Instructor’s Manual
for
INTEGRATIVE FAMILY THERAPY
with
KENNETH V. HARDY, PHD
Manual by
Ali Miller, MFT and Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD

psychotherapy.net
The Instructor's Manual accompanies the DVD Integrative Family Therapy, with Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD (Institutional/Instructor's Version). Video available at www.psychotherapy.net.

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Instructor's Manual for Integrative Family Therapy, with Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD.

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Instructor’s Manual for

INTEGRATIVE FAMILY THERAPY WITH KENNETH V. HARDY, 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 and after the video.

2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION
Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions section provides ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. ENCOURAGE SHARING OF OPINIONS
Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What are viewers’ impressions of what works and does not work in the sessions? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes; it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. CONDUCT A ROLE-PLAY
The Role-Plays section guides you through exercises you can assign to your students in the classroom or training session.

5. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL
Assign readings from Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading prior to or after viewing.

6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in the Reaction Paper section.

7. WATCH THE FAMILY THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS SERIES
This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application in work with families. Each video presents a master family therapist working with a real family who have real problems. By showing several of the videos in this Family Therapy with the Experts series, you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.
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 put on the spot to offer 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. Therapists are usually 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 actual therapy sessions, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal life with us.
Integrative Family Therapy by Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD

Integrative Family Therapy is an amalgamation of systemic models of therapy formed to create a coherent and holistic approach to treatment. It integrates principles and techniques from a number of models that share the same general family systems theoretical foundation, which is that all behavior is intertwined and is best understood when considered within the context in which it is embedded.

Integrative Family Therapy (IFT), as well as virtually all of the models from which many of its core tenets are extracted, asserts that a system--human or otherwise—is greater than the sum of its parts. While IFT draws heavily from the common thread of systems theory, it also merges concepts, tenets, and principles that are often considered opposite of each other. Thus, IFT highlights the connectedness of concepts that are considered antithetical to one another. For example, as an IFT therapist, my goal is often to explore how thoughts and feelings impact the expression of human suffering and problems that clients bring to therapy. I am neither exclusively emotionally focused nor cognitively oriented; I am both. I am keenly interested in pursuing how emotions are impacted by thoughts and how thoughts are impacted by emotions. IFT attempts to examine and promote an understanding of the dynamic tensions that often exist between two seemingly disparate entities, such as: thoughts and emotions; past and present; health and pathology, function and dysfunction, etc.

**CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE MODEL**

The core theoretical tenets that shape my version of Integrative Family Therapy are as follows:

- A belief in the centrality of relationships---The model advances the notion that we are relational beings and that we live life in a relational context. We are always in relationships---even when we are ostensibly alone. We are conceived, born, socialized, and live in relationships, and even when they are strained, fragmented, or cut-off, they still have a profound impact on who
we are and how we negotiate the world around us. *Relationships* are central to both what hurts us and what enables us to heal.

- **The system is greater than the sum of its parts and any change in part of a system ultimately changes the system**---This tenet is an extension of the aforementioned one. It implicitly challenges the notion of the “independent individual” and advances the principle of interconnectedness. It is a direct challenge to the belief that any one of us truly stands alone. Its main premise is that as human beings we are intertwined in a web of mutuality, where we both affect and are affected by each other. The interlocking of our experiences cannot be completely understood by closely analyzing “the parts of a system” in isolation, but instead require an acute focus on “the parts” in relationship to each other and within the context in which they are embedded.

- **A belief in circular causality**---The model espouses the belief that “problems” are not only embedded in relationships and context, but that their *causality* is actually circular rather than linear. In light of this assertion, as a therapist it would not be my assumption, for example, that it was a “wife’s nagging that caused her spouse to have an affair,” as was alleged. Instead, I would assume, and therefore attempt to identify, a well-developed pattern of behavioral sequences that both contributed to and helped to sustain the problem *in their relationship*.

