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Instructor’s Manual for Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy in Action: A Demonstration with James F. T. Bugental, PhD

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Instructor’s Manual

EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY IN ACTION
A Demonstration

with James F. T. Bugental, PhD

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS
Make notes in the video Transcript for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

2. SESSION-BY-SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Pause the video after each session to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions. The Discussion Questions provide ideas about key aspects of the therapeutic work that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. LET IT FLOW
Allow the sessions to play out some so viewers can appreciate the work over time instead of stopping the video too often. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage the viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the sessions? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively and constructively critique this work as well as their own.

4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL
Assign readings from Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites prior to viewing. You can also time the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

5. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

6. ROLE-PLAY IDEAS
The Setup: After watching the video, organize participants into groups of three. Assign each group to role-play a psychotherapy session following Bugental’s Existential-Humanistic model. Each role-play shall consist of one therapist, one client and one observer. Therapists should focus their
attention and comments largely on the clients’ *process*, as opposed to *content*. Examples of process include facial expression, body language and other non-verbal cues, intonation, timbre, pattern of speech, degree to which client appears engaged or present, implied attitude towards self, use of qualifiers such as “maybe,” or “I guess,” and any other manifestations of client resistance. Therapists may also want to practice helping clients to engage in what Bugental refers to as “searching,” which involves focusing inward and sharing as much as possible their full range of immediate awareness, including thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and other concerns. Here therapists should also *primarily* (although not necessarily exclusively) focus on process rather than content. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss their experiences. First have the clients share what the session was like for them, then the therapists, and then ask for the comments from the observers. Focusing on process can also be broken down into more specific elements, as is done below.

**Break the Process Down:** Learning to focus on process is a difficult skill for most therapists to acquire, and will certainly not be mastered in one role-play. A good way for students and trainees to practice is to break down process commentary into more discrete components. Try the following series of exercises:

A. Using the triads described above, have the therapists *only* comment upon clients’ facial expressions. For example, they might say things such as “You smiled when you said that,” or “Your face just turned red,” or “Your eyes look sad.”

B. Next have the therapists *only* comment upon clients’ body language or movement. For example, “You took a big sigh there,” or “You kind of collapse as you say that,” or “You suddenly seem more energized.”

C. Now *only* allow commentary on voice, such as “Your voice is very soft now,” or “Your voice is flat, monotonic,” or “Your voice gets loud when you talk about your dad.”

**Debrief:** After the role-plays have been completed, reconvene as a large group, and open up a general discussion on what was learned about both the practical and the emotional aspects of doing therapy from an Existential-Humanistic orientation. Was it difficult for participants to focus on process? What did they discover doing this? How did this differ
from how they typically interact with clients? Having some fun with this process can make the role-play an enjoyable and learning experience.

**Alternative Role-Play Format:** Another alternative is to do all of this in front of the group with just one therapist and client; the entire group can observe before discussing the interaction. After a while, the facilitator or another participant may jump in as the therapist if the therapist reaches an impasse. Follow up with a discussion that explores what works and does not work with this model.

**7. PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST**

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists or clients in videos may be nervous, putting their best foot forward, or conversely trying to show mistakes and how to deal with them. Therapists may also move more quickly than is typical in everyday practice to demonstrate a technique. The personal styles of therapists are often as important as their techniques and theories. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, all participants must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research to fit their own personal style and the needs of their clients.
Session-by-Session Group Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors or facilitators may use a few or all of these discussion questions keyed to certain sessions or those issues most relevant to the viewers.

FIRST PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

1. **Process Commentary:** During the session, Bugental focused extensively on Marie’s process instead of on content—i.e., he commented on changes in her eyes, her grin, her hand movement, etc. How did this strike you? What do you think his intention was? What effect did this have on Marie? Were there other aspects of her presentation that stood out? In what ways did you find Bugental’s comments productive or unproductive?

2. **Feelings in the Moment:** What did you notice in yourself when Bugental instructed Marie to check within, and to describe her feelings in the moment? Do you ask your clients these kinds of questions? What is difficult for you about this?

3. **Asking Permission:** When he gave Marie a choice about what to focus on, Bugental validated Marie’s decision to go to less emotionally intense areas of her life. How did this affect the feeling of safety in the room? What might be drawbacks to asking this sort of question?

DISCUSSION

4. **Pace:** Bugental felt it was important to follow Marie’s pace. What did he mean by this? Does it work here?

5. **Past and Present:** Marie mentioned several times that a trauma happened seven years prior. How might you have responded to these allusions differently than Bugental did? What do you think about the discussion of uses of the past, and whether it is being experienced in the here-and-now?

6. **Resistance:** Bugental’s conception of resistance not only applies to therapy, but also encompasses the client’s patterns of resistance to being fully engaged and present in her own life. Does this seem like
a useful concept? How would you characterize Marie’s resistance—both to the therapy, and to being fully alive? Bugental stated that in the context of two sessions he wouldn’t really address the underlying character resistance…and yet he does begin to draw Marie’s attention to it. What was your reaction to his focus on her pattern of control?

SECOND PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

7. **Silence:** What do you think of the way Bugental initiated a period of silence at the beginning of this session? Did this approach work here? If you were the therapist, what might be challenging for you about beginning in silence?

8. **Confrontation:** Bugental kept bringing the topic back to how Marie treated herself, and how she prioritized her inner life. What was your reaction to this confrontation? Do you think it helped the work? Was he effective in balancing confrontation with support, as he states is important?

9. **Screaming in Session:** When Bugental pursued Marie’s comment about screaming at greater length, what came up for you? Did this exploration seem useful? If so, how? What was your reaction when Bugental asked Marie if they should scream together?

10. **Maybe:** What do you make of Bugental’s drawing attention to Marie’s use of qualifiers, “Maybe…,” “I think…,” “It seems like…?” Do you think that these comments distract Marie from more significant issues, or that they serve an important function?

CLIENT REACTIONS

11. **Liveliness:** Were you surprised by any of Marie’s reactions after the session? What do the reactions she describes say about the relationship as a component of psychotherapy?

12. **Comfort:** What do you think contributed to Marie’s feeling of comfort and warmth in working with Bugental? Do you believe that level of comfort is necessary for the therapy to be effective? Were you struck by how important it was for Marie that she experienced Bugental as accepting, non-intrusive and kind? Do you wonder
whether you come across that way to clients? What might get in the way for you?

DISCUSSION

13. **Underlying Philosophy:** Bugental declares that “searching” is central to therapy and to life. What does he mean by this? Do you share this underlying philosophy? What other things do you think are central?

14. **Personal Effect:** How do you think that viewing this video will affect you as a therapist, and your engagement in the room? In what ways will these ideas influence other aspects of how you approach life?

15. **And You?** How would you feel having Bugental as your therapist? Do you feel an alliance could be made and that he could be effective with you? Why or why not?
Reaction Paper for Classrooms and Training

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the professor or facilitator.

- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach discussion. Respond to each question below.

- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video--we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about working with patients? For example, how is the alliance developed? What stands out in how the therapist works?

2. **What I am resistant to.** What issues/principles/strategies did you find yourself resisting, or what approaches made you feel uncomfortable? Did any techniques or interactions push your buttons? What interventions would you be least likely to apply in your work? Explore these questions.

3. **What I found most helpful.** What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work?

4. **How I would do it differently.** What do you think you would have done differently than the therapist in the video? How does his emphasis on process commentary and working with resistance differ from how you work? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Suggestions for Further Readings, Websites and Videos

BOOKS


WEB RESOURCES

**www.Psychotherapy.net**  
An in-depth interview with James Bugental, and an excerpt from his book *Psychotherapy Isn’t What You Think*

**www.ahpweb.org**  
Association for Humanistic Psychology

**www.meaning.ca**  
International Network on Personal Meaning

**www.existential-therapy.com**  
Overview of existential and humanistic psychotherapy by Louis Hoffman.

**www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/humanistic.html**  
Excellent resource list of Existential, Humanistic, and other approaches compiled by Victor Daniels
RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE
AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Down Every Year: A Demonstration of Depth Oriented Brief Therapy (Coherence Therapy)
– Bruce Ecker

Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy with James Bugental, PhD

The Gift of Therapy: A Conversation with Irvin Yalom, M.D.

Irvin Yalom: Live Case Consultation

James Bugental: Live Case Consultation

Psychotherapy with the Unmotivated Patient
– Erving Polster, Ph.D.

Rollo May on Existential Psychotherapy
Psychotherapy.net

Complete Transcript of Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy in Action

with James F. T. Bugental, PhD

DISC ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bugental Commentary: Hello, I’m Jim Bugental. I have been practicing, teaching, writing about psychotherapy for almost 50 years now. You’re going to be seeing two demonstration interviews of the kind of psychotherapy, which we call Existential-Humanistic. What those two terms mean is important and so I want to take a minute to talk about them. When we say “existential” we are pointing to the fact of our existence, of our being. The difference between being truly alive and being on tape, so to speak. When we’re truly alive we are present to our lives, we’re aware; we’re in touch with the fact of our being. Then the word “humanistic” that has to do with our conviction that each person has more potential for richness and fullness of living, for dealing with life issues than that person generally uses. In combination then “existential-humanistic” means an optimistic look at each person in that person’s carrying forward is being.

What we are about to see are two sessions of therapy with a client whose name is Marie. Each session will be shown without interruption, but following the session there will be a discussion of what occurred. The discussants are people who will have been in the room with us during the conversation. Then we’re very fortunate in that after the second session it proved possible without for-planning to have a de-briefing session with Marie, where she told us more of her own experience, and you will see that also. Marie came to see me about a week or two before the first session because I wanted to make sure that the experience of being on camera would not be distressing to her. Other than that, I had no other contact with her other than, you know, the casual contacts of getting set for the filming being the only other contact, and I have not had contact with her since. The filming, important as it is to conveying our work, also makes an artificial situation in some measure. For
the room is full of other people rather than being the privacy customary in our psychotherapy. But the client Marie showed a great ability to do her work despite that and I think will help us understand what this kind of work is like.

The effect of having only two sessions on Marie and on me was I think considerable. For Marie it meant that she needed to monitor how much she became open to the situation. For me it meant two contradictory impulses. On one hand, I wanted to do a lot of demonstrations of ways of working, probably being much more active than I ordinarily would be, make it a good demonstration. On the other hand, I was concerned for Marie that she not be pushed too fast and I wanted to make it a good demonstration in a deeper way by showing what pace is part of the way we usually operate, rather than pushing. Nevertheless, I think what emerged does show a reasonably accurate sample of our work. Now let’s meet Marie.

FIRST PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

Bugental: Marie, as you know, we have talked before briefly just to get acquainted. We didn’t want everything to be just like we’ve never seen each other before. We’ve had very little chance to really talk in any depth and we appreciate your willingness to be here very much.

