The Instructor’s Manual accompanies the DVD Integrative Counseling with Jeffrey Kottler, PhD (Institutional/Instructor’s Version). Video available at www.psychotherapy.net.

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Instructor’s Manual for Integrative Counseling with Jeffrey Kottler, PhD

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## Instructor’s Manual for

**INTEGRATIVE COUNSELING WITH JEFFREY KOTTLE, 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. FACILITATE DISCUSSION
Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. LET IT FLOW
Allow the session 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 viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively 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. REFLECT ON REFLECTIONS
After watching the video, hand out copies of Kottler’s Reflections on Making the Video, giving participants an inside view of Kottler’s experience before, during and after this session. Kottler’s reflections humanize the process and provide viewers a context into which they can place the person of the therapist. In this way, Kottler becomes not just an expert therapist but also a real person, with all the worries, stresses and joys therapists go through in their daily work.
6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER  
See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

7. CONDUCT ROLE-PLAYS  
After watching the video, organize participants into groups of three: one to play the therapist, one to play the client, and one to observe in silence and comment at the end. Assign each group to role-play a therapy session using Kottler’s integrative counseling approach. The “client” may resemble the client in the video, a current or previous real-life client, someone they know personally or even themselves. Participants should switch roles if time permits. As a basic instruction, suggest to therapists that they begin by listening closely for the client’s expectations, and focus on building a relationship with the client. Drawing on the various approaches they are familiar with, therapists can try different ways of interacting with the client based on what kind of help it seems the client needs. See Kottler’s Approach to Integrative Counseling in this manual for a brief review of how he works. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss the exercise. First have the clients share their experiences, then have the therapists talk about what the session was like for them. What did participants find challenging about this way of working? Ask the observers to comment on what they noticed about the therapists and clients throughout the role-play. Finally, open up a general discussion on what participants learned about Kottler’s approach to integrative therapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what does and does not seem effective about Kottler’s approach.

8. WATCH THE EXPERTS SERIES  
This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application. Each video in the series presents
a master therapist working with a real client who has real problems. By showing several of the videos in this Experts series (See the More Videos section for a complete list of the videos in the series), you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.

Other videos in the series use different therapeutic models. We can reflect upon the differences among these models by exploring the following questions:

• How does the model explain the therapeutic process?
• What assumptions does the model imply about the purpose of therapy?
• How is theory translated into practice in real-life situations?
• What is the role of the therapist?
• What outcomes are associated with successful therapy?

PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists may feel on the spot to put on a good demonstration, and clients can be self-conscious in front of a camera. Therapists often move more quickly than they would in everyday practice to demonstrate a particular technique. Despite these factors, therapists and clients on video can engage in a realistic session that conveys a wealth of information not contained in books or therapy transcripts: body language, tone of voice, facial expression, rhythm of the interaction, quality of the alliance – all aspects of the therapeutic relationship that are unique to an interpersonal encounter.

Psychotherapy is an intensely private matter. Unlike the training in other professions, students and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to see their mentors at work. But watching therapy on video is the next best thing.

One more note: The personal style of therapists is often as important as their techniques and theories. Actually, therapists usually develop or are drawn to approaches that mesh well with their own personality.
Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, students and trainees must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client who has courageously shared her personal life with us.
Kottler’s Approach to Integrative Therapy

Kottler developed his integrative counseling approach after practicing a number of psychotherapy orientations including rational-emotive therapy, existentialism, psychoanalysis, reality therapy and neuro-linguistic programming, among others. Although all of these approaches were effective in helping clients, he continually found himself wanting to try something new and different.

Building on his breadth of experience, Kottler integrates these and other models on a conceptual level, rather than simply combining different techniques at different times. Since no one theory does it all, his integrative approach blends insight with action, the past with the present and cognition with affect. Through his evolution as a therapist, Kottler has come to have a fairly clear sense of what is good for people, of how people get themselves in trouble and a number of different ways that they can get themselves out of trouble depending on the context, clients’ presenting complaints, their cultural background and gender, and on their expectations.

For Kottler, the task of the therapist is to honor and respect where the client is in the present moment. He often begins from a Rogerian, or person-centered approach, because he has found that to be the easiest way to start out building a relationship with the client. Based on what he knows about the client, he may come in with a particular agenda but he remains flexible and will shift to a different approach if the one he is using is not bringing about the desired effect. Kottler does not believe in client resistance, just the need for the therapist to change what he is doing to best meet the needs and experience of the client.

Kottler holds that good therapy depends more on the person of the therapist than on which particular theory the therapist works from. The most important aspect of all therapeutic orientations is the relationship. Listening very carefully to his clients allows Kottler to work within the parameters of what they expect and want from the therapy. He believes that catharsis is important, and gives people a place to unload and express themselves so that they feel heard and understood. He has found that both emotional activation and insight
are important, but only when the therapist helps the client come to some sort of resolution and provides the structure for taking action to bring about change outside the therapy session. The final stage of therapy for Kottler is evaluation, a mutual assessment between the therapist and the client of where they are, whether the client got what she wanted from the therapy, and if not, what they need to do to help her get there.
Kottler’s Reflections on Making The Video

It’s been several years since we made this video and I’ve thought about Harriet, my collaborator on this project, a lot. I wonder how she’s doing. I wonder what lingering effects the session had.

Harriet was my first session of the afternoon and I was really nervous about this. It was a big deal for me to make the pilgrimage all the way to Chicago to film my approach to therapy. I agonized about what I should wear—something timeless that would age well over the years (You’ll see I guessed that one wrong). I didn’t even know what the name of my therapy was since I use ideas from so many approaches and reinvent myself every few years. I do this because there is always so much new to learn but also because I get bored doing the same things over and over.

I was introduced to Harriet just before we were about to go out on stage. There was a studio audience waiting, lots of lights, and multiple cameras. What if I screwed up big time? What if I froze? What if I lost my therapy magic? What if I didn’t have a clue about what to do with this person I just met? Even if I didn’t help her, I didn’t want to do anything to hurt her. And there was something exploitive about this idea of doing demonstration videos even though she was being paid for her time: the whole purpose of the thing was to make me look good.

Standing next to Harriet while we were waiting, I leaned over and whispered in her ear, “Are you nervous?”

Harriet looked over at me and slowly nodded her head.

“Me too,” I said. Then she grabbed my hand.

So there we were, standing off camera, waiting to go on stage, holding each other’s hands. I knew, I just knew in that moment, that everything would be fine. It was as if we were saying to one another, “We’re in this together. It’s you and me against the world. Let’s take care of one another.”

By the time we took our seats, adjusted our microphones, and the
session began, I was clear-headed and relaxed. I felt like I’d known Harriet for a long time even though we’d just met minutes earlier. I just knew everything would be okay.

I’m pretty pleased with the way this session went. Since the producer decided to call my approach “integrative counseling,” I felt free to use anything and everything I could think of during the experience. I felt tremendous latitude that I could try almost anything and that Harriet would be forgiving, if not cooperative. After all, it really is all about the relationship.

When we watched the video and counted my interventions, we figured out that they came from more than a dozen different theoretical approaches, so I guess I was fairly integrative. What I remember most about the time we spent together was how alive I felt, how connected I felt to Harriet, and how much fun we were having. My favorite part of all was that moment when we both lost it and started laughing and couldn’t stop. It was just amazing to me that this was the first time we met and already we felt so comfortable, even in this contrived setting with all those people and cameras watching.

When the session ended I was feeling pretty good about myself, ready to relax, but the producer made me see two more clients. The second session was just okay, a talkative young woman who filled the session with chatter but didn’t really say much and didn’t let me do much either. Truthfully, I would have been more than satisfied if this was a first session with nobody else watching.