- **Embracing of both/and**---Embracing both/and is both a *philosophy* and a clinical tool that I use as a clinician to help clients (re)connect matter that has been disconnected in their lives. It is used to move clients beyond polarized and either/or thinking that often forecloses new possibilities. For example, the parents who want a quick therapeutic fix for their child whom they only see in rigidly constraining ways as “good” or “bad.” When this is the framework that parents use to understand their child’s behavior, the child is limited in what she/he can be in the eyes of the parents---either “good” or “bad.”
Embracing both/and helps to reinforce the position that neither problems nor behaviors exist in such a clearly demarcated purified vacuum—and that everything is connected. The additional value of assuming this theoretical stance is that it enables clients to see possible alternatives to their problems and solutions. For example, a father, who can only see his son’s failure in not wanting to follow his career path, can be encouraged to see and appreciate his son’s developing sense of independence that is reflected in his “unwise” career decision. The father would be encouraged to embrace both the “inherent problem” with what he considers to be his son’s poor decision-making and to simultaneously develop an appreciation for the latter’s independent spirit as well.

- A belief in reality as a subjective experience---The postmodernist contention that reality is constructed in relationships and is a subjective experience is a major tenet of this Integrative Family Therapy approach. This belief is predicated on the assumption that “reality” is not an objective, measurable, quantifiable phenomenon. Instead, it is created in relationships and is very much observer dependent. Thus, what is considered “real” depends on who the observer is and what it is that is being observed. Our contexts shape our reality. The concept of reality is particularly problematic when we treat it as an objective phenomenon and become the experts or framers of another’s reality. The overwhelming majority of the conflicts that bring clients into therapy usually have to do with rigid notions of reality and the strong sense of righteousness regarding the objectivity of “reality” and what/who is right. The IFT model regards reality as an infinitely fluid phenomenon of which there are multitudinous versions that can and often do co-exist.

- The significance of context---As indicated earlier, a major assumption of this model is that both problems and behaviors are embedded in a context rather than in remote isolation. Context refers to the physical, metaphysical, familial, non-
familial and cultural locations that bestow meaning upon our lives. Determining how a client’s familial and broader socio-cultural contexts influence their lives and the suffering that they endure are critical to the effective execution of this model. Just as this model rejects the claim that the behavior of an individual can be understood divorced from the familial context, it also further renounces the belief that a family’s behavior and meaning system can be completely understood outside the bounds of the socio-cultural context in which it is embedded. Consequently, taking into consideration the socio-cultural context of a client and how it shapes the world and reality of a client is a crucial aspect of this model. When the therapist attends to the significance of the socio-cultural context, larger systems issues such as class, ethnicity, race, religion and a myriad of other factors are seamlessly integrated into the therapeutic equation. Recognizing the influences of the broader context is most effective when accompanied by the therapist’s ability to fluently discuss these issues as well. Attending to the significance of context (both micro and macro) also highlights the importance of another core tenet of this model: the intersection of power and privilege.

- **Power and privilege** --- The interrelated concepts of power and privilege are critical to my conceptualization of Integrative Family Therapy. Power and privilege (either the presence or absence thereof) are organizing principles in virtually all human relationships. Regardless of the type of relationship, whether intimate or non-intimate, individual or group, power and privilege help to shape the interactional patterns. *Power* refers to the relative influence that one has in a given relationship, while *privilege* refers to the status that an individual or group possesses that affords and assigns power to them. The critical issue with relational power and privilege is not simply a matter of **who** possesses it (although there are instances where this would be of paramount importance), but also **how** it is used relationally. It is my assumption that power and privilege can be and are often used responsibly.
and effectively. However, they can be, and often are used irresponsibly and ineffectively, which essentially constitutes a misuse/abuse of power and privilege. When power and privilege are misused/abused in relationships, problems ensue. Consider the following examples: Under most circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that parents have more power/privilege than their children. When parents use their power and privilege responsibly, their children are the beneficiaries—they feel well provided for, loved, nurtured and securely attached. However, when power and privilege are misused/abused by parents, children usually feel emotionally (and sometimes physically) harmed or threatened, scarred, or deprived. In terms of therapy, making an ongoing assessment regarding the influences of power and privilege within both the family and the therapeutic systems is an important part of the clinical process.