Marie: You’re welcome.

Bugental: I think it might be a good place to start if you would just say a little bit as I told you, about some kind of issue or concern that we can explore together for a while.

Marie: Let’s see I have not given it so much thought, as far as focusing in on one, but something that is coming to play more and more in my life is the fact that my father is very ill and we had a life threatening situation due to this illness in December. And so this is something that has obviously affected me personally and my family as a unit. And we have a very, a very close family. Geographically my parents are not here in California but they happened to be during this last trauma. So that would be one very pertinent focus now.

Bugental: Sure let’s just talk about it a little bit. How is it with you, you say it was in the past this life threatening incident. How is it with you right now?
Marie: I have by virtue of the fact that they are not here in California at this point in time – they left maybe 3 weeks ago – I have been able to get a little more distance on the subject and a little different perspective only because it is not something that I am encountering on a daily basis. It’s generally left me very sad. I think it’s inevitable that this illness will kill my father, but there is a certain amount of hope that he will continue for, you know, a number of years. That may be a bit optimistic, but I feel that that’s a healthier way to look at the whole situation. But I think even more than feeling sad about this – because I had to go through somewhat of an acceptance during December – with the crisis is a matter of being worried all the time because they are 3000 miles away. I’m as worried about my mother in this whole process as my father. And so there’s a sense of worry and anxiety. It’s kind of in the back of my mind all the time.

Bugental: And it’s there now?

Marie: Yeah, oh yeah, it’s always there.

Bugental: This may be a little difficult but see if you can just sort of tune into it so I hear how it is in you right now.

Marie: Right this very minute it’s under control, it’s under control. I think that is by virtue of the fact that I had a very positive conversation with them yesterday. So, a lot of times after chatting with them it leaves one wanting for numerous reasons, but I think yesterday they sounded, both sounded upbeat. And so in effect that was, you know, you can get off the phone and say, “phew! We’re okay until the next conversation.” So as far as really searching myself I think that if I would allow myself to really, really, really start thinking about the inevitable consequences of this disease that I would get very sad once again. But right this minute I’m okay on it. It’s something that I’m coping with alright today, right now.

Bugental: Yeah, you emphasized right now because it’s the sort of thing you can’t tell how it will be.

Marie: Right, right. I mean it’s, you know, it’s kind of an invasive thought. I mean, if I allow it to, there are so many aspects to thinking in terms of my father’s mortality and his inevitable death: There’s how I will react, there’s how my siblings will react, there’s my mother’s scenario. And so there are so many different aspects to the whole thing not to mention the
fact that, you know, it’s my father. I mean, I’m going to lose my father. My mother loses a husband, I lose a father; it’s pretty overwhelming. I don’t know that I’ve come full circle on that. I did a little bit more where the emotions were overwhelming in December but I think my energies, I have taken the course where my energies, those energies are better put towards trying to come up with some interim solutions, trying to be positive, trying to help myself and the family cope. I think that’s kind of where our support system comes in. It’s more with understanding the emotions that everyone is going through on their own level, as well as my father’s reaction to this whole thing. So maybe that’s our form or my form of coping with it at least currently. But inevitably I know it’s going to be something that will have to be dealt with purely on an emotional versus an intellectual level because it’s going to be a horrible sense of loss. I mean, I have both my parents alive and—

Bugental: Isn’t that sort of the case right now that there’s both the intellectual and the emotional right now and you are controlling the emotional with the intellectual right now.

Marie: Yes, I think that’s very true, I think.

Bugental: And that becomes a question that you and I need to confront. If I help you go into the emotional more, will that upset something that’s important to your operating, daily operating, or could it be helpful to you to explore it more?

Marie: I don’t know.

Bugental: I don’t either.

Marie: Yeah, I really don’t know.

Bugental: I hear as you talk both in the words and in your whole way that you really made a lot of effort to keep it under control.

Marie: That’s true.

Bugental: And so now if I begin encouraging you to let release that control to some extent how does that, what do you think about that?

Marie: I am very torn about where that would lead. I think that the consequences of that could be very positive and shed a lot of light on a lot of different things, but on the other hand it’s like upsetting a balance that I
have obviously needed to come to some sort of grips with as far as dealing with this. So that’s my honest answer on that.

**Bugental:** I hear that. Why don’t you take a minute right now, if you can, do it out loud, but if you can’t, to yourself and kind of see, because it’s really your choice which direction to go.

**Marie:** [Pause] And maybe I ask a question in response to your question and that is from your perspective and your experience is there always a positive end to exploring one’s emotions?

**Bugental:** The way you are asking I think you know the answer, don’t you?

**Marie:** Well, yeah. So I suppose—

**Bugental:** I can say that more often than not if we get chance to really look through and feel through our feelings we come to the situation involved with better perspective. That’s not always positive in the moment, though it may be in the long run.

**Marie:** Right, right. Well, it’s taken me a long time to get to the perspective I currently have. Only I think with the motivation being one of coping more than anything else.

**Bugental:** It’s a hard choice and I want you to really feel free to make it either way you want.

**Marie:** No I think it’s, I think under the circumstances that it would be a good endeavor.

**Bugental:** That’s very gutsy.

**Marie:** Well, that’s what I am saying now, so.

**Bugental:** I understand. Well let’s make one ground rule that any time you find it too uncomfortable, you tell me that, and if we can’t balance it out more comfortably we’ll just stop, give you a chance to do whatever you need to do with it.

**Marie:** Okay.

**Bugental:** Good. Let’s take a minute now for a transition. Can you just go inside, maybe down here? [Points to gut, abdomen] See what’s stirring after all this talk.

**Marie:** The initial thing is fear.
Bugental: Take your time now. Fear comes first. Then...

Marie: Then a certain amount of acceptance, I think. I think this process that you and I will go through is something that I will have to go through on some level at some point in my life, I think, to get the full perspective on this situation. In general terms death is something that I’ve not had to deal with a lot in my life and I’m getting to the age that many of my friend’s parents are getting ill or dying. I mean, it’s becoming more evident and it brings up a whole bunch of issues.

Bugental: Yes.

Marie: But—

Bugental: What does it bring up right now for you?

Marie: I think just an overwhelming sense of anticipated loss and sorrow. In relation to my father it would bring up a lot of things that, “God I wish I would have, you know, explored that further with him,” or this, that and the other, you know. And I am not a big one on things could have been different. I just find that kind of non-productive thinking. I mean, I think that way, but, and I have my own set of regrets. But I find it far better to kind of accept what’s been and try to go forth.

Bugental: Marie, can you sense there’s a sort of rattled quality right now. Usually you are very contained and controlled, and I think you are beginning to let loose just a little bit. That’s fine. Just let that inner part, that quiet part speak inside you. Just go slow. No rush.

Marie: And we’re still trying to, I am still trying to ascertain what other feelings this brings out in me as far as deciding to explore this a little further. I think senses of regret, anticipated loss, a certain amount of helplessness, too – helplessness more that I can’t help my mother. And, you know, maybe one overriding thing that I did not hit upon earlier is the fact that there are going to have to be some very basic decisions made. And although these decisions have been grappled with before it’s kind of like it’s inevitable, I mean, where people are going to live, and things of that nature. So in another words there is potential for some major changes, some more major changes for everybody involved, everybody, me and my family. So I think what it ultimately it does for me is I lose any measure of control, I mean, any control I’ve got over—I have no control over this
situation. There’s absolutely nothing I can do about it as far as what’s going to be the inevitable.

**Bugental:** And control has been important to you.

**Marie:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah that’s—

**Bugental:** Kind of a wry smile there.

**Marie:** Oh yeah, that, that is definitely one of the ways that I get by.

**Bugental:** Say a little more about that, getting by through control.

**Marie:** I have my own theory on this.

**Bugental:** Alright.

**Marie:** As far as myself goes. And I, when I say control I am talking in terms of self control. And I feel as though that that MO has served me well because in the past I have been out of control and—

**Bugental:** So you know the contrast?

**Marie:** Yeah, I sure do.

**Bugental:** I noticed a minute ago when I reflected about control being important your whole manner changed for just a minute. The careful face broke up into a grin, your voice had much more modulation and generally you have somewhat monotonic speech. And I felt like I got a glimpse of the Marie in back of the public Marie.

**Marie:** Yeah, there—

**Bugental:** Can she talk any more?

**Marie:** Oh, sure.

**Bugental:** I would like to hear more.

**Marie:** The subject of my father’s death probably brings a very flat line to my emotions. I mean it’s not that I’m uncomfortable talking about it but it certainly does not promote any real positive thoughts, so.

**Bugental:** It summons up that control we were talking about, doesn’t it?

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Bugental:** Yeah.
Marie: That is true, that’s very true.

Bugental: I think it might be useful – let’s do an end run, so to speak – if you could let that, the Marie that’s in back of the control, so the strong control, if you could let, get in touch with her, let her speak a little bit.

Marie: Well, they’re actually one and the same person, so that’s okay. I mean, I’m at least integrated to that degree, but one thing that I know and I have kind of experienced say in the last 6 years, 7 years is that I have been far less spontaneous than I used to be. I think some of that and naturally I think the easiest way to explain that is just in terms of the restrictions that my lifestyle imposes, the demands of work, going to school, family, etc, etc. But I do know it goes deeper than that.

Bugental: Do you miss the old day in it?

Marie: Oh yeah, oh sure, there was a lot less responsibility, or at least perceived responsibility.

Bugental: I see, I see.

Marie: Okay?

Bugental: I see her in that smile that comes in.

Marie: Oh and I still have a good time–

Bugental: Yeah?

Marie: Once in a while. But it’s, yeah definitely, I take things a lot more seriously than I have ever in my life. And I think that that kind of came as a result of a life change I went through about, I guess, going on 7 years ago. And I quit drinking then. And that was, that was major. And I think one of the ways that I coped with not drinking was to become much more controlled. And because it was an act of sheer will.

Bugental: Yes.

Marie: At that point in time, so—

Bugental: But you did it.

Marie: Yeah I did, yeah I did. And I think that the ways in which I coped with that had a natural spin into the way that I operated, period. So—

Bugental: Help me understand that a little more because I—
Marie: Well, I think I’m going back to the spontaneity and the lack thereof, I think – and this goes just through my own way of kind of understanding this – that there was always a lot of internal and external pressure to do well, to do this, to do that, to do whatever, and to become the President of United States. No not quite, but I mean that could—

Bugental: But pretty high.

Marie: Yeah, there you go. Yeah, kind of sets the standard, and that imposed a lot of stress from the time I can remember, upwards. So the one way in which I dealt with that is I drank and I started drinking not at the age of nine or anything like that, but I mean, I started drinking probably when I was 17, 18 and it got increasingly worse and it became my coping pattern and it was the way that I could do away with all of those external responsibilities for lack of a better way of expressing it right now.