The last session was a train wreck. It is a film you will never see even though I lobbied hard to pick it for the video series. You almost never get to see really, really bad therapy in these videos, the kind you can laugh at and feel much better about your own skills. I later learned that the young man was just in the waiting room and the producer grabbed him because the other client didn’t show up. He wouldn’t talk. He admitted right away he didn’t trust anyone, and didn’t allow anyone except his family to get close to him. I ignored all the warnings and kept pushing anyway. The session was interminable, awkward, and painful for both of us, not to mention the audience who had been in the palm of my hand just a few hours earlier. Nevertheless, this
“ugly” session really looked like the kind of psychotherapy I usually do with resistant adolescents and I wanted the world to see it, to make fun of me, and feel better about themselves. I still have the only surviving copy and I show it to my students when I can.

What do I wish you’d take away from this session with Harriett? I think just the realization about how powerful and easy therapy can flow when there is mutual trust in the room (or on stage). Harriet not only trusted me and felt free to open up about some very personal things in her life, but I trusted her as well, enough so that I was willing to take risks, try things that I wasn’t sure would work out, and generally push the edges into new territory.
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Integrative Counseling with Jeffrey Kottler, PhD

• Assignment: Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the 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 the 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 integrative counseling? What stands out in how Kottler works?

2. 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? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

3. What does not make sense: What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working? Explore these questions.

4. How I would do it differently: What might you have done differently than Kottler in the therapy session in the video? 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
Psychotherapy.net Interview with Jeffrey Kottler
www.psychotherapy.net
Jeffrey Kottler’s website
http://jeffreykottler.com
Jeffrey Kottler’s page at California State University
http://hhd.fullerton.edu/counsel/faculty/jeffrey.htm
The Ghimire Foundation, an organization co-founded by Jeffrey Kottler that provides educational opportunities to neglected children in Nepal
http://www.ghimirefoundation.org

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Integrative Therapy with Allen Ivey, EdD
What Works in Psychotherapy
—Scott Miller, PhD
Psychotherapy with the Unmotivated Patient
—Erving Polster, PhD
Multimodal Therapy with Arnold Lazarus, PhD
The Gift of Therapy: A Conversation with Irvin Yalom, MD
Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use a few or all of these discussion questions keyed to certain elements of the video or those issues most relevant to the viewers. On-screen minute markers are noted with some question to highlight related points in the video/transcript.

KOTTLER’S APPROACH

1. Integration: (1-6:1-10) What do you think about Kottler’s idea that a good therapist will be good regardless of which theory and techniques he or she employs? How does this way of thinking mesh with your ideas about therapy? As a therapist, in what ways do you work within one model, and in what ways do you blend concepts from different approaches? How does your single model or integrated approach affect the quality of your work?

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

2. The Other Therapist: (2-4:9, 2-23, 2-37) What do you think about the way Kottler worked with Harriet regarding her ongoing therapy? Given that Kottler’s intention was to be supportive of Harriet’s work with her primary counselor, was he successful? How so? Were there any aspects of this session that may have conflicted with her other therapy?

3. Miracle Question: (2-14:2-17) Kottler asks Harriet what it would be like if, when the session ended, she walked out the door having totally forgotten about her recent break up. What do you think about Kottler’s use of the solution-focused miracle question technique? Is this intervention effective with Harriet? How so? Do you observe anything about Harriet’s interactions that would have influenced you to choose a different approach at this point in the session?

4. Laughter: (2-21) What do you notice about the moment of laughter between Kottler and Harriet? Does this seem to be a key moment in the therapy? Why or why not?
What purpose do you think the laughter serves each of them? How do you view laughter in therapy?

5. “I Don’t Know”: (2-13,16,21, 25, 27, 37, 38) Do you notice yourself reacting when Harriet responds to many of Kottler’s questions by saying “I don’t know”? How would you describe Kottler’s approach with Harriet at these points? If you were the therapist in the room with Harriet, what might you do differently?

6. Reframe: (2-27) What do you think about the way Kottler reframes Harriet’s holding on to Sylvester as a way of protecting herself from getting involved too quickly with men who may be poor choices? In what ways was this reframe helpful in the therapy?

7. Warning: (2-30) Kottler lets Harriet know he is feeling pressured to tell her what to do and that she had warned him earlier that this was an issue in her ongoing therapy. What do you think about his disclosure? Is Kottler’s approach effective here? How might you have handled this differently if you were the therapist? How comfortable are you giving clients here-and-now feedback on your experience of them in the room?

8. Therapeutic Relationship: How would you characterize the therapeutic relationship in this video? Do you think Kottler developed an effective working alliance with Harriet? What clues do you look for in assessing the therapeutic alliance?

GROUP DISCUSSION

9. 13 Theories: (3-6) What is your response to the variety of approaches Kottler uses in this single session? Having watched Kottler at work, has anything changed in how you feel about this integrative way of working? What are you taking away from watching this video?

10. Evolving: (3-20) What do you think about Kottler’s comments on his evolution as a therapist? Does it make sense to you that he would change the way he does therapy because he himself is changing? How do you understand your own stages of development as a therapist?
11. **Trust:** (3-28) How do you react to Kottler’s statement about believing what the client presents even though that may be naïve? Does this seem out of step with the goal of creating an authentic, empathic relationship with the client? Can you describe any situations in therapy where you would not trust your client?

12. **Personal Reaction:** How would you feel about being Kottler’s client? Do you think he could create an alliance with you and that the therapy would be effective? How so?
Complete Transcript of Integrative Counseling with Jeffrey Kottler, PhD

Note to facilitators: Throughout the transcript below, we indicate minute markers that correspond with those that appear on the video screen. You will find chapter markers on the DVD at five-minute intervals so that you may easily skip to desired points in the video.

KOTTLER’S APPROACH

1—1

Dr. Jon Carlson: This program is going to be on integrative approaches to therapy. What do you think of, Diane, when you hear that word, “integrative”?

Dr. Diane Kjos: Well, I think it’s an approach that, that puts together or integrates a number of ideas in, from various theories and various approaches, and one of the things that I’ve, I see or I get out of that is that we pay a lot of attention to doing the kinds of things that work for the particular client that you’re working with. And so that there’s, the therapist needs to be able to make some shifts to pull together from a lot of different areas. Although, I do see somewhat of a cognitive sense of it, but that may be based on particular needs of clients, too.

Carlson: It doesn’t seem like there’s any one integrative approach. It seems like every client calls for a different approach so….

1—2


Carlson: Yeah. Yeah. This is going to be really interesting. Let’s bring out our guest, Jeff Kottler, and learn more about this approach.

Jeff, welcome.

Dr. Jeffrey Kottler: Hi, Jon.

Carlson: Hey.
Kottler: Hi, Diane.

Carlson: Well, maybe, you heard our introduction and what does integrative therapy mean to you, Jeff?

Kottler: It’s everything.

Carlson: That helps.

Kjos: That’s kind of what we were trying to say, isn’t it? Yeah.

Kottler: No, it’s .... People integrate therapies on a number of different levels. There are eclectic therapies that are integrated on the level of technique, where practitioners have a bag of tricks that they pick whatever technique they want from whichever theory it happens to come from.

Kjos: So it’s like, “You look like a client that would benefit from role playing. Let’s role play.” Yes.

Kottler: Exactly. Or, “You have some issues that respond best to a cognitive approach or to an approach that accesses more affect.” Or, “You have some unresolved issues in the past and that maybe it would be helpful to work on that level.”

1—3

Carlson: That’s technique-focused.