- **Validation and the VCR Model**—When power and privilege are misused/abused, there are usually a myriad of relational consequences, the most notable of which is the feeling of devaluation often experienced by the least powerful/privileged individual or group in the relationship. Devaluation is a process by which an individual or group is stripped of dignity and the essentials of their humanity. For example, when children are on the receiving end of power/privilege misuses/abuses by parental figures, they can often suffer from a range of emotional scarring. When this occurs, validation—the overt recognition of one’s strengths and redeemable parts—must be used as a therapeutic strategy for promoting healing and transformation. Thus, the skill of providing effective validation is a core technique of the Integrative Family Therapy model of treatment. Validation is both a worldview and a clinical strategy. As a worldview it centers on the therapist having the ability to “see the pearls of functionality contained in the massive web of dysfunctional behavior” exhibited by a given client. Validation guides the therapist to search for hidden, often unacknowledged strengths as well as the redeemable parts of a client. Ultimately the process is designed to begin a process of counteracting devaluation and
restoring dignity. During the process of therapy it is critical for the therapist to use the VCR model which is comprised of Validating, Challenging, and Requesting. Validation affirms the redeemable parts of a client; Challenging brings attention to the “negative” aspects of the client’s behavior and (the) Request is an invitation and map for behavioral change that integrates the affirming part of the behavior/problem (validation) and the non-affirming part (the challenge). In most instances the validation and challenging represent opposite sides of the same coin.

This section has highlighted several of the core tenets of the Integrative Family Therapy model. All of these principles are highly integrated and provide for a holistic and comprehensive approach to therapy.
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Integrative Family Therapy with Kenneth V. Hardy, 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. 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 Hardy’s approach to Integrative Family Therapy? What stands out to you about how Hardy works?

2. **What I found most helpful:** As a therapist, what was most beneficial to you 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/interventions 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?

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently from Hardy in the session in the video? Be specific about what different approaches, interventions and techniques you might have applied.

5. **Other questions/reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy session with Hardy? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading

WEB RESOURCES
Kenneth Hardy’s faculty page at Drexel University
www.drexel.edu/familyTherapy/faculty/HardyKenneth/

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET
Family Systems Therapy, with Kenneth V. Hardy
Integrative Counseling, with Jeffrey Kottler
Integrative Therapy, with Allen E. Ivey
Structural Family Therapy, with Harry J. Aponte
The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach, with Monica McGoldrick
“My Kids Don’t Appreciate Me:” REBT with a Single Mother, with Janet Wolfe

RECOMMENDED READINGS


Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Integrative:** What do you think of when you hear the term “integrative”? Does Hardy’s description of Integrative Therapy match with what you were expecting? If not, what was different? How would you define Integrative Therapy in your own words after having watched this video? Do you take an integrative approach to therapy? If so, what are some of the theories you pull from? How does your integrative approach differ from Hardy’s integrative approach?

2. **Social context:** What did you think of Hardy’s discussion about the importance of looking at the socio-cultural influences on the family? What did you see him do in the session that brought in the larger social context? When you work with families, do you tend to consider the connection between what happens in the family and what happens in the larger society? If so, is this something you talk about explicitly during sessions? How?

3. **What is working:** How did you react to Hardy’s statement that therapists tend to focus on pathology and overlook the “pearls of functionality”? Would you say this is your tendency as a therapist? Do you, like Hardy, try to look for the things that are working? If you reflect on the case of a family you have worked with, what are some of the things that were working well for this family? What do you think some of the “pearls of functionality” were for the family in this video?