Bugental: Your hands are pretty expressive.

Marie: Yeah that’s the outside control versus the inside control. But it went both ways because a lot of this was internalized and I would not point a finger to anyone. I mean, it’s me, it’s my makeup. But drinking definitely did away with those constraints or restraints or whatever. But anyway it was not a healthy way to cope with it. It ended up just getting worse and worse and worse. And I made a decision to quit after a trauma and that’s fine and it worked and— But to go back as far as kind of a full circle on that perspective, I think that in order for me to cope on a daily basis without what became my biggest crutch, I became very, I had to be very regimented initially and this regimentation was nothing that wasn’t new to me. You know, it was going to catholic school and wearing the uniforms and doing the whole, yeah, you know. So I mean the regimentation was nothing new to me but it was the most comfortable arena or way, I guess I should say, that I found to cope. And since that occurred or since that became kind of my way of coping—

Bugental: Yes.

Marie: And way of living and so, I don’t know, maybe it has gotten worse.

Bugental: It seemed like you were kind of speculating or trying to estimate just then.

Marie: Yeah.
**Bugental:** Can you let me in on, what was that like, what were you doing just then?

**Marie:** What I was just doing? I was trying to conjure the, my own head trip back then and just kind of see how I was operating and remember how I was operating, what my perspectives were and how it was kind of working out for me.

**Bugental:** As you look back from today at that, what does that trigger inside of you?

**Marie:** Oh, that poor girl. That’s exactly... How did you do it?

**Bugental:** Yes.

**Marie:** That’s exactly what it triggers inside me, I mean, that effort was pretty overwhelming for me. Yeah. I don’t think that— The amount of willpower that I had to find in myself was something I don’t know if I would ever be able to do it again. I mean, I suppose because I did it once I can do it again, but that was—

**Bugental:** But when you look back today at that time of change you have simply a real admiration for the girl who did that.

**Marie:** That is, yeah I do, I sure do. I sure do. That’s probably what I consider the greatest credit to me is doing that. That was major. I am darn sure that I wouldn’t be sitting here talking to you if that, the other continued. Yeah, yeah.

**Bugental:** Your life really took a turn at that point.

**Marie:** Yeah. Yeah, I pretty much saved myself. I was like on the, I think in AA they call it the “yets,” it didn’t happen yet. Well, I was like probably hanging on with one finger to totally “yet.” So it was about the last possible minute that things could have turned around, so.

**Bugental:** Although you chuckle about it now—

**Marie:** No, it’s—

**Bugental:** Yeah, there’s a lot of feeling.

**Marie:** Yeah there is. And I think I don’t look at it at all on a humorous note but I have to smile because I’m happy. I mean, you know I really feel—
Bugental: You did it.

Marie: Oh yeah, I am happy there, but I am very grateful that it did not go any further than what it did. I mean a lot of friends of mine are in a lot of trouble, so, and a lot aren’t. So I think we all kind of, everyone had to make a decision.

Bugental: When you said, “If I hadn’t made the change.”

Marie: Yeah, bad.

Bugental: Can you imagine what that might have been?

Marie: Can I imagine what it would have been like?

Bugental: I don’t know. I’m just curious what the inner experience was because clearly you had a lot of feelings about that.

Marie: Well it would have just been— I don’t know, to be honest with you. I mean, when I laugh about it, you know, it’s – and I shouldn’t say laugh but – when I make light of it, it’s like, hey, I would have been in jail or dead by now. And, but in not such a light manner, that’s the truth. I mean, I think that I led a very double life. I was a fully functioning— I mean, my drinking undoubtedly would have affected my career more sooner than later and it did on minor occasions but that’s, let me put it to you this way: I definitely got a handle on that before anything took a real nosedive. But it was, but I forgot what I was saying, so I don’t remember right now. I can think about it, yeah.

Bugental: That’s all right. Why don’t you pause just a minute, we’ll both pause and sort of get centered back and I’ll do the same thing.

Marie: Good.

(A Brief Pause While The Video Crew Changes The Tape Cassette)

FIRST PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION (CONTINUED)

Bugental: Marie, there’s no way we can pick up where we were, where we are now. Why don’t you just check in with where are you, now not just with the ideas, but where are your feelings right now?

Marie: My feeling, let’s see, I was just trying to in my mind regroup and connect and see how one subject kind of flowed into the other. But how
am I feeling right now? Well I am feeling like I need to think about being spontaneous again in my life a little bit so, which is something I do get accused of, so.

**Bugental:** I don’t know what it is.

**Marie:** That control, organization, not as spontaneous as—

**Bugental:** Accused is not approved of?

**Marie:** Right.

**Bugental:** I see. Do you feel that, too, or is that more from the outside?

**Marie:** Oh, no, I feel it and I freely admit it. It just happens to be the way I operate and on some levels it works just fine.

**Bugental:** I should think so.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Bugental:** Right.

**Marie:** Yeah, so, um—

**Bugental:** And yet, there’s, your eyes are falling, there’s another side to that story.

**Marie:** Sure, there is. Because I think that one’s freedom, or my freedom is actually curtailed to a certain degree. But when there are X amount of responsibilities and things that need to be accomplished, if it’s going to get done it’s going to get done. I do tend to, “overbook myself,” you know. I try not to say I will do 25 things and then consistently only get 20 of them done. So, in other words, I try not to set myself up for a loss.

**Bugental:** Do you know, you are telling me this with a little side glance of— What is it? It’s got a smile and sort of, rueful quality, is it?

**Marie:** I don’t know. Maybe it’s just, maybe I am just thinking that, “Ah, if my sister, my husband, my brother were all here, they would all be going, ‘she’s saying it out loud,’ right now” which is kind of good. But, so maybe that’s why I have—

**Bugental:** Would they be surprised?

**Marie:** Would they be surprised? No, no they wouldn’t be surprised. But I think they’d say, “Good, she’s admitting it,” you know. So acceptance
would be the first step.

**Bugental:** So you’re known in the family for your control?

**Marie:** Well, the great organizer.

**Bugental:** The great organizer.

**Marie:** For sure, yeah, yeah.

**Bugental:** But by acting the great organizer, there’s an impish—

**Marie:** Oh, yeah.

**Bugental:** Yeah.

**Marie:** I mean, I’m the eldest of four children. I came about a lot of this stuff naturally. And it’s one of these things where if somebody didn’t do it, there have been, I mean, it wouldn’t get done. So, okay I’ll do it. It’s just, that’s the role that I assumed by default and by my own volition. So I think they both played a part. And, you know, if you find or I have found that it is just an MO that works. So, but what I have also found the older I get is that it’s totally an illusion. So, I mean—

**Bugental:** What’s the illusion?

**Marie:** The illusion of control, you know, that everything’s shades of gray. So as much as I try to plan, organize and orchestrate something’s always going to go wrong. I mean something will always not to be a part of the plan. So anyway, you know the 2 pages I got on the way over here this morning, they weren’t part of the plan that I orchestrated for these 2 jobs that are going on. So I think, I think that I have to work on – and I am okay on it, I think – that it’s just a matter of being somewhat flexible and—

**Bugental:** Your whole manner just changed and I had the feeling there was something that you are looking at, sort of chewing on—

**Marie:** Yeah, I was trying to figure out, am I flexible? And there would probably be a pretty good debate about that within my family and—

**Bugental:** How about within you’re—

**Marie:** Yeah, I think I’m flexible as far as being open minded. But as far as flexibility with my scheduling, I’m not very good at that. In fact, I am down right bad at it.
Bugental: I don’t know what bad means in that context.

Marie: It is not comfortable for me not to go about the day as I have a plan in my mind. I don’t relax very well.

Bugental: Now that brings up the grin and the chuckle. What’s that?

Marie: Well it’s kind of— It’s too bad, I think. It really is.

Bugental: But the grin and the chuckle don’t go with “it’s too bad.”

Marie: Well, let’s see. Maybe I should think about that. I don’t know why. It is incongruent, I guess.

Bugental: You know the association I had, that perfect people just cut class.

Marie: Oh yeah, that’s probably exactly right. I think you have nailed it because that would be—that’s it. That is true. That is exactly right. If I say I am going to blow off my afternoon and read a Ludlum novel, for example, there is always a sense of guilt that I should be doing something else, because there usually is about 1000 things that I could be doing that would be “productive.” So that’s true.

Bugental: Does that trouble you?

Marie: Oh, I was initially going to say not as much as it used to, but I don’t know. Which part of it? I mean, there are a couple parts of it as far as troubling me. Does it trouble me that I don’t have the kind of time, leisure time? Maybe, some times. Does it trouble me that I feel guilty if I do just take a break? Yeah, but that I think needs exploration. I know that I’ve kind of come to a way of, not so much scheduling, but I do indeed allow myself some of that free time and that’s something that I didn’t do for a long time. I mean, I think I did it to an excess when I was drinking. I didn’t do it for the first four years I didn’t drink mainly just because that was one of the aids to help me along, okay. And now maybe I am a little bit better about all that. But I think it’s something that I still have got to come to some sort of terms with.

Bugental: I wonder if this is a thing we could talk more about perhaps next time.

Marie: Sure.
Bugental: And does this make sense? Is it a good place to stop?
Marie: Yeah. Yeah, it feels like a good place to stop for me.

Bugental: Okay. I want to suggest, Marie, don’t feel you have to do any homework. Let whatever happens, any thoughts and big views or anything just happen, but you don’t have to do anything like an assignment between now and next time.
Marie: Good.

Bugental: And we will talk some more.
Marie: Thank you.

Bugental: Thank you.

DISCUSSION

Bugental: Working with Marie at the outset, I found that the current concern about her father’s death would probably take us into things that would be more upsetting for her than I thought we wanted with just the time limitation. And I was thinking about that when I realized that I overlooked the thing I keep teaching you all about: What’s the leading edge of the resistance? Which of course was her control, so manifest. And then when we switched to that, well, it gave us a useful area in which to work. She was astonishingly candid, clear in her presentation, but the control was always there. And sometimes she was able to let it down briefly, and I respected that given her history; she’s done a splendid job.

Yalom: Getting back, though, to the issue with her father: You made a point there of giving her a choice of whether she really wanted to work on that on an emotional level or not.

Bugental: Yes.

Yalom: And she said she did and yet…

Bugental: And yet it’s been proved that it’d be better not to.

Yalom: What do you mean by that?

Bugental: Well, she did see the value of trying to get into it. I don’t think she recognized at that point what it would mean to really get into all the things about her father and her family and so on. And if we had a long
relationship, open ended relationship to work with and we weren’t on camera then I think that might have been a very fruitful area to plumb. But since even though she said that she was willing, even that you may remember was somewhat conditioned.