Kottler: Yeah. And the kind of integrative therapies that I’m more interested in are the ones that take place on a more conceptual level. That it’s a little frightening to me sometimes that some of the brief therapies that are so anti-theoretical, you know, just kind of do whatever seems right, but it’s very difficult for them to articulate why they’re doing what they’re doing, what they hope to accomplish and how they’re going to measure it afterwards. And especially for beginning students that are just learning theory, it’s pretty confusing to approach this very complex profession and business without having some kind of organizing framework for what you’re doing.

Carlson: Talk about yours, then. What do you mean it’s conceptual, conceptually based? What is that for you?

Kottler: Well, it means having a pretty clear notion and a clear idea
about what’s good for people, about how people get themselves in trouble and a number of different ways that they can get themselves out of trouble depending on the context of what’s going on, depending on what their presenting complaints are, depending on their cultural background and their gender, depending on what their expectations are because you always have to start with the client’s expectations and needs.

1—4

Carlson: So you’re going to match the treatment to a lot of different variables?

Kottler: Within certain limits, because clients always thinks they know what’s best for themselves but oftentimes I see that we are experts, and sometimes we have to make some informed decisions in our treatment planning about what we think is going to be optimal.

Kjos: You mentioned the cultural. As you were talking about that, I was thinking that this really is an approach that adapts well to multicultural settings or multicultural issues.

Kottler: Yeah, I think that’s why I think the future of the field is that the lines between theories are becoming so blurred that very few people are even practicing any of the theories in pure form.

1—5

I’m kind of cynical and suspicious anyway of the difference between what people say they do, the theories they say they use…

Kjos: And what they actually use.

Kottler: …versus what they do when nobody’s watching, and I think that people are far more eclectic, far more pragmatic, far more flexible than they’d ever lead others to believe.

Carlson: Maybe it would help me if you could talk about maybe the journey that you took to get to this place, I mean, maybe the theoretical approaches that you went through.

Kottler: Well, for me, a lot of it started in my theories class. That …. I’m very impressionable, very open-minded, and every week, you know, theories in those days is it’s theory, you know, flavor of the week
and each week I’d become so impressed. You know, you know, the first week of the semester: “I’m a psychoanalyst. That’s what I’ve got to do.” And then I’m an existentialist and then I’m a cognitive therapist. And I loved them all.

**Carlson:** Like the medical student’s disease. Whatever the disease was they talked about, you caught.

**Kottler:** Absolutely.

1—6

And it seemed to me that there’s something funny going on here, that it just, how is it possible that someone like Carl Rogers could help somebody the way he did, when Fritz Perls could do something so completely different and also be useful and Albert Ellis could do something that’s so amazingly different than those two and that he could be helpful and that Adler could be helpful and that Glasser could be helpful and they all seemed to be doing different things. And it occurred to me even then, something weird is going on.

It seems to me that if you lock somebody up in a room with somebody that has certain qualities and who does certain things, that person’s going to come out different and that it really doesn’t even matter what you do as long as you follow certain guidelines and as long as that there are certain variables that are present. So I’ve been real interested in the last 20 years, researching what is the essence of good therapy regardless of how it’s done and what people call themselves.

1—7

And what I’ve discovered is that basically good therapists all do the same things.

**Kjos:** Which is?

**Kottler:** They work on a relationship. I mean, a lot of people, a lot of the brief therapists and some of the more action-oriented therapists deny the relationship is important, and I think it’s critical. The placebo effect and working with people’s expectations I think is absolutely critical. Listening very carefully to what clients expect and want, and working within the parameters of that. Honoring and respecting this person, listening to them. Freud was right: catharsis is
important, giving people a place to dump, a place to kind of unload and express themselves in a way that they feel heard and understood. But Rogers was flat-out wrong, you know, that insight isn’t enough. It isn’t a sufficient condition for change in all cases, that people oftentimes need structure for taking action. And so I think, for me, the best kinds of integrative approaches are those that combine insight with action, that combine the past with the present, that combine cognition with affect.

1—8

Carlson: This takes a lot of courage to do this. I mean, most counselors are trained in their, call it their method of origin, their MOO, if you will, and they learn that approach, whether it be Adler, Freud, Glasser, and then they spend their whole life in that place. And you’re saying you start with that and then we have to give that up?

Kottler: Yeah. I think in all honesty, I, you know, some other variables are—I’m fickle and I have a high tolerance for change and stimulation, so I mean, at one time in my...

Carlson: So this is natural for you.

Kottler: I get bored after a while. I mean, I was an avid, fanatic rational emotive therapist for a number of years and the only reason I moved on isn’t because it wasn’t working, but just I was bored doing the same thing, and that’s true with having been an existentialist, a psychoanalytic practitioner, reality therapist, neuro-linguistic programming.

1—9

I mean, whatever was popular. I did it all. And I loved it all and I found that it all works, which is really, really disorienting and confusing for students.

Kjos: Yeah. Because how do you know what to use when, then?

Kottler: And they hear faculty in each of our classes presenting in such an articulate, passionate way, advocating for why Adler is the best approach or why reality therapy is the best approach, and the students are caught in the middle because we’re all so good at what we do in many cases. And it’s very puzzling about how do you sort that out,
that you, Diane, could be so effective as a practitioner when what you do is so different from what Jon does. What's that about?

**Carlson:** And it’s really hard to break from these methods of origin, though, because you become identified with them. You become…

**Kottler:** Comfortable.

**Carlson:** Very comfortable.

**Kottler:** And we get very, very skilled in these approaches.

**Carlson:** Even if they, even if they don’t work, you know.

1—10

**Kjos:** You know, usually you get enough payback that it keeps you attached to it and I, I was intrigued by your saying you got restless or you got bored, and that was the impetus.

**Kottler:** One of the reasons, Diane, is I think the theory matters less, which theory we pick matters less than we, we think it does, is I’m more interested in the who of the therapist than the what. That is, who we are as human beings. But I think that one of the things that all of the theorists have in common that have been in this video series is they’re all pretty charismatic, passionate, caring, respectful human beings, and I think they could switch. I think Glasser would be just as effective as he, if he was a cognitive therapist, and I think they could switch theories and they’d still be good at what they do.

**Kjos:** Do you work with families and groups?

**Kottler:** Oh, quite a lot. The future of the field is, you know, soon, I think individual therapy will become obsolete, not only because it’s not as cost effective but because within so many different cultural groups, individual therapy is just, doesn’t make sense.

1—11

It’s not respectful of the values of those particular cultures. So my preferred way of operating is in the context of group and family. And I, I guess I’m a believer in Bowen, you know, the idea that all therapy is family therapy no matter who’s present.

**Carlson:** There really wouldn’t be… Or maybe, I mean, I shouldn’t
ask, I should ask the question rather than answer it: are there any techniques that are unique to this approach?

**Kottler:** No. I think the techniques are irrelevant. You know, I think that if you have a well-developed conceptual model and you’re flexible enough, and most importantly, you’re responsive enough to what clients need, because I think clients… You don’t pick a theory or an approach and even stick with it with the same client, because what clients need in the beginning of the relationship is different from what they need in the middle and the end.

1—12

And I think that the techniques you pick just don’t matter that much.

**Carlson:** So it sounds like this approach, then, is really, it’s client driven. I’m thinking if ….

**Kottler:** Consumer driven. Exactly.

**Carlson:** If someone has a theoretical approach and it doesn’t work, you say the client’s resistant. You know, it’s not the theory; the theory’s just fine or the approach is fine, but it must be something wrong with client.

**Kottler:** Yeah, I don’t even believe in ….

**Carlson:** And in your approach, you would, you would say, “We need to try something else then.”

**Kottler:** Yeah, I don’t believe in, that there’s a thing called client resistance. I think that all clients are doing the best they can to cooperate with us. It’s just they’re, we sometimes find them very annoying because they’re not cooperating the way we prefer. And that just means that we have to change what we’re doing to honor and respect where they are in that moment.