4. **Changing the world:** What came up for you when Hardy said, “I’m using therapy as a very small stage hopefully to change the world, to change the way we think in the world.” Do you see therapy as a tool for social change? Why or why not?

5. **Role of family therapist:** Hardy spoke of his role in a variety of
ways, including seamstress, gardener, and chef. Which, if any, of these metaphors resonated for you as a family therapist? What do you think the role of a family therapist should be? When you work with families, what kinds of roles do you play?

FAMILY THERAPY SESSION

6. **Starting the session:** Hardy began the session by giving the mother and daughter the choice about who would speak first. Some therapists are more directive in the beginning and will ask someone in particular to speak first. What did you think of Hardy’s way of beginning? How do you tend to begin family therapy sessions? Why?

7. **Goals:** One of Hardy’s goals was for this family to leave with a more complex understanding of the problem than they had before the session. Do you think this goal was achieved? What did you see Hardy do that you think facilitated this deeper understanding? What do you think your goals would have been if you were this family’s therapist?

8. **Dialectic:** One key aspect of Hardy’s approach is looking for the dialectic between seemingly polar opposites and moving between past and present, cognition and affect, and supporting and challenging. How successful do you think he was at navigating these opposites with this family? Were there any moments where you would have focused more on supporting and less on challenging, or vice versa? More on the past and less on the present, or vice versa? More on affect and less on cognition, or vice versa? In your own work, do you tend to favor one over the other (i.e. focusing on cognition more than affect, etc.)? Why?

9. **Violence:** How did you feel when you heard Mother talk about Erica’s violent behavior? How do you think you would have managed your reaction if you were their therapist? What did you think of how Hardy responded? Did you like how he focused on Erica’s feelings of disrespect and rage as opposed to focusing on the violent behavior? How might you have responded differently?

10. **Speak to each other:** What did you think of how Hardy
encouraged mother and daughter to speak directly to each other? Do you think it was an effective technique for increasing the intimacy and intensity in the mother-daughter relationship? Do you utilize this strategy in family or couples sessions?

11. **Fragile:** What did you think of how Hardy worked with Mother’s construct that Erica was fragile? Did you like how he eventually challenged Mother on this perception? What might you have done differently to address this perception? Would you have challenged her sooner? Why or why not? How have you maintained a therapeutic alliance with one family member when you disagree with or have concerns about their perception of another family member?

12. **Timing:** Hardy spent the beginning of the session doing a lot of listening, and spoke a lot more in the second half of the session, gently challenging and offering his opinions only after he had some appreciation for each person’s beliefs. What did you think of the amount he spoke and his timing in sharing his own perspectives? Do you tend to speak more or less than Hardy did in your family therapy sessions? What factors do you consider in deciding when to keep your attitudes and opinions on the back burner and when to share them?

13. **Alliance with Erica:** What did you think of the therapeutic alliance between Hardy and Erica? Do you think she felt understood and cared for by him? Are there specific things that Hardy did or said that you think contributed to or detracted from the strength of the alliance with her? One of the audience members perceived that Hardy was relating to Erica as a child. Did you agree with this? Why or why not?

14. **Alliance with Mother:** How would you describe the therapeutic alliance between Hardy and Mother? What specific interactions in the session do you think contributed to or detracted from the strength of the therapeutic alliance with her? If you were the therapist, would you have offered more or less affirmation and validation?

15. **Self-disclosure:** Hardy stated that he violates the rules of his own
training and self-discloses liberally, trusting that he can make the decision about when self-disclosing will be helpful to the client. What did you think of how he self-disclosed in this session? Do you think his self-disclosures about his own life and family contributed to this family? Why or why not? What factors do you take into account when deciding whether and how much to self-disclose?

DISCUSSION

16. **Intimacy and intensity**: Hardy spoke about his attempt in this session to promote more intimacy through vulnerability. How successful do you think he was at this? What might you have done differently to promote more intimacy between Mother and Erica? What are some of your strategies for promoting more intimacy among the family members with whom you work?

