of the twelve members of the meditation group reported increased calmness during the next week. I ordinarily ask clients to identify any tendencies they have to lash back, and I caution that trying to get even destroys the shielding. The procedure is best used in combination with appropriate assertiveness suggestions.

4 Revised from the listing in Driscoll (1984), pp. 195-199. One guideline is an addition (address emotional reactivity), and the tasks of clarifying factors and of instilling new patterns are now separated.

Commentary: The Teenage Prosecutor as an Example of Systematic Eclecticism

Bernard D. Beitman

Struggle as many of the case authors in this volume might, they remain bound by certain general principles of psychotherapy. Each may wish to clothe his/her presentations in striking theories or durable models, but many of these attempts are more accurately construed as garments synthesized by their own unique life experiences. Varieties of systematic eclecticism are conceptual grids that both express underlying principles of psychotherapy and reflect the author s own life experiences. Richard Driscoll's case and concepts illustrate these points. For the reader, separating the author's own idiosyncrasies from solid, useful, and fresh observations can be a puzzling process.

DRISCOLL'S MODEL AS A REFLECTION OF UNIQUE LIFE EXPERIENCES

The theoretical thrust of Driscoll's approach represents one not uncommon human approach to increasing complexity: "Let's get back to basics." Eclecticism is a reaction against the confusing proliferation of

psychotherapy schools. One of the chief confusing elements is the proliferation of terminology often with unacknowledged overlapping meaning. For years, for example, Jerome Frank (1976) has spoken about the demoralization hypothesis and the need for self-mastery, while Bandura (1977) has spoken about self-efficacy. The terms truly have similar meanings yet they have emerged from different professions (Frank is a psychiatrist and Bandura a psychologist) and from within different traditions although both are prominent psychotherapy researchers. Driscoll's response has been to return to "ordinary language concepts" as a way to answer the problem of separate and apparently incompatible languages among theoretical orientations. But, as he states early in his case, "ordinary language words can be used in several ways" and, in my view, can suffer from the same ambiguity as multiple theoretical terms. In addition, who is to decide what is "ordinary" and what is not?

The appeal of ordinary language for psychotherapy is its populism. If this view had a slogan, it would be "Let's return psychotherapy to the people. After all that's who it is supposed to serve." Perhaps this attitude has been influenced by the fact that unlike most of the case authors in this book, Driscoll is not on the regular faculty of any university. He has been greatly influenced by Peter Ossorio and the Linguistic Research Institute of Boulder, Colorado (see Driscoll, 1984, and his case for references). In my view his bows to ordinary language concepts stem from his need to clothe eclecticism in political and philosophical concepts familiar to him.

DRISCOLL'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

It is around the term "pragmatic" that the strengths of his contributions begin to turn. Language is not only thought but also deed. Words affect others. There is in speech the intention to influence. He insists that therapists learn to pay attention to the effects of speech as well as its content. Although he is not unique in this regard (e.g., Watzlawick et al., 1967), this crucial aspect of communication needs continuing emphasis in psychotherapy.

His "guidelines" are clarifications, systematizations of basic psychotherapeutic principles. His reference to these guidelines during the case makes them difficult to comprehend since the reader must break the flow of the case by referring to the appendix to grasp the details. His book contains clearer, more easily read descriptions (Driscoll, 1984). The guidelines are written in simple English and are geared toward each of the stages of the psychotherapeutic process. He offers ways to build the psychotherapeutic relationship and places much emphasis on affirming the client's personhood and strengths. During the search for important patterns he reemphasizes the need to collaborate and to learn from unexpected responses to therapist intervention. During change (which he calls clarification) he insists that the therapist sharpen the maladaptive patterns through illustrations and alternatives and also pay attention to the reality basis of emotions. He mirrors cognitive approaches by suggesting that the "operating premises" (also known as

schemata and constructs) be analyzed and, where appropriate, declared or demonstrated to be invalid. As faulty attitudes are revealed, alternatives can be clarified and "brought home," a process that resembles psychodynamic working through and cognitive review. Finally, it should be "carried over" or, as behavioral therapists might say, maintained and generalized. He also offers guidelines for dealing with client motivation: "Appeal to what matters" and "Avoid generating resistance." However, he does not mention the therapist's reactions to the client, which may also generate resistance. This omission implies that the pragmatics of human communication apply only to the client's effect on others and the therapist's effect on the client but not to the client's efforts to influence the therapist.

A final important point is made less clear in the case introduction and presentation and more clear in his book. Driscoll acknowledges that he is not able to tell therapists what to do when, but only how to think about what to do when. The unique confluence of the personalities of therapist and client create too many variables for which a single author cannot control. His guidelines contain crucial goals and general ways to meet them. The specifics must be developed by the individual practitioner at the time action is required.