**Kjos:** I know there’s been research that indicates that the relationship is one of the key factors of change. Are there other components of research that you’ve relied on or looked at in terms of the way you do your work?

1—13
**Kottler:** Yeah. I mean, there, you know, there’s a half a dozen or even a dozen core ingredients that I think are operative in all good therapy. And I think that if students look at all the theories they’ve studied, I bet they could come up with them themselves. But in addition to the relationship and the personal characteristics of the practitioner, there are the, some of the things we’ve already named, like providing a place and an environment for catharsis to take place, the importance of emotional activation. I mean, you know, Rogers is right on target about that, you know, that accessing affect and, you know, is really important. But where I don’t, where I think research has not supported his efforts is that activating emotion for its own sake isn’t really useful or therapeutic if you don’t help people bring that to some sort of resolution.

You know, as a couples therapist, gosh, I don’t know how many sessions I’ve done, you know, where you see people… there’s lots of emotion. They’re screaming like crazy and it, it makes things worse sometimes, not better, if you don’t help people take that stuff and do something constructive with it.

1—14

**Carlson:** Well, can you kind of take us step by step what you would do if, you know, say a client comes into see you, how you tailor your approach or, you know, integrate? Step by step?

**Kottler:** Yeah. See, I think this is generic therapy. You know, if we were going to call this something else, I’d call it generic therapy except generic has a connotation of being cheap.

**Kjos:** White box with black lettering.

**Kottler:** Yeah, but generic means that we’re talking about something that, that, you know, is somewhat, has the good stuff in it without the, the marketing and the advertising. But I think good generic therapy these days is that if you don’t bond with a client….

You know, the object of any first session is to get the person to come back for a second session. If you can’t do that, you’re generally not going to help somebody.

**Carlson:** So you’re going to engage them.
Kottler: And be as charming and respectful and honoring as possible.

1—15
And then there’s an assessment process or a diagnostic process, treatment planning that’s taking place, where, in collaboration with the client, you’re coming up with a plan for “what can we agree we’re going to work on? How much time do we have to do this? What outcomes would you… For this to be considered a successful experience, what do you want to see happen?”

As you’ll see in the interview with Harriet, a place I very much like to start is where, with people’s prior experience about, you know, so, “what do you think this is all about?” And clients come up with some very creative, often disturbing things that they want us to do. You know, they, if they were really honest, if clients were really honest, they’d say, “I’m going to tell you what my problem is. You’re going to listen to me, and then you’re going to fix it. And I’d prefer if you could take care of this in the very first session. If necessary, I’ll come back one more time. But you’re going to do the work; not me. That’s what I’m paying you for or that’s why I’m coming here to see you.”

1—16
And of course, we can’t disagree with that or they won’t come back. So there’s that negotiation that takes place with the clients in the beginning. And then I believe that there’s…

Carlson: Probably can’t deliver it, either, but go ahead.

Kottler: We can deliver it eventually.

Carlson: Okay.

Kjos: That’s an optimistic…

Carlson: Exactly, yeah.

Kottler: I believe that. That if we have that relationship, then I think those negotiations take place in which we’re trying to convince the client that our goals, in conjunction with their goals, might be more realistic for them.

Then I think there’s an insight phase that’s useful in most but
probably not every client or every case. And I think that the kinds of insight—there’s about six or seven different kinds of insights that you can promote depending on what the client’s ready for and, frankly, how much time you have. Are you going to look at unconscious stuff? Are you going to look at secondary gains? Are you going to look at irrational beliefs? Are you going to look at… I mean, all the other theories that people have studied, I think all of that is appropriate.

And then I think you’ve got to move beyond insight, where you have the Woody Allen syndrome where people stay in therapy their whole lives without apparently changing. And then I think there has to be some kind of action, some kind of deliberate, intentional movement that the client makes outside the sessions. Because I think that what they do outside is a heck of a lot more important than they ever do with us. And then the final stage is the evaluation, you know, the kind of mutual assessment of, “Where are we? And did this get you what you want? And if not, what do we need to do to help you to get there?”

Carlson: Okay, well, we’re just about ready to watch you work with Harriet. Can you set that up for us a little bit? What our viewers might look at in terms of how you worked integratively with her?

Kottler: Yeah. There’s a lot of pressure in one session to kind of show your stuff and to make sure that…

Kjos: Were you feeling pressured?

Kottler: More than a little bit. And…

Carlson: So we should look for, okay, we’ll look for that.

Kottler: Yeah, look for my ….

Kjos: See if you sweat.

Carlson: Your anxiety, yeah.

Kottler: I’m really cautious and careful that even if I don’t help anyone I don’t want to hurt them. And I was aware that Harriet was already seeing another counselor, so it was very important to kind of look
at the context of what she’s doing. And I think it’d be interesting for students to observe that as a way of beginning, and then to just tune in on the variety of things that I tried to use and the variety of methods that I tried to demonstrate. I think it’d be an amusing way to start this video if you showed the video first and had students guess what approach I was using and I bet we would have gotten a half a dozen or a dozen different answers. And I’m quite proud of that, of not being able to be typed. When I read reviews of my books, I’m always amused that the reviewers say, label me as being an existentialist or a humanist or a psychoanalytic practitioner or a cognitive therapist.

1—19
Like nobody knows where to put me. And I’m, I’m quite proud of that, actually, that I don’t fit anywhere.

Carlson: So look for you to be respectful, very positive, and look at the way that you use yourself to help Harriet change.

Kottler: And especially look at the relationship.

Carlson: Good. Okay, let’s watch.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

2—1

Kottler: Harriet.

Harriet: Are you ready?

Kottler: I’m ready. We have about 45 minutes together. And what I know so far is that you’ve been in counseling for a little while. Maybe it would be helpful to start if you’d fill me in on what you’ve been talking to your counselor about and what you’ve been doing so far.

Harriet: Let’s see. Well, when I first came, I was depressed about a relationship and how to deal with this relationship I was having with this person. And then I started—and she was helping to think more positive and to start to feel better.

2—2
And also I was having problems with organizing different things going on in my life. I had a lot of things. I had the classes and the children
and, you know, my work. And I was trying to spread things out because I was getting very stressed out.

**Kottler:** Juggling all these things at the same time. Okay.

**Harriet:** Yes. So she was helping me with stress. Then I got back with the person in the relationship I was in, and then they were kind of verbally abusing me, and so I was dealing with that. And she was trying to help me, every time the person would hurt me and upset me, you know, trying to work on how to build myself back up. And then, just recently, we finally broke up. And then I got kind of sad again, you know, and so that’s where I’m at now, and I’m trying to get over the breakup.

2—3

**Kottler:** Okay, so, Harriet, you’re, what brought you to therapy originally was this relationship that was always, for some time, up and down and up and down.

**Harriet:** Yes.

**Kottler:** But you also said that you’ve that you’ve been juggling a number of different things.

**Harriet:** Yes.

**Kottler:** We had talked briefly about your three children. And they’ll be going away again, going back to school, leaving you alone. And then you’ve been under a lot of stress related to work. And I understand that you’re also going through a job change or job transition, where you’re going to be doing something completely new. And with the therapist that you’ve been seeing, what have you done with her that’s been especially helpful to you so far?

**Harriet:** Well, let’s see. Well, she did give me some affirmations, and that helped, and she told me about positive thinking, and I was working on that because I tend to, I think, sometimes look at the darker side of things.