17. **The model**: What are your overall thoughts about Hardy’s approach to family therapy? What aspects of his approach can you see yourself incorporating into your work? Are there some components of this approach that seem incompatible with how you work? What in particular would you do differently from Hardy?

18. **Personal Reaction**: How would you feel about having Hardy as your therapist? Do you think he could build a solid therapeutic alliance with you? Would he be effective with you? Why or why not?
Role-Plays

After watching the video and reviewing *Integrative Family Therapy* in this manual, assign groups to role-play a family therapy session following Hardy’s Integrative Family Therapy model. Organize participants into groups of three, consisting of one psychotherapist and two family members. If time permits, rotate so each person has a chance to play the role of therapist. The point here is not to try to resolve the family’s issues, but to use this role-play as an exercise in viewing the family through an integrative lens.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR ROLE PLAYERS:**

One person will start out as the therapist and the other two group members will decide amongst themselves who will be what family member. One option is to choose a segment of the video that you would like to use as a basis for the role-play; do not attempt to follow the sequence of interactions, but rather use the clients and situation in the video as a jumping off point, and allow the role play to develop spontaneously. Alternatively, come up with your own scenario, based on a family you have worked with, your own family or a family you know well, or a completely fictional family.

Therapists should use their own style while incorporating some key aspects of Hardy’s approach. Begin by listening in order to gain an understanding and appreciation of the clients’ belief systems, keeping your own opinions and perspectives on the back burner at first. Experiment with the various dialectics Hardy spoke about, including:

- Supporting and challenging: Validate the clients’ views and beliefs and gently challenge some perspectives that you view differently.
- Cognition and affect: If a client is intellectualizing, invite them to focus on their feelings. If they are very connected to their feelings, invite in their rational mind.
- Past and present: Find your own way of connecting what’s happening in the present to its roots in the past.
- Other aspects of Hardy’s approach to try out include:
• Increase intimacy and intensity by having the family members speak directly to each other.
• Point out connections and similarities where there seem to be only disconnection and differences.
• Focus on what is working in this family, as opposed to only focusing on pathology.
• Utilize self-disclosure in a way that feels natural to you, experimenting with trusting your intuition about when it would be helpful and when it would not be.
• Bring in the social context as it relates to what comes up in the session, paying particular attention to race, gender, and class.

After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss their experiences. Invite the clients to talk about what it was like to role-play this family and how they felt about the therapist’s interventions: Did clients feel understood and cared for? Did they experience their own beliefs and perspectives being validated by the therapist? How was it for them when the therapist challenged their beliefs? How did they feel when the therapist self-disclosed? Do they have a more complex understanding of their problem now? Then, invite the therapists talk about their experiences: How did it feel to conduct a family therapy session using an integrative approach? What was it like to move between supporting and challenging, cognition and affect, past and present? Do they feel satisfied with their self-disclosures? How was it to focus on the social context? Finally, open up a general discussion of the strengths and the challenges in applying an integrative approach to working with families.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one family; the rest of the 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 family. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion on what participants learned about using Hardy’s integrative approach to working with families.
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Complete Transcript of
Integrative Family Therapy
with Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD

Hardy: So, I was just wondering if either one of you would start by
telling me a little bit about why you agreed to do this, what you had
hoped to get from it. I assume if you are here there is something you
are struggling with. Where is the struggle?

Mother: There are issues between Erica and myself but I think what
led me, I was the one that initiated calling was that last week, last
Tuesday to be exact, she is dating or seeing the young man across the
street. And she was very angry with him that she took a baseball bat
and knocked out the passenger side of his window. And then she
proceeded to – I grabbed her, I stopped her when I realized, when I
saw when she ran out the door.

[26:00]
Well I didn’t see her run out the door – when I heard the smashing,
because she was going to proceed to knock out the rest of his windows.
She ran back in the house and got another object and was going to
further knock out the windows. And I was in a state of shock. At the
time that this was all happening she was screaming and hollering that
this young man had gotten someone pregnant and had a baby.