Driscoll's handling of the family members and his comments on the process offer some other ideas worthy of emphasis:

1. Humor may be useful during the engagement stage as well as later

in therapy.

2. Responsibility is neither "all or none" but rather may be only partial, depending on the circumstances. People influence each other, and one's own actions may be in part a product of external influence.

3. Therapists are teachers. Driscoll demonstrates that therapists try to convey to clients their own favorite lessons. He tries to show Becky, the teenage prosecutor, and her father how her words influence his feelings.

4. He shows a useful flexibility in scheduling by alternating stepfamily meetings with couple's meetings. He goes for 1.5 hours for the first session.

5. Clients may learn more from watching us than from what we think we are communicating. For example, during an early session, the father saw Driscoll model an alternative way of responding to Becky that could work. In the week before the fourth session the father and stepmother had begun to pull back from the roles Becky was attempting to have them play. This was the crucial change upon which the success of the therapy pivoted.

6. Stalemates need not be prolonged. When he found himself frustrated with his inability to handle Becky individually, he switched back to the family therapy approach. I would have been curious to know in what ways he reacted to her and whether or not this information would have been useful in understanding how the father reacted to her. However, I am

uncertain that such information would have improved his handling of the case.

7. Uncovering the origins of a problem is not in itself a solution to the problem. The past can be interesting and illuminating from a theoretical perspective, but Driscoll places much needed emphasis on changes now. Intergenerational theories and psychoanalytic theories can distract clinicians from the practical work at hand by rewarding them for confirming theories.

8. Latent content may be missed without consequence. In session 10, the follow-up session, Becky goes on a tirade about the school bus driver "being a jerk." Driscoll mentions that he sympathizes with the school personnel who must operate in that atmosphere. I believe that she was unconsciously referring to her anger at Driscoll (the "psychotherapist equals school bus driver") and that he was also expressing sympathy for himself for having to operate in that kind of atmosphere. Perhaps this observation is of no use to the conduct of this therapy, but because of my own training and predisposition to see latent content, I mention it. Generally speaking, whether or not therapists are monitoring it, clients do make indirect reference to therapists, and therapy awareness of this can sometimes be useful.

SYSTEMATIC ECLECTICISM AND INTEGRATION

As Driscoll would probably be among the first to acknowledge, the words

we use influence not only the behavior of others but also our own behavior. His calling his approach "pragmatic" implies that others are not pragmatic, just as the term psychodynamic implies that other therapists are psychologically static. In the same way, the term "cognitive" implies that other therapists do not use thinking. Similarly, some writers consider themselves integrationists and others call themselves systematic eclectics. Are the differences between these two groups truly that great? Ultimately these competing labels may meld together into a definition of psychotherapy that is generic and without the implied bias of superiority. Driscoll's work is a reflection of the efforts of many others who in their own ways are adding to a clear, more precise definition of the psychotherapeutic enterprise.

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Commentary: Practicality in Need of a Direction

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Pragmatic family therapy is an eclectic therapy emphasizing practicality and clinical utility. This approach emphasizes the use of ordinary language concepts and follows a set of guidelines presumably developed for individual therapy. The author states that this therapy uses interventions from client-centered counseling, family systems approaches, behavior therapy, psychodynamic therapy, and "smatterings of other orientations as well." In addition, I recognized interventions usually associated with several different systems of family therapy, including strategic therapy (use of paradox), structural family therapy emphasis on understanding relationships in the family), and intergenerational approaches (influence of family of origin on present family).

The eclecticism in Driscoll's approach is most apparent in the use of technique. The procedural guidelines that form the basis of the approach are intended to represent a synthesis of familiar interventions from a variety of current psychotherapeutic systems. Interventions are chosen "because they seem to fit the case, and not because they are associated with any particular orientation." The author states that he is not concerned with "the controversies

between theoretical orientations." Thus, the major emphasis is on finding the therapeutic tactics that best fit the case.

An effective eclectic approach requires the integration of different theories to provide a conceptual basis for the application of different interventions. The issue for the eclectic therapist is not one of competing theories. The task is to integrate aspects of different theories in order to achieve a clearer understanding of a case. The combining of theories is as important for the eclectic therapist as the selection of techniques. A theoretical perspective integrating individual and family level variables is essential in providing a context for determining which interventions "best fit" the situation. A lack of theory creates difficulties both in the application of the guidelines to family therapy and in providing a rationale for choosing particular guidelines at specific choice points in therapy.