2—4

And she had me make a list of all the things I have to do, and with this list, you know, I started doing some of the things and she would,
she would pat me on the back and, you know… So that made me feel better, like I was getting through some of…

**Kottler:** Giving you a lot of support because that’s something that’s been in short supply for you with all the stuff you’ve been going through lately.

**Harriet:** Yes, she was very supportive. And I guess, a lot of times I would just vent and she would listen. And I would feel better after I left, you know, because I guess I would get a lot of this out, you know, things that were bothering me. And…

**Kottler:** Having someone you could talk to, someone you could trust, somebody who would listen to you. So that really helped.

**Harriet:** Yeah, because I didn’t have much support in my life at this time, at that time.

**Kottler:** Okay. What else did she do that was especially helpful?

**Harriet:** Well, she was trying to help me get away from the ….

2—5

**Kottler:** This destructive relationship.

**Harriet:** Yeah. And… But I was having a very hard time with that because I would say things and when I got home, I would forget, you know. And like when she pointed out that, she pointed out that this person was similar to my family background and she, then, we made a chart. And she showed me that the qualities that he had and the qualities that my family had and my ex-husband had were similar. And we made a chart on what I really wanted, and she was saying that these are not the same things, you know, what I want and what he is were different.

But I kind of feel like I was kind of, maybe addicted or something to him because I just…

**Kottler:** Couldn’t let go.

**Harriet:** Couldn’t let go.

**Kottler:** Yeah. That your brain would tell you, you know, this is the right thing to do but there was something in your heart that kept you
connected to him, just not ready to end that relationship.

2—6
And you said something interesting, you said that your counselor would tell you these things but then you’d go home and you’d forget.

Harriet: Yeah. I would forget.

Kottler: Which means that it must not really have sunk in or, or you must not have been utterly sure that that’s something that you wanted to do. Part of you wanted to let go of the relationship but part of you wanted to hang onto it. There, there must have been some things about the relationship that you valued and appreciated.

Harriet: Yeah. He was, well, he was very helpful, and he …. I always felt that …. I don’t know. I had this thing that I thought he was “the one,” you know, and I thought we got along very well and we talked very well and he was, you know, intelligent. And you know, I thought, you know, this was, I thought this was going to be the one for me. You know.

Kottler: Even when there was a lot of evidence to indicate that the other things that he was doing weren’t real good for you at all, and you alluded to the fact that he was kind of beating you down.

2—7
You weren’t feeling good about yourself, and that’s one of things that your counselor was helping you with, was to kind of look more clearly not only at the good things about the relationship but the things that you were ignoring as well.

Harriet: Yes. Yes.

Kottler: So, in this, the counseling that you’ve been in so far, what are some things that haven’t been working very well or haven’t been all that helpful to you?

Harriet: When I, when I, when we broke up the second time, it wasn’t helpful to me because I also asked …. I didn’t know what to do. I was very distraught when I came in and she wouldn’t… she seemed like she didn’t want to help me. She just said, “Well, you have to make up your own mind.” And I felt really bad.
Kottler: So you were frustrated with her because you wanted some direction from her that she wasn’t willing to give because she didn’t think that was good for you, even though that’s what you thought you wanted.

2—8

Harriet: Right. Because I felt like I was so low that I couldn’t get direction. And then, she even told me how I looked, you know, and that kind of bothered me. She says, “You look like a little lonely child sitting in the corner.” And that just made me feel worse and I just, you know, I cried because I felt like she was beating, I felt like she was beating me up.

Kottler: So sometimes she would confront you with some things that you didn’t necessarily feel ready to look at. Even if she was right or even if that was true, you didn’t feel like that’s something you wanted to hear right then.

Harriet: Right. Yes. Yes. Because I, it just made me feel worse. It made me feel like maybe I should just go and hide somewhere if I’m looking like this. If I’m looking like someone lost, you know, lost little kid, maybe I should hide rather than come out in the world.

Kottler: Yeah. That’s what you needed to do right then and there and you weren’t ready to come out.

Harriet: Right.

Kottler: Harriet, what I’m doing with this initial question, or initial questions, is in that you’re already seeing a counselor, whatever we do together in the time we have, I don’t want to mess with that.

2—9

I mean, I want to support the work that you’re already doing because we just have this one meeting together. So it’s real helpful for me to know what it is that you’ve been doing that’s been working pretty well and what you’ve been doing that hasn’t been working that well.

Of all the areas that you mention that you’ve been working on—related to issues of letting go of your children and what that means is living alone again, especially now that this relationship has ended. So
now, in some ways, it’s, you’ve got to be feeling even more alone than you have before; dealing with the job transition and all the stress that that brings and some of the other issues that you raised— What would be most useful for us to talk about in the time that we have?

**Harriet:** The letting go and dealing with, you know, the children leaving, you know, because I’ll be there by myself, and I just wonder how I’m going to deal with that.

2—10

**Kottler:** And that’s coming up in a matter of weeks when they go back to school.

**Harriet:** Next week.

**Kottler:** Yeah.

**Harriet:** And especially the letting go of this person because they told me, today I talked to them, and they said that they have moved on. And I think that kind of helped a little bit, that they told me that they moved on.

**Kottler:** When you say “they,” in particular, which daughter are you speaking of?

**Harriet:** I mean, I mean the man.

**Kottler:** Oh, the man. Okay. So when you’re talking about letting go, you’re referring not just letting go of your children, but also letting go of this relationship that so recently ended.

**Harriet:** Right. Yes.

**Kottler:** Okay. Although you’re saying it’s over, there’s a part of you that’s not really sure that…

**Harriet:** Well, I still don’t want to let go. I wasn’t ready to let go. He just, he just decided he didn’t want to see me anymore, and he told me he hated me, and that really hurt, you know. And he said that, you know, that, you know, he said I couldn’t handle being with him, because we wanted different things.

2—11

He had just got out of a divorce, and he wasn’t ready for a relationship,
and I’ve been divorced for a number of years, and I was ready for, you know, a committed relationship.

**Kottler:** So this was not your choice to end this relationship at this time.

**Harriet:** No.

**Kottler:** And perhaps you could tell me a bit more about how this whole thing happened. What do you want to call him? What’s his first name or what first name do you want to call him?

**Harriet:** Sylvester.

**Kottler:** Sylvester. Okay.

**Harriet:** Now what did you say again?

**Kottler:** What would be helpful for me to know about the way this relationship so recently ended and what you’ve been dealing with since then, related to your relationship with Sylvester?

**Harriet:** Well, it seemed like he just always pushed me away.

2—12

He used a lot of, he would say a lot of mean things to push me away. And I don’t know. I just, you know, I, I wanted it to work. And I thought a lot of times that the things that he was saying was because he just didn’t know any better and I tried to overlook.

**Kottler:** And make excuses for him.

**Harriet:** And make excuses for him, yeah. And because he would say some, you know, I think, kind of cruel things, you know. And you know, like, and we had been seeing each other for weeks and then when he said that, I said, “Well, does this mean we break, we broke up?” And he says, “Well, we never went together. We were just, I was just dating you, I was just seeing you because you didn’t have a boyfriend.” You know, like, as if he was doing me a favor.

**Kottler:** Yes. And yet, although you know that in many ways this relationship wasn’t good for you, you’re still mourning the loss because you did, and perhaps still do, care so deeply for him.

2—13
Harriet: Yes. Yeah. And I don’t know why I care so deeply for someone who, you know, can be so cruel.

Kottler: And that’s the part that’s been so confusing and frustrating, that with your counselor, once you’re in session with her, you talk about how, all the reasons why this wasn’t good for you, and you think you understood while you were there, and then as you said, you’d go home and you’d forget. That is, whatever you thought was important then all of a sudden didn’t seem so important once you were with him. It’s like whatever was in your head at the time just didn’t seem that important anymore.