And apparently he made her angry by calling her the “B” word
because she was saying “I got your B, I got your B.” And what really
upset me, that wasn’t the car incident because the window could be
replaced, but that she went in the house and got a knife. By this time
this young man came out the house he was on our property because
we live directly across the street and the knife part, her anger towards
him with that knife is what really had me very concerned. This young
man was not quite as upset for what she did as much she was upset. I
was under the impression that she was upset because she just found
out this news. Later on I found out…well, after that she was arrested.

Hardy: Because of this experience?
Mother: Because of the window. I am not sure if he told them about the knife. I talked to the police officer, I didn’t tell him about the knife. He had her arrested, she went to jail. She was released that night. I work at a job where I work 3 to 12, so I don’t know what time she got home.

When I was across the street with the young man viewing the car, actually I was startled that she did this. I was going to get some plastic – I was really trying to help. He told me then, he said that she has problems and she needs some help. “You need to get her some help.”

[28:00]

He brother who is also an undergrad at the University of Illinois came home for Thanksgiving and he was told what happened. And she expressed to him that she wanted to get some help. So I called.

**Hardy Commentary:** Although it is relatively early in the session, there is already a developing story (reality) about Erica that her mother, boyfriend, and brother to some extent, are all convinced of: that Erica has a problem and needs help. According to the mother’s recollection of a conversation with her son, it appears that even Erica, according to her brother, believes that she has a problem and needs help.

Like I said, there are issues between her and I, but in the course of all of this, I found out through her friends, one friend who came home from school, another friend that lives in the neighborhood that is a childhood friend of hers, that this young man has been physically or verbally, more verbally I’d heard, abusive to her. My biggest concern is that this is an unhealthy relationship that she is in, and Erica has a lot going for herself. She is going to school and she works two jobs and she’s got a bright future. And from what I know, and like I said this young man lives across the street, he doesn’t work and he doesn’t go to school.

**Hardy:** Was this, and Erica I’m going to come to you in a minute. I just want to ask your mom another question. Was this experience, this sort of outburst of hers, was this unusual? Was this the first time you had seen her get this enraged?

**Hardy Commentary:** I am trying to accomplish two goals with this
question. First I want to acquire more information about the anatomy of the violent outburst; and secondly, I take a first step towards trying to name Erica’s behavior as “enraged” as an alternative to the developing story of Erica as “the person with a problem who needs help.”

**Mother:** The first time I had seen her that enraged, wanting to inflict harm. I have seen her verbally in a rage. Her and I have been. But never where she wants to inflict any harm.

**Hardy Commentary:** I am relieved and pleased to hear the mother frame her answer in terms of enrage/rage, which suggests to me that my benign but significant and subtle intervention had some immediate traction with the mother. Once again, I offered Erica as “enraged’ to infuse another possible reality into the conversation.

**Hardy:** And what is the source of conflict between the two of you? I’m going to get Erica’s opinion in a minute, but just form your perspective what is it?

**Hardy Commentary:** Since my initial small step to introduce the mother to the notion that Erica was enraged was moderately successful, I decided to take another small risk here by attempting to expand the definition of the problem by expanding the focus of treatment to Erica and her mother.

**Mother:** She has two brothers, one of the brothers – she is a twin – is her twin – there has always been… I’m a single parent.

**[30:00]**

And there has always been a conflict of how much attention is given one to the other. She is the baby girl. I call her the “Baby baby” because she is the baby of the twin and so I always –

**Hardy:** And the only girl?

**Hardy Commentary:** I am attempting to get the mother to think more contextually by reminding her that Erica is the only girl and maybe this is worthy of further consideration.