Family therapy requires not only an understanding of individual behavior and dynamics but an appreciation of family systems theory and interactions. Because of differences in the developmental stages of different family members, there are often inherent conflicts in the family members' needs, desires, goals, and overt behaviors. Consequently, a careful assessment is often necessary before embarking on a therapeutic course. Driscoll favors the interweaving of assessment and intervention under the guideline of "learn as you go." The combination of therapy and assessment is a well-established procedure within

some approaches to family therapy. However, my personal preference is for a more substantial and formal assessment prior to beginning the treatment phase of therapy. In this case, the author begins to intervene at the outset, prior to obtaining a clear or detailed understanding of the presenting problem or the family dynamics. Although the author bases his assessment on his observations of the family interactions, it would be helpful to obtain the family's impression of why they are seeking therapy. In reading the case, it was never clear to me why the family specifically came in for therapy or what the presenting problem was from their point of view.

Some of the guidelines appear more suitable to individual psychotherapy than to family therapy. For example, the first three guidelines for establishing a therapeutic relationship are: Be on the client's side, maintain an alliance, and maintain credibility." My question is: "With whom?" A major difference between individual psychotherapy and family therapy is that disagreements often exist among different family members with regard to values, acceptable behavior, therapeutic goals, and other issues. Families in harmony rarely present themselves for therapy. In this case, the rationale for the specific interventions used is clear to the extent that particular guidelines are specified. But the guidelines themselves are not easily applied to a family context. For instance, the therapist is sensitive to the interpersonal struggles between Becky and her father and to family dynamics (the breakdown of boundaries and the different alliances). He makes clear therapeutic choices regarding who to support, what

behaviors to modify (e.g., helping the father become more comfortable in his role as father), and what tactics to use (e.g., separating the parents and instructing them in child management techniques). However, there does not appear to be any general plan or rationale for why these particular issues are addressed.

A different issue is the importance of theory as a rationale for choosing interventions. It is on this point that I disagree with Driscoll. The author states: "As practitioners our attention is primarily on understanding and intervening appropriately, and not on articulating what we are doing" (emphasis mine). My contention is that by articulating what we do, we achieve understanding and appropriate interventions. The advantage of eclecticism is that it provides the clinician with a large repertoire of tactics and interventions from which to choose. It is important that the clinician have a clear sense of theory to guide the selection of techniques. The author states: "Ordinary language pragmatism is a way of grasping and comparing the various alternatives that might be appropriate in particular circumstances, and not a general prescription on which ones to use in any specific instance" (emphasis mine). What is needed in eclectic psychotherapy is a coherent rationale for deciding on what intervention to use in a specific instance. In my opinion, a delineation of the theory underlying the choice of interventions would strengthen this approach. Theory serves the purpose of providing a rationale for choice. As such, it can often serve a practical purpose in providing a direction for therapy when there appear to

be equally viable choice points. This is especially true in family therapy where the presence of several clients simultaneously often leads to interpersonal conflict and/or disagreement or there are a number of different options available.

A major objective of this approach is to make the intervention)s) that best fits the case. In family therapy it can be difficult to decide what constitutes a "best fit" because of the different people involved. The eternal struggle between parents and children, especially teenagers, often labeled as the "generation" gap, is testimony to the differences that exist. Theory can be helpful in deciding whether to focus on a compromise solution, helping the teenager to individuate or differentiate, or to support the parent in setting limits on the youngster. In this case, the therapist made a number of clear choices, but the rationale for the choices is not clear to me. For example, the therapist states that one of his main goals is to make the father more comfortable and effective in his role as a parent. This is based on his formulation that the father's initial rigidity and strictness represented an overcompensation for a loss of control over his children. Becky's competition and rivalry with her stepmother is an alternative interpretation to explain the conflict between Becky and her father. This view might lead to a very different set of interventions.

The issue is not which formulation is correct. It is the nature of therapy for the therapist to continually be faced with situations in which there may be

equally good alternatives for both understanding and intervention. Even the most experienced therapist faces uncertainty. The author acknowledges this at one point when he states, following an intervention: "I will try to follow it up in a later session, but I am not sure where to go with it."

Clinicians experienced with families will recognize that the emphasis on the use of ordinary language and practical interventions makes good common and clinical sense. This case was handled with skill, sensitivity, and versatility. Because the eclectic clinician faces so many choice points as a result of the spontaneous occurrences in therapy and the diversity of available techniques, it is helpful to have a cognitive map for guidance. Theory provides the conceptual map for organizing the specific formulations and interventions. Without such a map, the rationale for our specific choices can be unclear and the therapy can lack direction.