Sapienza: Yeah, I wasn’t sure when she said that she wanted to do it what she really wanted to do.

Bugental: No, neither was I. And so when the other opportunity opened, that’s the much better way to go.

Yalom: It seemed, though, you pursued that a couple of times to see that if she was able to work on a more affective level about her father and his illness.

Bugental: I don’t remember, yeah, that could be.

Yalom: But you were saying that you made a conscious decision to move away from that.

Bugental: Uh, huh. Particularly as we got onto the subject of her control, which did seem a very available area to work in.

Yalom: My sense was you were fairly gentle with her and very supportive. You didn’t— You gave her a lot of support. You didn’t push her a lot.

Bugental: That’s true, yeah.

Yalom: Can you say more about why you chose that approach?

Bugental: I am very aware of being on camera, that this is going to be recorded, other people will see it. I would not want to do anything to make her feel embarrassed later or regretful that she participated. We can teach enough without bringing that about.

Douglas: I also noticed that you were quite willing to work with her in a timeframe that she brought up, about 7 years ago, and a lot of things happened for her And knowing you and your sort of predilection for emphasizing and coming out of the here and now, I was interested in that, how you came to be quite content to dally there.

Bugental: But she was experiencing now, which was where I was going, even though the content was 7 years ago.

Douglas: It seemed like you picked that up somehow that there was a
wealth of feeling attached to that time frame.

**Bugental:** And as we learned, it was a big emotional thing that happened 7 years ago and it is still going on, in a certain way. She is still very carefully controlled.

**Douglas:** Can you remember what clues you saw that led you to see or intuit that, that might be really fruitful there?

**Bugental:** I think, this is hindsight so I am not totally sure, but the thing that comes to mind now is that little change in her manner. I think I commented on it. She had been almost monotonic, I was struck because when I saw her briefly beforehand she wasn’t that monotonic. She was clearly in control as we began and then something we talked, I guess when I reflected about the control, I don’t know, it’d be interesting to see, but her manner changed. There was almost a girlish laugh, her face became animated, her tone had intimation and so on. So that I think is the thing that particularly—

**Douglas:** Got you. Yeah, I know that you really seem to pick up on that and use that as a theme.

**Bugental:** And to recall it back to her from time to time.

**Yalom:** Yeah, you picked up several times on her laughter, her mannerisms or her hand movement.

**Douglas:** Less controlled—

**Bugental:** And it wasn’t under such tight control, so it gave us an opening, an entry point. Yeah.

**Yalom:** It seemed like you were able to do that in a positive manner, rather than confronting her on her resistance, on her control, you were able to point out the areas that she was, that were kind of breaking through that.

**Bugental:** Yes, right.

**Yalom:** And you really joined with her in a positive way about that.

**Bugental:** That’s my effort, right. And particularly this really is, quite aside from audience and camera, this is really the first interview. We had, what, 15 minutes maybe to get acquainted. And in the first interview, I sure wouldn’t confront her, you know, in an abrupt fashion. And she
cooperated, you see, that control was something she could let down, not drop, let down and then bring back as she need to but she was willing to.

**Sapienza:** But once again for me it spoke to the respect that you have for resistance. And the importance that Marie feels about her need to control and to intellectualize, that they were going hand in hand: your respect and her awareness for what she was doing and needs to do at times.

**Bugental:** Marie provides such a wonderful example of why one needs to respect resistance. She’s remade her life. And, sure, it’s a resistance in some sense, but it’s also a structure that’s made for, uh, saved her life, one would say from what she has told us.

**Yalom:** You use the word resistance differently than a lot of people. A lot of people use it as a resistance to therapy, and you can certainly conceptualize Marie’s resistance on that level, her control being a resistance in the therapy. And yet you see it in a broader context.

**Bugental:** Much broader, yes. Good point, Victor, because the resistance to therapy or to the interview that we saw was so quickly, she could lower that, but the resistance in back of that to being out of control which is not something just in this room or with me, it’s clear that’s part of the way she has learned to manage her life. I don’t want her to overcome that; don’t want to have her feel it broken or something.

**Yalom:** In the long haul, you want to address that.

**Bugental:** Yes. Good point. If we went on for some time and she was able to and wanted to work further on it, I’d like to make it less compelled, that she would get even more choice about when she is going to be in control. She hinted towards the end of our time together of some feeling that sometimes it was too much and that what her husband, her brother—

**Sapienza:** Yes, her family was, would be glad to hear her say that—

**Bugental:** Yes.

**Sapienza:** She had difficult relaxing or letting go of things.

**Bugental:** But the fact she could say that already says that it isn’t as tight as it might be if she couldn’t. She said it with humor rather than resentment, which another person might feel.

**Yalom:** But there was, she was saying that they would, they would chuckle
to hear her say it out loud.

**Bugental:** That’s right, to cop to it, right. One thing that was so apparent with Marie was that she tends to strain all incoming through thinking about. Very seldom, did we get direct to the feelings first. And that’s of course the nature of the control. It also means that I think Maria feels, and she showed this toward the end, that there is something more that she wants.

**Sapienza:** How did you see that when she showed it toward the end?

**Bugental:** Well, in her ability to criticize herself about it, in her use of sister, husband, so forth, in her manner with me. She was able to, I can’t remember the words now, but to kind of be more immediately personal in responding to me then she had— Before the break, you know, before we had the pause, I was concerned that that pause would make her go back all way up to tight control, and it didn’t. She functioned very well on a more open level.

**Sapienza:** One of the things I was really, thought was so poignant in that session was this idea of this impish quality to her face and her voice and this admiration. You pointed to her when the, I guess maybe there are two things I am bringing up: one is this quality that you picked up that she could really relate to, and the other is this admiration that she had for herself for what she had done and how she had used her, what you might call defense to get herself out of. That both those things were so poignant for me in watching you work with her. And the way, I thought that was the moment where the feeling was much more than the surface than—

**Bugental:** I think you’re right.

**Yalom:** I found myself a number of times while watching it feeling being moved almost to tears, and yet it seemed that the affect was more restrained for her. I am wondering what you felt during the interview with her.

**Bugental:** After we got, found the avenue to work in so to speak, I was able to let go more I guess to the immediate process. Before that I was trying to, now wait a minute, I don’t want to push too hard on this death of her father thing. What else can we do to have a good interview for the camera? And I was busy like that in a way that I prefer not to be but often happens.
Yalom: But often it gets in the way of—

Bugental: It gets in the way, right. And if it, you know, that can happen with no camera and no audience, there are other things that can bring it up. But once we found, so to speak, the avenue in which we can work I felt increasing admiration for her. And I think that’s the word, just appreciation. By damn, she pulled herself up by her bootstrap. There was just a hint about some trauma that precipitated the change. But we all know, I am sure, from our clinical experience that there can be traumas and still a change doesn’t occur. Some don’t react, respond, as proactively as she seems to have. I had moments of curiosity what that was, but that really wasn’t the point of it. The point was that she used it to change this. The other feeling that I had was almost a playful one, when I mentioned the impish smile.

Yalom: And the kid cutting school.

Bugental: Yeah, the kid cutting school, I could tease her just a little bit to try to evoke that other side. And she responded greatly to both.

Sapienza: And I think that’s important. You evoke, you helped evoke the positive or the side that was— You know, we might think, well, she is telling us that she is sad and she is not showing it. But there was this other side of her that is so important in this case which is that spontaneity in that little girl and that—

Bugental: If we were working longer, again, open-ended, I would probably do something similar for her. It helps to make the alliance stronger. But we have had that kind of understanding, sort of almost our secret understanding, you know, that there is an imp in there. Then to come back to the sadness, we got money in the bank, so to speak. Then to say, for instance, we might say, “When you think or how will you feel about your father right now, can you say what comes with it?” in a way that I wouldn’t have said this early, and I hadn’t said that and that’s— When I would want to help her get back to the sad part, too, which we would need to do, we have something to draw on because we have had this, seen the other side, acknowledged the other side.

Yalom: What you refer to is kind of giving the support, as well as balancing the support with the—
Bugental: Confrontation.

Yalom: Confrontation, right.

Bugental: Exactly so, right.

Yalom: It seems it’s, when she would get up into her head a lot and intellectualize to give explanations for her behavior there is a part of me that wanting you to push her more, and kind of breakthrough that resistance kind of in a more traditional way of thinking about resistance. This helps me to understand more; you were really nurturing the kind of the support and the alliance so that such confrontations would be possible. She wouldn’t feel attacked.

Bugental: That’s the difficulty with first interviews and early interviews: building the alliance, the container within which confrontation can occur. You know, we’ve sometime said this support, the pressure and the backstop.

Yalom: What’s the backstop?

Bugental: The alliance, the clients’ feeling that we don’t see them just as resistant, that we see more of them and that, the steadfastness with which we contain the readiness to be effected by that. I think we don’t always recognize how important it is to most clients to know that they can make us, make an impact on us, that we will change the topic if they need that, or that we will give them support if they need that or that we will be standing steady even if they assail us, that’s also backed-up.

Yalom: I guess it’s, to get back to what we talked about earlier in terms of defining her kind of resistance or that controlling part of her and seeing that even though you are saying you weren’t really working on the underlying characterological resistance—

Bugental: No.

Yalom: In a sense you were because you were already labeling it and you were already talking about it and you were already making that a topic of discussion. And just helping her recognize that I think is the first step.

Bugental: Yeah, absolutely, but it’s from a high altitude. We hadn’t come down to the ground level with it. We are just observing it, saying, “Oh yes we see it’s there,” and then later we would need to come down to ground.
Sapienza: Well, I think that it speaks to when I am always amazed, and it reminds me all the time to do myself in my work is the pacing, the way that you right from the beginning stayed with her, didn’t interject anything, didn’t try to get it to go a certain way, but really looked for your avenue, but let her lead you to where that avenue was, and even with this resistance it’s the same.

Bugental: I think the thing that stood out for me most was the growing, her growing ability to let the other side, the playful, that feelingful side, and I suspect that this side also has the pain in it though we didn’t get into that, but even in this short, somewhat artificial situation, she really showed movement along that.

Sapienza: She did.

Douglas: She even commented that she had something to think about now.

Bugental: Yeah, right and she’ll do it.

Douglas: Right.

Bugental: That’s why I didn’t want to give her any assignment to work on in between.

Yalom: Yeah, because that would have been her tendency from what she told you?

Bugental: I think, yeah

DISC TWO

SECOND PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

Bugental: Let’s just take a minute and get with ourselves as much as we can. Breathe a little bit, and when you are ready let me know.

Marie: I’m okay.

Bugental: You’re faster than I am.

Marie: Sometimes.

[Pause. Bugental watches Marie until they nod to each other.]