Harriet: Yes. Yeah.

Kottler: So it’s not so much that you forgot. It’s that there are two really, really important voices that are speaking inside you at the same time—one that’s saying, “Harriet, get the hell out of that relationship; it’s not good for you,” and the other one that’s saying, “But wait. I love him. I care for him. I’ve invested a lot in this relationship.” And you’ve been kind of going back and forth and back and forth.

Harriet: And that’s been also making me very tired because I think about it constantly. You know, I think about it morning and night and all during the night when I’m trying to sleep. So I’ve been really obsessed about it, and I’m trying to stop that, you know, because I notice that makes me feel worse.

Kottler: What it would be like for you, or what would happen, if you didn’t have this problem anymore? What if all of the sudden you would wake up tomorrow… Let’s say this session was so effective that when you walk out of the door here today and you drive home, it’s like there’s this magical cure and you don’t think about him anymore. He’s just history and you’re able to move on with the rest of your life. What would that be like for you?

Harriet: It would probably be very relaxing. It would probably feel better. I think it would feel much better.

Kottler: In some ways. But what about in some other ways that that wouldn’t be so attractive or so good?
Harriet: Well, the loneliness, you know. Because now I kind of feel like I’m all alone in the world, you know. Like, I feel almost like he’s thrown me out in the world by myself now.

Kottler: So as long as you stay obsessed with him, as you said, as long as you keep thinking about him, as long as you stay stuck with him, it’s like you still have a part of him with you and you’re not quite so alone. And that if you really did walk out the door today not thinking about him anymore, with Sylvester gone, not just out of your life but out of your head and your heart, you’d have to face how lonely you really feel and how alone you really feel.

Harriet: Yes. Yeah.

Kottler: So there’s a part of you that’s really reluctant to, to let that go and to let him go.

Harriet: Yes, I guess so. Yeah.

Kottler: What else would be different about your life if he was not only occupying you, your time, but he didn’t occupy your head anymore and you never thought about him or gave him a second thought?

Harriet: I could set some goals and do, do more because I’ve been very slowed down lately. I don’t feel like doing too much, you know.

Kottler: So, in some ways, he’s a good excuse to not do some things that you might have to do if you made yourself more available?

Harriet: I guess so. I don’t know. I’m not sure.

Kottler: Yeah, I know. You nodded your head and said you guess so but it seems like that doesn’t really fit for you or that you’re not sure about that.

What I was, what I was wondering, Harriet, is just that as long as you remain stuck in that relationship even though it’s over, you don’t exactly make yourself available for another kind of relationship at
some time in the future. And I’m not just talking about a romantic relationship; I’m talking about intimacy on any level, not just with a lover but with a friend.

2—17
You know, you’re talking about how alone you feel and in some ways you’re insulating yourself or keeping yourself stuck so that you don’t reach out to other people. And so, what I was bringing up is the idea is that Sylvester is, in some ways, still keeping you from reaching out to other people.

Harriet: I guess so.

Kottler: Again, you’re not so sure about that.

Harriet: You mean like the thought of him.

Kottler: Yeah.

Harriet: Yeah.

Kottler: As long as you stay obsessed, as long as you think about him, then you really don’t have to go on with the rest of your life. And there are some really exciting things about your life that seems to be taking off right now. You know, from some things that you said when we were chatting earlier, you know, you’ve seem to have done some marvelous things in terms of launching your children out into the world, that they’re so independent that they’re communicating to you they don’t even need you anymore.

2—18
Harriet: Yes. Yeah. I raised them by myself after my husband left, and so everybody says I did a very good job.

Kottler: What do you think?

Harriet: They are, they’re good kids. There are some areas that I’m, you know, you know, that, you know, they have a few little problems with. But they’re, you know, they’re trying to better themselves and get their careers together, and they’re serious about school. And, you know, from what I hear about other kids nowadays, you know, that’s really a good thing. So. And my son told me the other day I did a very
good job as his mother, so that made me feel good.

Kottler: So your children, most of the time or some of the time, seem to believe that you’re a pretty okay mother, and you’ve reported that other people who have observed you and observed the way that you’ve parented and the way you’ve worked with them also think you’ve done a really good job.

2—19

But you seem reluctant to kind of pat yourself on the back yourself, to be able to admit, “Yeah, I did a good job.”

Harriet: Well, I guess because, for some reason, motherhood didn’t seem real important to me, you know. It was just something I had to do and I did it. I guess that’s not a good attitude, but you know.

Kottler: Well, as you said, being stuck in a situation where you really didn’t have a choice, that you were the only parent that was around to raise them, you never had the luxury of thinking about what you wanted to do.

Harriet: That’s true.

Kottler: And yet, it seems interesting to me that in your work, in your career, you finally seem to be at a point where you’re asking yourself what you want to do, that you’re, you’re not altogether, and haven’t been, satisfied with what you’ve been doing and that’s a part of your life that you’re really taking charge of and really wanting to go in a completely new direction.

Harriet: Yes. Yeah, I am.

Kottler: You just smiled as you said that like…

Harriet: Because I’m really happy about the job change.

2—20

Kottler: Yeah. And what did it take for you to make that happen?

Harriet: I had to do a lot of studying and the courses. And, well, I had put in for the job maybe a year or so ago, and I was on the waiting list, then she called me and told me they had an opening and was I still interested, and then I told her, “yes.” And then she told me, she sent
me the material. I did the studying. I looked at the videos and took the course and passed the course. So, and I did very well. I was really proud of myself.

**Kottler:** Yes.

**Harriet:** I think I, out of 50 questions, I missed two, so I was really proud of myself.

**Kottler:** Wow. Yeah. So what would it take for you to take the same kind of initiative and the same kind of drive and the same kind of motivation that helped you move on in that part of your life—what would it take for you to move on in your relationship with Sylvester?

2—21

**Harriet:** I don’t know. I guess, what, to look for another man?

**Kottler:** You said that like even you know that’s not the right answer. To look for another man!

**Harriet:** I don’t know.

**Kottler:** Wrong.

**Harriet:** Okay.

**Kottler:** I’m not supposed to say that, either. Okay. Let’s start over.

**Harriet:** Okay. I don’t know.

**Kottler:** Yeah. Well, part of you, it sounds like, isn’t really ready to let go of Sylvester just yet, and you know, your counselor might be telling you that that’s a good thing that you should do and maybe some of your friends are telling you, “Why don’t you get rid of this loser and move on?” but people can say that to you until they’re blue and you’re not going to make that happen until you’re ready, until you’re ready to let go and move on. And this didn’t happen according to your schedule.

2—22

Sylvester is the one that decided to end this thing. And that’s annoying on top of everything else, that it’s just another way that it felt like you were being controlled by this man who’s not good for you. And yet, he could call you today and say, “Honey, I changed my mind.” And you
know, “You’re not so bad after all for a loser. And maybe you want to come back and be with me again. I’ll consent and I’ll let you back into my life in a limited way.”

**Harriet:** Yeah. Yeah, that’s sad. Because I really want more.

**Kottler:** You’d like to be the kind of woman that could say, “Thanks but no thanks. I need and deserve something far more in my life.”

**Harriet:** Yes.

2—23

**Kottler:** But you’re not quite there yet.

**Harriet:** No. So how can I get there?

**Kottler:** Yeah. That’s, that is the question. In terms of the ongoing work that you’ll do with your counselor when our session ends, what would it take for you to get to the next step? Not to get it all at once, but to just go to the next step, where if Sylvester did call or if sometime in your life you find yourself involved in another relationship with somebody that’s not giving you what you deserve and what you want, what would it take for you to not only realize that when you’re talking to somebody, but to actually remember it when it really counts?