Bugental: Good. Mm hmm. It felt sort of like things we saw last week, that
quick way, “I am okay”, giving the feeling where you are sort of pushing more, or a little bit, “come on, come up to the mark.” Is that accurate?

**Marie:** That’s accurate, yeah. That actually is pretty on the target for my MO [Modus Operandi] so to speak.

**Bugental:** Why don’t we just stay with that for a minute and see what it brings to mind, this MO of yours and the way you treat Marie.

**Marie:** Well, I think what it brings to mind is the fact that more times than not I am trying to do about a hundred things at the same time. So I think what that ultimately has me doing is constantly prioritizing in my mind as to what needs to occur now. And I think, so there is constant state of prioritizing and in addition to that what I have to constantly remind myself is to focus on the task at hand because I am always thinking about what I have got to do next or maybe what I didn’t do – yeah. Or if this could have been done differently or better or whatever. So I think it’s just kind of an ongoing internal dialogue and escaping that only happens for me really when I get absolutely immersed in what I am doing and that doesn’t happen real frequently. If I am reading a good book, watching a good movie. I can focus if I am working with or dealing with another human being. You know, I don’t have a real problem with everything else becoming a part of it but it’s not something that I do often. Yeah, that’s very on the mark.

**Bugental:** I was just thinking that in your priorities, Marie’s private internal life must be fairly low down on the list.

**Marie:** Well yeah, I suppose so but also on the other hand I think that… Yeah, I think that’s a fair assessment, but I also think that on some level I am constantly working on that. I mean that’s always kind of happening and I will have some sort of thought or insight and I will kind of work through it. I have an opportunity on a daily basis because I am in my car a lot and that’s, some of that kind of down time. And also I get up real early in the morning just so I can have an hour kind of to regroup, but in effect, yeah, that’s true, that’s true.

**Bugental:** How about right now, where is Marie on the priorities for right now?

**Marie:** I am… This is what I am doing right now, I am with you. I am not
allowing the other things that are kind of motivating me as far as what I have to do next where I have to be next, the phone call I have to make when I leave here. The other things they are on my mind I have kind of put them aside. And what was very helpful in doing that was to sit here and take some deep breaths and kind of regroup.

**Bugental:** Yeah.

**Marie:** So that, that helped me kind of do away with all that other chatter for this time with you. As far as where me, my internal dialogue is in relation to this, it is the priority right now. I mean obviously we are doing this with a goal in mind. But I believe that me, my feelings are the priority of this communication. So that, it’s a nice little cocoon you know, it’s a nice little breather.

**Bugental:** A protected space.

**Marie:** Yeah, for this time, yeah.

**Bugental:** Let’s use that, in that cocoon, if you just, maybe take one or two of those breaths and sink into it even more, what do you find?

**Marie:** Well, as far as how I am currently feeling in this internal dialogue going on just going into that. I am harried today, I am stressed, it’s taking me more effort maybe to concentrate on what we are doing than a week ago when we met and I think that’s just because there’s pressures both internal and external that are happening right now today. So, I guess I’m just feeling a little on edge.

**Bugental:** And you said that’s a guess, “I guess”.

**Marie:** Well I am feeling a little on edge.

**Bugental:** And that’s leading you on…

**Marie:** No, no, that’s okay, I mean I am just, yeah, there is probably a better way to express that but I am feeling, uh… [Pause]

**Bugental:** Your face just changed.

**Marie:** Well I was just thinking I guess it goes back to the age old, I mean everything is kind of circular. And it’s a matter of the same thing we started out talking about in relation of priorities and there’s a 100 things going on always at the same time. So I am constantly berating myself for
not being better at time management. So that—

**Bugental:** Oh you’re tough aren’t you, on yourself.

**Marie:** Yeah. Yeah I am. Yeah I am.

**Bugental:** You seem complacent about it.

**Marie:** Well, I think it’s something that I have addressed and I am not so sure that… It’s ingrained. I have tried to look at some of the origins of it. I can pinpoint some of those and no, I don’t give myself a lot of breaks.

**Bugental:** I hear that.

**Marie:** I really don’t and I know that that’s… That kind of ties in with what we were talking about last week. And being, not being a spontaneous, as spontaneous as maybe I could or should be but again those “shoulds” start coming into place, so it’s kind of, you know, I think I have gotten to the point and when you say complacent I have accepted this as a part of myself. And I guess it, it works, you know, I manage to get things accomplished.

**Bugental:** I’ll bet. Yeah. But doesn’t it make you kind of a machine for your purpose?

**Marie:** Well, to a degree I suppose but I think just by the nature of my relationships and the kind of job I have that, that I need to be a pretty feeling human being. And as I mentioned earlier I think I can put some of that stuff aside when I need to attend to or am with someone else. But, yeah, there is an underlying kind of soldier type attitude. I think at least as far as things that are in relation just to me.

**Bugental:** Yes.

**Marie:** Yeah, maybe that’s a better way of looking at it.

**Bugental:** Yeah, that says it.

**Marie:** Yeah, I think that that defines it a little more accurately. And so—

**Bugental:** How do you feel about that?

**Marie:** Well, as I mentioned I think to a degree it’s the coping mechanism that works for me and I think it came about relatively naturally. I guess that one of the aspects of that whole attitude that is not appealing to me is that there is never a sense of being content. Okay, when you had said
earlier I am complacent with that, well I am not really complacent with too much and so contentment on many levels eludes me, period. And it’s something that I don’t know if it is just an illusion. I mean, there’s certain moments that it’s fine but it’s just hard for me I think to, to be real content, for lack of a better way of expressing it that that kind of is an ongoing anxiety.

**Bugental:** Let me feed back what I am hearing, then you check it out for me.

**Marie:** Okay.

**Bugental:** I am hearing you say that you have learned a way of sort of managing things in your life that works pretty well. But it has quite a cost in contentment in deeper quell your satisfaction inside yourself. You know how to deal with situations, a variety of situations, demands, but in that process some inner part of you doesn’t get to relax. I notice, as you tell me that, your usual prompt speech is larded with things like “I think,” “I guess,” “it seems” as you sort of feel your way to think about this. Am I on target?

**Marie:** Yeah, you are on target, you are, because that inner peace is something that I am still working at, I am still working on. I think that my orientation as far as being, as far as doing, you know, kind of constant motion, you know, that is one of the ways that I cope.

**Bugental:** Keeping busy.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Bugental:** A list of things.

**Marie:** Yeah and whether it’s physical busy or mental busy it’s still keeping busy. It’s like, it’s like making sure I have some sort of purpose.

**Bugental:** And the way you cope each day.

**Marie:** Yeah. I was just thinking in terms of really what, what end that means serves and some of it I realize I mean well… [Pause] The initial, my initial response will be, okay Marie what are you avoiding, okay, because… But I’m really not avoiding anything. I mean, I believe that I am kind of on the verge of being brutally honest with myself. I don’t have a real problem with being honest with myself regarding shortcomings, things that need to
be worked on, etc. So, I mean, if I would indeed take that next step as far as to say, okay what am I avoiding through this coping mechanism, I am not sure what that would be.

**Bugental:** I am not sure either right now. It felt like we turned a corner some place as you were talking, did you get that?

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Bugental:** I don’t know just where.

**Marie:** No, I am trying to figure it out too. It’s like… [Pause] I don’t know.

**Bugental:** Why don’t you let that go, just get centered, try and find what would be good to go further with right now. [Pause]

**Marie:** I’ll take your lead. I think as I kind of check inward the subject that kind of came to my mind is kind of anxiety and wondering if this conversation is making me anxious.

**Bugental:** Good, good.

**Marie:** You know, regarding that whole aspect of my behavior, namely my coping pattern.

**Bugental:** That’s a terribly important question then, take time to check in on it. [Pause]

**Marie:** I think it is an important question and I am not sure what kind of door that would open, honestly. Because to a certain degree highlighting that coping pattern does produce a certain amount of anxiety, I think, mainly because I don’t think and I don’t feel that it is… It may be the most efficient way to go from a mechanistic viewpoint, but it certainly, it certainly is not satisfying, okay maybe that’s… And I am not real sure that I have any alternatives to that, I mean that’s just the kind of the way things have developed. And I can think back, I wasn’t always like this, but this is kind of what’s worked. It’s like with my drinking that I talked to you about. You know there is no doubt in my mind why I drank. I mean it’s like it’s the one time that there weren’t all these control dramas going on, you know, so it served a purpose. Got out of hand, but it certainly served a purpose, so—

**Bugental:** Then what you call a coping mechanism was able to replace that, but it served a purpose too.
Marie: Exactly, exactly. And I think that that’s, at that point, and I think I touched on that last week with you that that’s kind of where I see not the origin of all this, but at least where I see that it’s getting into a kind of everyday way of living.

Bugental: If the choice is between going back to drinking and the coping mechanisms, it’s clear which is the one you prefer, it pays off.

Marie: Oh yeah, I have—

Bugental: I wonder is there’s a third choice.

Marie: Yeah, me too. It’s called balance. You know it’s that whole... and really the term that I have been able to utilize for me as far as what I would be searching for is balance. I mean there has to be some sort of balance here. And I’m still looking for it.

Bugental: Well, of course.

Marie: You know that’s just kind of my quest right now and—

Bugental: I am so struck, your voice has so much more inflexion just in the last few minutes.

Marie: Oh, it’s because there’s hope, maybe. Yeah.

Bugental: Maybe it’s hope, yeah.

Marie: Yeah. But, I mean that’s true because knowing the way that I get things accomplished and go about it and, you know, the pressure to do everything right and do it more than right and, you know, that whole perfectionistic thing, yeah the whole type A business, etc, etc. It’s very exhausting.

Bugental: Yeah, oh, I believe it.

Marie: That’s probably the best word that... and I sometime I say to myself, “My God, you’re exhausting yourself thinking about what you are going to do today, why don’t you wait and actually get into it before you get tired,” you know. But yeah, so I don’t… It serves a purpose but there’s a cost. And I think that, I think there’s got to be a way to find some alternatives. And I am not so sure that those alternatives are in any sort of... if they are any sort of mechanism or any, yeah, pattern.

Bugental: Packaged.
Marie: Yeah, yeah, I mean I think it’s just a matter, kind of, of living. And enjoying when one can, and one of my sisters I think really has a good handle on living like that and so I try to learn from her a little bit. So it’s tough.

Bugental: I believe it.

Marie: It’s tough and the ramifications of it are, I think, relatively pervading.

Bugental: You looked very reflective there, just stay with that for a minute, discover what comes up next for you.

Marie: What I was hitting on right then was, I was just thinking in relation to my family, that I just kind of jumped when I mentioned my sister and I was just thinking in terms of my brother who, he and I are so much alike in the same sort of thrust.

Bugental: Mm hm, you make a little face as you say that.

Marie: Yeah, well I am trying to figure out just kind of how to explain it. I mean the, I think it’s matter of trying to live up to the great expectation, so to speak, you know. And there is a lot of that externally and I think it’s been internalized to a large degree, and I think one way or the other, ultimately there is some sense of never actually reaching that goal because perfectionism is impossible. But I had it, but it is still in my mind. I mean, it’s something I have now kind of confronted and try to work through—

Bugental: What is the “it”? 

Marie: The “it” is that I was sold a bill of goods that there is something called perfect.

Bugental: Oh, I see.

Marie: Yeah, and unfortunately life does not bear that out, but I think that plays a lot with how I do things. I never want to do anything halfway; it’s got to be done, you know, which is okay, I mean I don’t think I am too bad of an extremist on that one, but it does play a part, that does play a part and I think it also makes for very poor risk taking. I mean once I am in kind of a comfortable situation, maybe comfortable is not the right word, but that I know, then it’s… and that I know I can excel at, then it’s difficult to make a change. That’s been real evident to me as far as my career path
up to this point, so just as a for example. But—

**Bugental:** Your voice has gotten much more level again.

**Marie:** Yeah, because I am, yeah. So I think that whole tendency, it creates a lot of dissatisfaction, that maybe that’s the best way to explain it. And now that I am talking to you about this in relation what I had stated earlier regarding contentment and lack thereof, well, you know, looking towards perfectionism, I’m never going to be content and there is never going to be anything perfect, so it just kind of—

**Bugental:** Fits?

**Marie:** Yeah, it does all kind of fit. Now what do I do about it?

**Bugental:** Yeah, good question. What happens when you ask? You liven up for one thing.

**Marie:** [Laughs] Oh, I am like, “Oh man, this is like great. Here is the new mountain to climb,” you know. I think the first thing I have to do, and this is the case, I have got to give myself a break, I mean a psychological break, and that’s no easy task, so…

**Bugental:** I am going to put into, make an observation, have you check it out: “That’s a mountain I’ve got to climb,” that pointed outside of you, but then you thought, “first I’ve got to give myself a break,” and that was inside, and I wonder if that isn’t the truer place.

**Marie:** Oh for sure, absolutely.

**Bugental:** Yeah, to give yourself a break.

**Marie:** Oh, well.

**Bugental:** Mm, caution on that one.

**Marie:** Yes.

**Bugental:** And I see that, tell me that about that caution?

**Marie:** Well it’s just not something that I am used to doing.

**Bugental:** I see that.

**Marie:** And I’m consequently not very comfortable with that. I am not sure—
Bugental: Tell me about the discomfort with the idea of giving yourself a break.

Bugental: Well, I am not sure… Yeah, I am not sure what would happen.

Bugental: And you’re sure out there?

Marie: No.

Bugental: Okay. Just to keep the record straight here.

Marie: No, no, that’s kind of irrelevant. But it’s like maybe it’s a house of cards and it’ll all come tumbling down.

Bugental: What’s the “it”?

Marie: The way that I kind of get by or it’s more than… It’s the way I live. I mean, it’s not a matter of getting by it’s the way I live, but—

Bugental: And it might come tumbling down?

Marie: I mean taken to a logical extreme, okay, well, I don’t know if that’s… I am not, I can honestly say I am not real sure what prohibits me from exploring that. My justification for that coping pattern is that it works.

Bugental: Clearly and well.

Marie: And the only person who is possibly, or who does indeed miss out or get hurt or suffer from that is me.

Bugental: Does that matter?

Marie: Yeah, it matters, but I would rather have it be me than someone else.

Bugental: I hear that. Is that the choice?

Marie: I would hope not.

Bugental: I would hope not.

Marie: You know, I would hope not. And these are kind of, I think in talking to you about this, it’s kind of amplified this whole way of living, I mean it’s not as— now I’m just trying to justify it to myself too—it’s not quite as mechanistic as maybe I make it out to be. On the other hand maybe it is.
Bugental: It’s an important question.

Marie: Yeah it is. It is, and as far as… I don’t know, I don’t know. I think maybe not 100% of the time. But a lot of times, too, I think circumstances dictate, so at certain points, certain days it becomes more necessary to be more of that way. But I have to admit one thing, and this is admitting it to myself, I am becoming more like that. The more responsibilities I take on in my life, the more I tend to kind of be on automatic response.

Bugental: Does that matter?

Marie: Yeah, it matters because I don’t think too much kind of gets through. It’s, there’s a wall there. And I don’t think that, well I know it’s not good. So, it’s kind of like the great pretender because I can play a pretty good role. And I am not sure how many people can really see through that. I mean I am sure—

Bugental: Is that important?

Marie: Well, yeah to a certain degree, I mean to certain people. But I’m with people all the time in my job, so that is important. I mean, you know, that’s kind of a relationship at an arm’s length. That’s important, yeah.

Bugental: Yeah. I want to be sure I’m understanding. You’re saying that often you are pretending, the great pretender, and that many of the people in your daily life, your work life, don’t see you any other way, and that’s alright. Am I hearing you?

Marie: Yeah.

Bugental: Now, you had a little pause here. What was that?

Marie: Well, I was just kind of contemplating on that if that’s alright. Well, if indeed… Yeah, it is alright. It’s alright most of the time. I mean, if I have developed a personal relationship with the client… I mean, it’s the same thing as when I sat down here.

Bugental: Okay.

Marie: “Marie, how are you doing? I’m okay.” You know, I mean, don’t finish your sentence, “I am okay.” “I am fine”—that’s my big one—“I am fine”. And, but, I am really not fine. I mean there is a whole bunch of things going on in my life that are promoting not fine. I mean, my father is dying for God sake, I’m not fine, but I don’t feel I have to share that
with my clients. I don’t need to share that with many of my co-workers. You know, I think a distance to a large degree is necessary with numerous people that I encounter in my daily life.

**Bugental:** How about with you?

**Marie:** With me, to me? No, that’s not necessary.

**Bugental:** And you suggest that it’s there.

**Marie:** Well, when I say that... No I think I am pretty honest with myself about that, about how I am feeling. Yeah, I don’t have a real problem with that because when I do this great pretender thing I know what I am doing. Yeah, I mean it’s not so much calculated, but it’s definitely, it’s purposeful. It’s purposeful. So, I know when I’m a wreck but the world doesn’t have to know I’m wreck. I mean, that sort of attitude.

**Bugental:** Do you pay attention when you’re a wreck? I mean, you know, but do you pay attention?

**Marie:** Sometimes. Sometimes but it’s the old adage that pick oneself up by the bootstraps and continue on, you know, and I kind of have found that to be more effective.

**Bugental:** Than?

**Marie:** Than dwelling maybe on other things, especially when they are things that I can’t control.

**Bugental:** Two choices?

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Bugental:** Only two choices?

**Marie:** Two choices: the control and the not control?

**Bugental:** The picking yourself up and booting yourself in the ass to say, “get going,” or…

**Marie:** Or dwelling in the—

**Bugental:** Dwelling.

**Marie:** Yeah, see that’s it. That’s kind of... I am not real good about seeing that in between. It’s the truth. It’s the truth.
Bugental: You shake your head.

Marie: Well, I mean, I know, I know this is, I know this. I know it… Maybe every once in a while I am better at it than not, but the older I get I think the more ingrained that whole pattern becomes or that whole belief becomes.

Bugental: I want to be sure I know what the belief or pattern is.

Marie: Either or. The either or. It’s like when I smoked cigarettes I smoked three packs a day at the end. So I am really not, that whole balance again. It’s that, you know, it eludes me.

Bugental: You see that pattern in a lot of different places.

Marie: Yeah, oh yeah, absolutely.

Bugental: What do you think about that?

Marie: Well I think it’s really counter-productive, I really do. I mean, if indeed… If I place—I mean, I am just saying this out loud because it just kind of struck me—It’s kind of odd to speak to you about this and realize I place so much value on efficiency, which I think the nature of my job brings out, and then here I am doing these things that are just counter efficient, so to speak. There is a real clash there.

Bugental: Yeah. Let them clash in you right now, if you can. Let me hear whatever comes with it. Don’t figure it out. Let them clash.

Marie: Well, I could scream but I won’t do that.

Bugental: Why not?

Marie: Well, that’s I don’t think appropriate right now.

Bugental: I am going to hound you a little bit, why not? Why isn’t it appropriate?

Marie: Why isn’t it appropriate, because I don’t want to freak everyone out here that I’d scream.

Bugental: You are taking care of everyone else.

Marie: Oh, well, this is a good… Oh here we go on another one of Marie’s problems.

Bugental: Okay.
Marie: Yeah, I do that all the time.

Bugental: How well are you taking care of Marie?

Marie: Well, she comes second, maybe third, maybe fifth. But I figure—

Bugental: You say that sort of.

Marie: It’s kind of like, I figure that in taking care of my other responsibilities, that somehow that’s going to take care of me, I mean, let me put you this way, if I didn’t do what I felt I should do for the other people in my life, that would drive me crazy, too, so—

Bugental: Sounds like kind of “either/or,” doesn’t it?

Marie: It’s the same thing. I mean, this is real—

Bugental: So let’s come back to why don’t you scream?

Marie: Well why don’t I scream? I guess because I would consider it inappropriate behavior right now.

Bugental: Are you always appropriate?

Marie: Since I quit drinking, no I’m kidding. [Laughs]

Bugental: Now you’re not.

Marie: No I am not always appropriate, but I certainly am a lot more controlled. Yeah I am pretty controlled, I am a pretty controlled person.

Bugental: I know, can you feel how much enlivened you are right now?

Marie: Yeah, and I have fun too.

Bugental: Well, I can see that.

Marie: Yeah.

Bugental: But, the very thought of letting Marie out more and you come alive and your voice modulates.

Marie: And it’s not to say that I don’t do that, either. But it’s not my orientation.

Bugental: But you don’t scream here now.

Marie: No, no I’ll do that in my car. [Laughs] Just kidding.

Bugental: No, you’re not just kidding.
Marie: No, I have been known to do that.

Bugental: Here?

Marie: No, in my car.

Bugental: That’s what I thought, you weren’t just kidding.

Marie: No I wasn’t, you are right, you are right.

Bugental: Suppose I scream with you, shall we scream together? Will that help?

Marie: No, I don’t think it would help at all. I’m—

Bugental: What? This is what we’re looking for, Marie. What happened just then?

Marie: What happened just then is like, I think in relation to screaming I’m thinking, “Oh well that would be futile.” But that’s not all that there was there, and I have to think about it. It’s… [pause] Well, yeah, I suppose being somewhat controlled is important to me. I have been known to scream at work, I have been known to scream in a lot of other places, in my car. But I am trying to think why I would not want to scream here.

Bugental: Yeah.