**Harriet:** I really don’t know. See, I really don’t know. Because right now I just feel so low.

**Kottler:** I believe you. Yeah.

**Harriet:** So I really don’t know.

2—24

**Kottler:** And by feeling so low, it doesn’t feel like you have the energy or the drive to do what it would take, at least in that part of your life, even though you have these other part of your lifes, parts of your life right now that you are very much in control of. This is just one segment that’s a bit more out of control than you’d prefer.

**Harriet:** Yes. Yeah. I think so. I’ve noticed that everything else seems to be going, you know, well. You know, like I take classes here, my classes.

**Kottler:** So in many ways in your life, you’re bettering yourself. There’s just this one way and maybe a few other ways we haven’t talked
about yet, that these are just some areas that you need to strengthen.

**Harriet:** Right.

**Kottler:** I have a guess or a hunch that this isn’t the first time in your life that you’ve experienced a relationship similar to what you have had with Sylvester, what you still have with Sylvester in your head.

2—25

**Harriet:** Yeah. That’s true. Because, it seems like, and somebody was telling me I make poor choices.

**Kottler:** So how, how is this familiar to you?

**Harriet:** Well, I was in a relationship with a drug addict and it was, it was bad like this. And, but I think I was feeling even worse because I just went, I just gave up and I just went to bed and I got into a very deep depression. And I think I stayed away from relationships for at least three years or so. And then the one before Sylvester, he was very angry. So I don’t know. I just, I just pick the wrong people. They say a lot of times it’s from your family, you know. My father was very emotionally distant.

**Kottler:** Yes.

**Harriet:** And, you know, I think my mother was not really very helpful, either.

2—26

**Kottler:** So there’s been this ongoing pattern in your life of other Sylvesters.

**Harriet:** Yes.

**Kottler:** And one of the things that scares me, just thinking about it, is that once Sylvester is really gone, what’s going to stop you from picking another one just like him?

**Harriet:** Well, I thought I was going to, I was just going to try to be more careful. And you know, take things slower. I was thinking that might help, if I kind of take things a little slower and not get, get involved with the person unless I, until I really knew who they were.

**Kottler:** It sounds like that’s the kind of decision that you’d make that
makes perfect sense right here, one of those things that you’d say but might be one of those things that you could easily forget when…

2—27

**Harriet:** I, I really think I, this has been a lesson for me, because I have met some people and right way I see different things, like, like red flags, and I’ll dismiss it right away.

**Kottler:** So this is a turning point for you. And interesting that you may, in fact, be holding onto Sylvester as a way to slow things down so you don’t get immediately involved in another relationship.

**Harriet:** Oh, I don’t know. You think so?

**Kottler:** I’m just suggesting that as a possibility. You know, I’m kind of asking myself the question, why would someone as bright and as perceptive as you are and as capable as you are and as competent as you are in so many other areas of your life, who seems to have perfect understanding of this ongoing pattern of picking losers to get involved with, why would you find yourself in a series of successive relationships with these guys that aren’t very good for you?

2—28

And why would you be holding onto, onto Sylvester knowing that it’s over and that even if it wasn’t over, he’s not good for you? I don’t have an answer, but I think it’s a fascinating question why you might be holding onto this.

**Harriet:** Well, I was thinking, and I know what they say, you know, that maybe he would change and… I tend to be a rescuer, I believe. And, and I just thought that maybe in time, he would change.

**Kottler:** You could fix him.

**Harriet:** Yes. Well, yeah.

**Kottler:** And how has that worked with your other projects that you’ve, these guys that you’ve tried to fix?

**Harriet:** Well, the drug addict did stop using, you know, because I prayed. I prayed for him a lot, and he finally did, you know, stop using. And….
Kottler: So in some ways, you felt like you have been helpful to some of these people.

Harriet: I guess through prayer.

Kottler: Yeah.

Harriet: So, but other than that, it hasn’t worked. And my son was telling me that with my ex, I, for years, tried to change him, you know. So, yeah. So I guess it doesn’t work. I guess it is just a waste of my energy, so.

Kottler: Well, it might work in some unintended ways, but it certainly doesn’t work if your goal is truly to be involved in a, a relationship with someone who can give you what you can give him or if your goal is to be independent in such a way that you don’t need a man in order for you to be happy, that that’s just something that would make your life better but it isn’t necessary. And one of the things that you’ve alluded to a couple of different times is the, the real scare that you’re feeling right now at the prospect of not only losing Sylvester, but losing your children, and that you’re going to be living alone.

And that’s something that’s very frightening for you.

Harriet: Yes.

Kottler: And if you’re not very, very careful, you could make a choice or a decision to pick somebody else who isn’t necessarily good for you, for the sake of having a companion, even if it’s somebody that doesn’t treat you very well.

Harriet: Yeah, so what do I do about that? I just have to be very careful, huh?

Kottler: This is one of those moments right now that you warned me about where you said that one of things that you didn’t like so much about your counselor is when you were struggling and you were confused like you are right now, you wanted some direction and some structure. You didn’t want the counselor to give you some evasive response and say, “It’s up to you,” or, “You know the answers, and
you….”

So, I’m really sensing that right now you want, first of all, you think that I know what you should do and that if I knew that I would, that I would tell you.

**Harriet:** Right.

**Kottler:** And I’m really feeling a bit trapped right now because, and pressured, because I’m thinking, gosh, I just met you and how could I possibly… I barely know what’s good for me most of the time, and how am I supposed to know what’s good for you? But I’m also aware that I don’t want to let you down.

**Harriet:** Well, when they were gone before, I stayed real busy. I ran around a lot. You know, I just stayed out in the street and just ran, ran, ran, you know.

**Kottler:** To keep yourself occupied and keep yourself busy. So that’s one answer that you thought of when I was just jabbering a minute ago.

**Harriet:** Yeah.

**Kottler:** What are some other things that you know have worked for you in the past?

**Harriet:** Exercise. Something like that, you mean? Exercise helps.

**Kottler:** That’s an example of…

**Harriet:** An activity.

**Kottler:** Pardon?

**Harriet:** An activity.

**Kottler:** Of an activity or something healthy that you’ve been doing that’s good for you, yeah.

**Harriet:** Right. Walking, exercise, aerobics, that type of thing. And I… am an art major here, and sometimes, and the art work has helped me, but lately, I don’t feel like doing any art work.
Kottler: Right. Well, that’s when you, I mean, I mean, gosh, Harriet, you’re going through an ending of a relationship that’s been so important to you, and you’re experiencing a lot of different transitions in your life and, as you said, you’ve been depressed and also pretty stressed out. So it would make sense that you wouldn’t necessarily have a lot of energy for these creative things even though you know that you’re good for you.

2—33
Harriet: Yes.

Kottler: What else?
Harriet: I read a lot. So that helps. I read and I pray.

Kottler: All of the things that you’ve mentioned so far are things that you would do alone or you could do alone, which is fantastic because it means you’re not really dependent on anyone else to be able to accomplish those things. Everything that you’ve mentioned—doing your art work, getting more physical exercise and working out on a regular basis, reading, you know, bettering yourself in school—you know, all of those are great things but one of the things that you mentioned is the way that you’ve isolated yourself, that you don’t have a lot of support right now.

Harriet: No.

Kottler: What are you going to do about that?
Harriet: I’ve been going to some 12—step meetings, so I’ve been doing that and that helps.

2—34
And…

Kottler: Talk about how that helps.

Harriet: Well, that helps because like I hear different things at the meeting that help, and then while I’m there, it seems like I’m able to think more clearly about situations. You know, I guess because I think it’s like a spiritual group, and so I start to think more clearly about things and I see that, with this relationship, I was, maybe because I
was.... I kind of blame myself a little bit because maybe I was kind of controlling because I was trying to push him to have this relationship with me.