Marie: And it just wouldn’t be comfortable. And I think it wouldn’t be comfortable because it’s, maybe it’s just that letting go, I don’t know, I am not sure. I mean—

Bugental: But you are doing a useful thing, you are sort of checking inside. What holds me back, what is really holding me back? I’ve got these quick words, inappropriate and so forth. You can sense there is something more that keeps you contained. So, feel it a little longer, if you can, just listen inside, feel inside.

Marie: [Pause] It all kind of stems from what I think is correct behavior, whatever that may be. I don’t know.

Bugental: I think that’s true.

Marie: I can’t… I mean there is a whole bunch of different forces I am sure, but to bring one up, I don’t want to place too much importance on any one thing, you know, because it is such a, oh, I can’t think of the word, but confluence of things, you know it’s not, there is just, there is not one thing.
Bugental: Yeah, so a bunch coming together.

Marie: Yeah, yeah, and it’s not that I consider myself a real, a very reserved person, but maybe I am to a degree.

Bugental: Maybe.

Marie: Well, I think I am to a degree and—

Bugental: “I think:” how cautiously.

Marie: I am a reserved person to a degree. [Laughs]

Bugental: Do you notice how cautiously you pick it up—

Marie: Yeah, I am trying to think this through. I mean, this is never a self-perception I had, me as a reserved person, but I am getting old so that’s part of it. It is part of it, but maybe that’s… Oh here, maybe this will help shed some light on this in my own brain: Maybe that is how I want to appear, is more reserved than I know I can be.

Bugental: Three maybes to say that.

Marie: Oh, three maybes? Well, I am trying to think this is through. I don’t want to set it in stone here.

Bugental: Alright, absolutely. I am just noticing, as you are getting into this new territory, you are cautious, and I think wisely But you are livelier, your voice modulates, your face is active, and the monotone tells me how much is held down by that monotone.

Marie: That I believe.

Bugental: Yeah.

Marie: That I believe. I mean, why I would want to appear reserved to people is beyond me, it has never held a whole bunch of importance in my life before, to come off as reserved. But, you know, maybe that’s just one of the things that plays a part.

Bugental: It amuses you some way, doesn’t it?

Marie: Yeah. Well, I think it’s kind of fun to delve into one’s personality and try to kind of figure it out. I have always looked at exploring that from the origin side. You know kind of okay well that’s a behavior that I am very familiar with because it’s something that my mother has done all these
years, or dah-dah-dah, you know, that sort of explanation, so to speak. And I do think that that has shed a lot of light on different things for me. But obviously me, myself, I give it my own spin, so to speak. So I think it’s been helpful for me to understand some of those potential origins. But as far as exploring the behavior now, yeah, it is. I mean, it’s like, oh my god. So I do have the capacity to laugh at myself and again I go back to this whole thing about being counter-productive in this quest for efficiency when my priorities need to shift, you know, and the quest has got to be some sort of balance and enjoy life more. So I need to win the lotto… No I’m kidding, but not kidding. But I think that’s right. I think that that is absolutely right.

**Bugental:** Just take a minute and see where we are as we draw to a close. It’s kind of abrupt and I am sorry about that. I think I got caught up with you.

**Marie:** Yeah, no, it did go by quickly. Well, the one thing that I am just thinking to myself is, “Oh my God I’ve got an incredible amount to think about and to synthesize,” you know, all this information, but I know after speaking to you last week, and you made a conscious effort or comment of saying, “Don’t do any homework.” Yeah, and but I couldn’t help it. Obviously in the back of my brain something would jump out and I think it was real good. And I realized last week and I realized again now this is a lot of information. This is a very enormous experience and it will kind of sift itself out just, but I think I am going to, I know I will be more conscious of maybe my way of dealing with things. I mean, at least, you know, I am aware of it now on a different level. I have always been aware of it but haven’t been as maybe deeply aware of it or something of that nature, so—

**Bugental:** What I had meant by don’t do homework is, sometimes people try to write out things to bring up next time and bringing a shopping list of things, then that gets some way of doing what you have been doing so well today, discovering as opposed to figuring yourself out or writing yourself out. And that’s the one thing I would recommend to you. You can do that on your own, too.

**Marie:** My shopping list is kind of burned in my brain.

**Bugental:** Yeah, I bet. But take time just to listen maybe. Do you keep a
journal?

Marie: Well I have been, not personal, but it was a good exercise to do it for another endeavor and that might be an idea to continue.

Bugental: Sometimes just don’t write, sort of like our talks, just let it be discovery rather than telling.

Marie: Good ideas.

Bugental: Good. I liked working with you.

Marie: Oh, it has been my pleasure.

Bugental: Well then.

Marie: Thank you.

Bugental: Thank you.

CLIENT REACTIONS

Yalom: You were talking about what a wonderful experience this was. I just wanted to get this on camera just to… You were almost more expressive right after this than you were in it.

Marie: Oh, its… I just, it was a very powerful experience and working with Jim there was a comfort level there. There was a comfort zone that just kind of defied the circumstances, so to speak. I mean, it’s not… When you have cameras on, when other people are witnessing what I consider a very personal situation, personal conversation, my inclination would have been that it would have been very uncomfortable, not real spontaneous, kind of, definitely a little bit at arm’s length. But Jim just totally… The situation transcended all of those fears of mine, or not even fears but just what I kind of consider as facts of the environment, and yeah.

Douglas: Sounds like appropriateness became less important.

Marie: Oh totally. He, I was absolutely comfortable with him. He just kind of emanates with this warmth and acceptance and kindness and my comfort level just… And interestingly enough for me is that it occurred right away both last week and this week. I loved last… I was in much more, I had much more trepidation last week because of course I was walking into a completely unknown situation. And when I left I was just
I kind of marveled over the fact that I was that comfortable with this person, you know. And he works in such a non-intrusive sort of way. You know, it was just really, it flowed really well. And the other thing that I was just commenting on, Victor, was the fact that it was just the two of us you know. Regardless of who else was here, what else was going on, this magnificent view, I mean, it was just kind of the two of us clicked and it flowed and it just kind of, it worked. And I very much, I am very moved by the whole experience. It was fabulous. I am not one, as my conversation with Jim kind of explained, that totally concentrates on what’s going on right then. I mean, I have got a hundred other things on my mind, and not with him during that session. It was just great. It was so focused. Yeah that’s the word for it. So I am glad to have the opportunity to share that.

Yalom: What about him and the way he was, you think, helped you just to be so, be present, be focused?

Marie: Well, I got to tell you, the one thing about him is he always has this twinkle in his eye and it’s just, it’s so marvelous because he you know he just kind of emanates a kindness and a warmth and a non-judgmental kind of attitude. I mean, he is, he just immediately put me at ease, immediately put me at ease, and that’s no easy task where I am concerned you know. I—

Douglas: I can’t resist telling you that you have the twinkle in your eyes right now.

Marie: Oh yeah, oh good.

Yalom: I noticed that.

Marie: It’s infectious. I love it. Oh well he, it just, I can’t speak highly enough about just the feelings that he promotes. And you know there is a certain amount of safety and support and just all of the… When I said that I felt kind of like we were in a cocoon. Well, it is kind of like that. I mean, there is just a really good environment, and it kind of promoted, his whole stance kind of promoted looking, feeling positive about this. Maybe you know not, not like dreading it, trying to get into different aspects of my personality, or you know things that you really would prefer not to deal with. I mean that, it wasn’t that way at all. I mean it was kind of, it was a positive endeavor. It was a very positive experience, and I think his
approach and his mannerisms and his way just encouraged that. Yeah he’s—

**Yalom:** There’s a couple of things I am curious about. One was when he kept commenting on your liveliness, tonality of your voice, being monotone or being more varied, would that make you self conscious or how would that impact you?

**Marie:** Well, last week it blew my mind because I said, “My God I have never paid that much attention to what my non-verbal cues mean to someone else,” Okay, and that’s important. You know, I mean, and I usually kind of check them out with other people but you don’t give, or at least I didn’t think in terms of what message I was promoting. And so his attention to that really staggered me, it really did. Now today as far as the monotone versus kind of being effervescent, etc, well it’s totally… It didn’t make me at all self-conscious. Well, it kind of did, but then again I just kind of got lost in what we were doing, so I wasn’t thinking about myself so much other than the fact that the screen that I had gives out a lot of that. Anyway, to answer your question, it really, the subject matter bespoke my tonality and it was interesting. But he utilized that as a tool and that’s what I found… You know, I said, “Oh, wow, you know, that’s really a cue.” It’s kind of like a cue for me to think in terms of that, as well as the message that I am giving out to others. So it was, that is another powerful aspect of this whole experience, so, yeah.

**Yalom:** And the one other thing I was wondering was when he would pause or ask you to pause and kind of check inside internally with what was going on, what was that like for you?

**Marie:** Well at first it was uncomfortable. I think, you know, the old pregnant pause, it’s like we should be talking you know. But, and in the very beginning of the session today when he said, “How are you doing,” and I immediately said, “Okay.” You know, “Okay we’ve got enough of that thinking about, I am fine, let’s just go, go, go”. But it really, I learned in that very short period of time that that is one of the greatest tools is to just have me and take a breath, think about it, check in with myself. You need the time to do that and it kind of, for me at least, quieted my mind down so my thoughts weren’t racing ahead. And it allowed me to hold on to something and explore it a little deeper. So, and I don’t think that that
could have been accomplished without those pauses. So those pauses were important, and the fact that they might have been mildly uncomfortable in the first 10 minutes became irrelevant because they became such an important part of this whole process. So, if that makes sense.

**Yalom:** I guess just a little, one final thought: It seemed right at the end you were saying you were, it was, not overwhelmed, but there was a lot of stuff you were left with to kind of just think about, or kind of wait further.

**Marie:** Yes, yes. And in that, I think there was incredible amount of information that I gathered from the session both kind of with Jim’s direction and internally, and he taught me an exercise, so to speak, and that is check in with myself and take that a few steps further. And it’s not something that can be done in any short time. I mean, that’s why the pauses again were so important. I mean, you’ve just got to take a breath and give yourself the time to kind of explore that. And all the information, it’s I just have to synthesize it all. I have to think through it, I have to sift through it, and kind of resift through it and in my own natural way there is got to be some sort of acting on it I think, you know. But, and that acting on it can simply be just contemplating it so.

**Sapienza:** Taking your time and sort of letting yourself absorb it.

**Marie:** That’s… Absorption is the right term. I know the last time, and it’s something that I wrote down real quick when I got home, after last week it was, I was overwhelmed at how energized I came away from the experience. It was kind of like, “Oh Monday morning a million things to do,” dah-dah-dah, I came here, I got beeped a couple of times at the office when I arrived, they said, “Oh well, only two traumas this morning,” you know, dah-dah-dah. And I left here, and I am like, “wow.” I felt lighter, I felt energized. It was really, I mean there was like a physical change as well as a mental change, and I anticipate that this will be the same way. I mean, he is just wonderful.

**DISCUSSION**

**Bugental:** I want to comment first of all on how, the relation between the two sessions with Maria. Last time I couldn’t, she is a very contained person, as is obvious, and I don’t want to disturb that abruptly without knowing what. So I think I was rather cautious and didn’t confront
a whole lot. So I was interested this time to see how she was when we started out, and everything said she was in good control, so that I could be more active and more confronting. And watching it through, I thought throughout she was handling it well. She gave us a warning most explicitly at one point when she talked about, she worries, “What if she gave up this control?” So I took that seriously and tried to give her a little reassurance or support that she had control and that she would not have to give it up. She handles the situation very well. Another thing I might, just in general to start with, is that she does her searching more implicitly—and I’m gonna talk about searching in a few minutes—but with some clients it’s the language, the word choice is much more subjective than hers. And it might seem at first that she wasn’t really getting into herself, but if became manifest in a number of other ways that she was even though she was using word choice that sounded more objectifying.

One thing that was to me quite evocative was the intonations that would come and go in her voice, and I would comment to her and she could use that very well. She talked very flat and steady for a while and then as she began to really get into it, her voice began to modulate, her face became more mobile. And when I’d feed that back it was not disruptive. She could use it, which I thought was very assuring. If we were working together long-term, I think we could work more and more to get depth of penetration, so to speak, in searching. But it might or might not be language that we are using in link with being subjective. I think the great danger is that we get caught on word choice and language rather than watching is something moving, is something opening up, is something changing in her self-perception, is she risking what she has hesitated to risk before, and on all these accounts she certainly was, you know.

**Yalom:** That’s good to hear because, yeah, I think I got caught a little bit on the word choice because she would talk about herself and as if she was solving a problem still.

**Bugental:** That’s exactly so. I at first was very aware of that and concerned, but when I began to notice, wait, she is moving and so that sort of—

**Yalom:** By moving you are referring to all the other nonverbal cues suggested in use.

**Bugental:** Yeah and even to the material that she’s bringing forth became
less and less stuff that she already knew about herself and more and more she could express surprise or reaction to herself, which tells us that she is
opening.

Yalom: And that’s the essence of searching, is uncovering new material?

Bugental: Yeah. I’m glad you are bringing me back to that, Victor, because searching is so central to our work because it’s so central to life. The very fact we are here is part of our individual searches and our collaborative search. Gary and Jessie are searching in a way by the fact they’re here. What we do is a way that we seek for greater richness of living fulfillment, satisfaction, confirmation, affirmation. As you all have heard me say I think it’s the same thing as the little leaf that is forcing its way up through the dirt or through the cement sometimes to find the sun; that’s a searching.

Yalom: I think it would helpful if you could state more explicitly what you mean by the searching process in psychotherapy?

Bugental: Well let’s see. Let’s make the general statement and then bring in psychotherapy. The general statement: Searching is to find a way of greater realization of what is potential within us, whether it’s a seed coming up through the grass or the ground or whether it’s Einstein figuring out the general theory of relativity. It’s a difference in scale but it’s the same basic human process, basic life process. Now, when we talk about searching in therapeutic situation, we are talking about how we are using this opportunity to explore for new perceptions, new awareness, new life experience that would be more fulfilling. And what we listen for, we therapists listen for, is what gets in the way of that process. What is the obstacle to the growth that is instinctual, that is inborn? And then we try to point out… We don’t say get rid of that; we say, notice how that’s happening, and so I say to Marie, “That tone of voice, it seems so flat.” That’s a resistance, it’s an obstacle and you could see the difference when that tone was different and she came to life more.

Sapienza: And that’s what gets in the way for her in her searching, and when she becomes aware of it then—

Bugental: Then it begins to loosen up.

Sapienza: And it did.
Bugental: Also, of course, what gets in way for her is the need to be efficient, but you know, we need some of those things. The goal is not to get rid of all these things, but to be selective and to not be constricted to beyond what’s necessary.

Douglas: To choose rather than be chosen by.

Bugental: Yes, yes right. Choose rather than be chosen by. Control as loose, as free, control like driving a car. You have controlled it in a straight line no matter what.

Yalom: I guess I was struck by when we had our kind of debriefing with her afterwards, how she talked about how powerful the two sessions were with you. And it seemed like in that format she was able to be more expressive and the work and the searching was more powerful than she was able to kind of manifest.

Bugental: In the hour.

Yalom: In the hour because of her, the way she controls her body and her feelings.

Bugental: She was on stage trying to do the job.

Douglas: The second time she was offstage, onstage.

Yalom: Right.

Douglas: The whole place you know just—

Sapienza: Right.

Bugental: My hope is with one or two sessions with Marie or with 100 sessions with Joe where there might be, that it would go on after our session. It would not be only something that happens in the therapeutic hour. That they would experience that there is more they can have access to more. It will make life different.

Sapienza: And that’s what Marie was saying that, just that experience of giving herself a moment right in the beginning of the first session. First to notice that she would just automatically say, “fine,” and then to take the time to where she said to take a deep breath and give herself that time was an experience that she doesn’t do and doesn’t have that she says she wants to take out the door with her.
Bugental: Good.

Sapienza: So it's, that's the hope.

Bugental: If it only happens in the room, forget it. Yeah.

Yalom: But, yeah, that she, just how important that was that you gave her the pause and encouraged her to look inside herself rather than let you “take the lead”, as she said. One time when you asked her to look inside she said, “I’ll let you take the lead.”

Bugental: I remember and she laughed.

Yalom: Yeah. The other thing that struck me about our discussion with her afterwards is her emphasis on how safe she felt. What you talked about the container, the alliance, and how that obviously had a very powerful effect on her. She was able to kind of be fairly oblivious to the surroundings and really be in the moment with you.

Bugental: But she can be oblivious—that gives me a way of making another point—because we don’t deny the surroundings. If you are trying to say, “Oh, I won’t pay any attention to the fact that there is cameras” and so forth, it’s just counter-productive because you have got the attention, now you’ve set another system to fight it, and what’s left for being here, you know.

Douglas: Yeah, you know, it seems like you are very willing to comment on whatever seems to come into the moment.

Bugental: Everything is everything is the silly way that I—

Sapienza: And that comes to the story that we want to hear, about the client in the next room.

Bugental: Our office in LA did not have perfect sound insulation between the offices and that particular time that you are reminding me of occurred when I was working rather intensely with someone. We were very quiet. Our voices had dropped and so forth. And suddenly from the next room there was this piercing scream. We both jumped, and for just a minute I am saying, “Oh should I go do something or something.” And then I realized what was going on and I said to my client, “Somebody is really fighting for their life.” And she burst into tears and said, “Yes, that’s what I want to do.” And the temptation was that one scream, but that went to
where she was and she was much more in sadness, tears. But I think we all hunger to get out more, to let out what we feel inside and that’s what searching’s about.

**Douglas:** Well, Marie certainly came out and certainly was touching from over here.

**Bugental:** Yeah, I purposely didn’t want to be in the scene because I thought she would be able to speak more candidly.

**Douglas:** One thing that did intrigue me that, I don’t know where this goes but, that she from where I could sit, it seemed like she touched you twice in the session; she touched you on the hand with her hand. Second time was she was really in the flow by this time and much looser and it was a real dynamic touch, but the first time it was very tentative and just almost maybe barely didn’t even touch, but I noticed your hand withdrew and you just stroked it.

**Bugental:** Hmmm, I only was aware of one touch and so I am looking forward to seeing the tape. I don’t know which of the two times, you know, because I wasn’t aware of this either, you know, withdrawing. I just remember just a light touch like this. I felt, at the time I experienced the touch, was aware of it, I felt there was a real sort of bonding. We are doing this together, you know, and I like that.

**Sapienza:** And I was watching Marie’s hands after in the debriefing and she was talking about feeling. It was almost like she was feeling held in the situation, and feeling very safe and connected. They were like this often. [Holds out hands palms up and open]

**Bugental:** Those are open receptive hands.

**Sapienza:** Yeah. So I think she experienced that, that bonding if you will. I guess maybe you talked to a little bit about this already, but what would you envision in terms of a longer term therapy with Marie?

**Bugental:** Well, for a while I would not do a great deal more than we did this time. At the end, today, I did make some suggestions about maybe journaling or something to keep it going because in a way… And also to try to remind her that it wasn’t that she figured things out today but that she discovered. Her tendency is of course to figure things out and that’s great, but it has been for her, in what word, a constriction that she tries
to objectify herself and figure things out. And what I tried to help her do today is to discover not by objectification, but by subjectification, if you will, so that there was more to be found inside her than she could just know.

**Yalom:** She commented at the end that in some way you were talking about things, you know, her need for control and perfection that she knew about herself and yet somehow she had a deeper or fuller awareness of that.

**Bugental:** Yeah, that was… I wish there were a chance to explore what she was seeing at the end. I thought it was pregnant, that it had a lot of possibly for further exploration, so if we were to have further sessions I would like to know something more of what she was getting at there. She was sensing that she had been exploring within herself in a different way and yet there was a way in which I felt she was trying to get it back into her familiar phrasings and so on. And so it would be a useful thing if we went on to watch for that and help her see how much she still relies on “thinking about,” manifested by all of her qualified phrases all throughout: “I think, I guess, it seems as though, it might be.” It’s alright, they loosened up a little bit and she did her job, but if we were longer term I would probably reflect how cautious she is in making any statement about herself and that would open something else up, I don’t know what.

**Yalom:** But I think you struck a nice balance between highlighting an awareness of that, but not pursuing it too aggressively, and I think that’s what let her feel safe and supported that you too had a non-judgmental or non-critical stance.

**Bugental:** If she weren’t doing the good work she was doing then it might pay to come in, but she was doing, she was doing fine for her 2nd interview. Wow.

**Yalom:** I think, I know myself when I first studied with you and kind of learned some of your techniques and other people I have seen. There is a tendency to want to take a little bit of a good thing, which is kind of awareness to the process awareness, to resistance in the moment and really go, go with it and—

**Bugental:** You are quite right. I think we all, I do that at times too, sure.
But if I can keep enough perspective, I want to watch what’s happening. Are we opening up new territory? Is that life force finding a way through a little more?

**Douglas:** Is there an end do you think to the new territory that can be opened up in this process?

**Bugental:** No, isn’t that wonderful?

**Yalom:** I think you knew how he was going to answer that.

**Douglas:** I had a pretty good idea.

**Bugental:** It’s a good setup for me.

**Yalom:** But there is there is an end to this discussion.

**Douglas:** Yes.

**Sapienza:** Yes, I think we’ve hit it.

**Bugental:** Okay.
Notes...
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