Kottler: So part of the 12—step, about letting go of the things that you can’t really help.

Harriet: Yeah, and being powerless over people.

Kottler: Yes.

Harriet: You know, that I have no control over people, places or things.

Kottler: And the way your relationship with God helps.

Harriet: Right. And putting my life in God’s hands. So yeah, that’s been helping, the 12 steps.

2—35

Kottler: And feeling part of a group of people that are, that’s bigger than just yourself, where you don’t feel so alone. You hear their stories. You hear that other people go through things similar to what you’ve been going through.

Harriet: And then, I, I went to one yesterday and, and I realized, like you said, it’s mostly this one area, where a lot of people had so many areas that they were out of control in. So you know, that’s good for me in a way because, like I said, it’s only this one area that’s really causing me a problem right now.

Kottler: So doing, taking an inventory of that, looking at the whole context of your life not just the one area of your life that you, with Sylvester, that you’ve been so obsessed about. And by taking inventory, it allows you to hit all the different areas of your life and realize that, whereas this might not be going so well, there are other areas that are going quite well.

Harriet: Yeah, that’s true. Because I also roller-skate and have a group of roller-skating friends.

2—36

Kottler: Oh, okay.
Harriet: And so that’s fun, and they’ve been very supportive about the situation, too.

Kottler: And who else has been supportive?
Harriet: Well, my children don’t want to hear it.
Kottler: Yeah, they’re sick of it.
Harriet: Yeah. And I think that’s about it.

Kottler: And that’s where your counselor has been helpful because some of the people in your life don’t want to listen to you anymore talk about this. And your work with your counselor has been one of the few places where you could go and you could talk about that and not have to worry so much that you’re going to get cut off or that someone’s going to say, “Oh, Mom, would you shut up? I’m tired of hearing about that.”

Harriet: Yeah, because even my mother, she jumped all on my, you know, she, you know, started fussing and stuff about it: “Why aren’t you doing....” Like that. And so, that wasn’t very helpful.

Kottler: Right. Because then you have to walk around pretending as if this doesn’t matter anymore, and it really does. You do spend a lot of time thinking about it.

Harriet: So I do, I stay to myself a lot because, you know, the mood I’m in.

I just don’t really feel like giving much, and then people also make comments about it, you know, about how sad I look or something sometimes. So I’ve just been just staying in the house, you know, just resting.

Kottler: Keeping away from people, isolating yourself. And then when you’re out there in the world, kind of pretending that you feel better than you really do.

So when you have your next scheduled session with your counselor, what are you going to tell her about this conversation?

Harriet: Oh, I don’t know. I might tell her.... I don’t know. I really
don’t know. Maybe I’ll tell her about what you said about isolating myself, you know. And you know, maybe I should force myself to get out more.

Kottler: Well, what would it take for you to have a breakthrough with your counselor and kind of take your work with her until the, to the next level?

Harriet: I don’t, I don’t know.

Kottler: I guess I’m wondering what are some things that you haven’t told her yet? Or what are some things that you haven’t shared with her, some things that you haven’t done with her that you might do that would....

Harriet: Well, I did tell her that I realized with this relationship I had abandonment issues and I’d like to work with that and also, you know, I think I’m love-addicted because I’ve been reading a lot, you know, and I’d like to work with that. Because I really, I really want love, you know, in my life. I don’t know. Maybe it’s, sometimes I feel like maybe it’s too late for me, you know, being an older person.

Kottler: And by love addicted, it would be much better if the source of love in your life didn’t necessarily come, have to come from a man, and if it did come from a man, it wasn’t exclusively from a man and if it even, if it did come from a man, that it wasn’t somebody that always took from you and didn’t give back what you deserve.

Harriet: That they took from me and didn’t give back.

Kottler: That’s been the pattern that you’ve described that’s occurred so many times.

Harriet: Yeah. Yes. So I guess I need to find someone who loves me back, huh.

Kottler: Yes. And maybe even before that, to be able to get yourself to a point where you don’t need a man in order to find that kind of love,
that there’s so many other people around you or who could be around you that can provide that kind of love and support that you deserve. And you obviously have a tremendous amount of love to give to other people. It’s just been so frustrating for you that it doesn’t feel like it’s been reciprocated in this one, one dimension or one area. And in some ways, you do sound discouraged about whether you’re ever going to be able to enjoy that kind of equal relationship with someone....

Harriet: Yeah, I do. I’m wondering.

2—40
I guess because, maybe that’s one reason why I’m holding onto Sylvester, because I just feel like, you know....

Kottler: It might be the last chance.

Harriet: Right. You know, and then sometimes I say, “Well, maybe in a few years he’ll realize, you know, what a wonderful person I am, and, you know, and.... You know, and how good I am for him.”

Kottler: And it does seem so sad that there was potential there, but he and you together just weren’t able to make that work.

Harriet: It seems like he fought it.

Kottler: Because in some ways he was really afraid of you and afraid of that relationship and did what he could to sabotage it.

Harriet: Yeah.

Kottler: Harriet, we only have just a couple minutes left and I guess what I’m wondering is, when you drive home today and you’re in your car and you’re thinking about this conversation and how it went and the things that we talked about, what are you going to think about? Or what’s going to haunt you after this over? What are you going to remember—not forget but remember?

2—41
Harriet: Well, I’ll probably remember what you said about him sabotaging the relationship and about not isolating myself. And maybe having my counselor talk about ways to feel good about myself being alone. I think maybe that’s what we should work on.
Kottler: So you’ve left with a plan of what you’re going to do with your counselor the next time you get together and some other areas that you might explore.

Harriet: Yes.

Kottler: What else are you going to do? The first question I asked you is what you were going to think about, but what are you going to do now based on these things that you realize?

Harriet: Well, I’ll continue with my meetings.

2—42

I guess I’m going to, I’m going to keep trying to let him go. I guess I’ll keep trying.

Kottler: Boy, was that tentative. But that’s the best you can do for right now, or the best that you’re ready to do right now. And the one thing that you don’t like is people pushing you to do something that you don’t feel ready yet.

Harriet: Well, what do you suggest I do to….

Kottler: I, I think you’ve got a plan, and I really support that plan. And I….

Harriet: I mean to let him go. How can I let him go?

Kottler: I think you’ll let him go when you’re ready to let him go, and I don’t think you’re quite ready yet. And I think you’re getting closer and closer and closer, and I really applaud all the other things that you’re doing in your life right now to diversify your, your life and to have a lot of other sources of stimulation so that you don’t need to hold onto him anymore. And I think that once you make yourself available in that way, I think you’re going to find you’re going to attract a whole lot of people in your life other than men.

2—43

Harriet: Okay. Okay, that sounds good.

Kottler: Yeah. Thanks so much for meeting with me today.

Harriet: Okay, thank you. Okay.
Notes...
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Dr. Kottler has authored numerous books in psychology, education, and counseling. His books are directed towards a number of different audiences: 1) for practicing therapists and counselors about the inner world of helping others; 2) for teachers and educators about the human dimensions of helping; and 3) for students in education and helping professions. Kottler is also known for his provocative books about contemporary issues and human struggles, such as the forbidden world of what people do when they’re alone, the phenomenon of crying and what it means in people’s lives, the inner world of murder and the reasons why people have an attraction to vicarious violence.

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<td>Ernest Rossi</td>
<td>Mind-Body Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jill Savege Scharff</td>
<td>Object Relations Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lenore Walker</td>
<td>Feminist Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert E. Wubbolding</td>
<td>Reality Therapy</td>
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