**Mother:** And the only girl. And I think the two…well I’m a firm believer in birth order. And so

**Hardy:** So am I.
Mother: And so her twin brother is the oldest – he has two roles. He is the second child of birth of mine but he is also the first born by being the first born of the twins. And he has characteristics of being, has some of the first born characteristics in him. So, he is the type of young man that – he doesn’t need a lot of prodding or, he has somewhat of that aggressive type of personality that comes with the first born, along with my oldest young man, my oldest son.

Hardy: And as some people say, that comes along with being males, too.

Hardy Commentary: Here I use the both/and technique by acknowledging and validating the mother’s claims about the “good son” (my description) and by extension, her bad daughter (Erica), by adding another dimension to her analysis. Once again, I attempt to get the mother to think more about gender and how this profoundly affects how one sees the world and believes they are seen.

Mother: Yes, I know. I take that all into consideration. All that in one. So they don’t need that much encouragement or a lot of attention given to them and so they themselves will say, well if you ask the three of them, because over the course of their teenage years, “Well your mom’s favorite,” and the other one will say, “No, another one is mom’s favorite.” And the other one will say –

And I kind of say, well if each one of them says...I must be doing something right because it is somewhat balanced. So, you are not going to ever have two say she is the favorite.

I have a niece, my sister’s, my niece is a high maintenance child. Erica is a high maintenance child. She doesn’t drive. She didn’t get a license and she blames me for that. She holds me responsible for that.

[32:00]
Like I had mentioned to you before the cameras started, I live with my mom. And my mom within the last four years had a stroke. She can no longer drive. And in the course of their childhood I worked two to three jobs.

So I worked two to three jobs and took care of them. They have been very active children – football, basketball, swimming lessons, kids at
college in the summer time, boy scouts, girl scouts.

**Hardy:** I’m getting exhausted just listening to the list.

**Hardy Commentary:** Once again, my goal is validate the mother’s experience and to convey that both her workload and effort is extraordinary.

**Mother:** But I mean I did all of that for them. Parent/teacher conference – one of the jobs I had was as a teacher’s aide and lunchroom supervisor at their elementary school in the same school district that they grew up in. So I knew all of their teachers because I worked there. So it wasn’t like I wasn’t involved with their education and what not.

Plus, help my mom, so.

**Hardy:** That’s a lot. How do you do it?

**Mother:** I don’t know. And my oldest boy has been to four colleges that I had to drive him back and forth, one of them being Southern University, he completed and graduated from St. Ambrose in Davenport, Iowa. So between two jobs, being a single parent, I had to take care of that.

**Hardy:** Yeah, you need to take a deep breath because that is a lot. And I just appreciate the job you have done because I know it is not easy doing it alone.

**Hardy Commentary:** Here I not only continue to validate the mother but I now also very gently add another dimension, which is the fact that she is doing all of this without a partner or any assistance. I am also trying to slowly and methodically weave together a much more complex explanation of Erica’s problematic behavior that may be connected to a number of other issues and people within the family.

**Mother:** But in the course of leading up to this what I want to say to Erica is that I notice now that Erica is very fragile and I never realized how fragile of a child she was. And you had to be very careful how you handle her because she just seems to have a very fragile type of soul, that she holds a lot of things in and she gets angry and she has got a wrong misconception about my motives and my intentions and some
of it might be true.

**Hardy Commentary:** The mother’s introduction of Erica as fragile is her way of suggesting once again that there is something broken or deficient about her daughter. It seems difficult for the mother to “see” anything redeemable or worthy of affirmation with regard to Erica.

**[34:00]**

**Hardy:** Now, do you think she was born that way?

**Hardy Commentary:** I offered this question to invite the mother to think more critically about how Erica may have gotten to be “fragile.” I thought it might help shift her thinking from “What’s wrong with Erica?” to “What happened to Erica?” Quite honestly, I was surprised and a bit ill-prepared for the response that I received. I thought if she answered yes, it would have been a more speculative answer. I was surprised by the definitiveness of her reply.

**Mother:** Her fragile? Yes.

**Hardy:** So you think she was born that way.

**Hardy Commentary:** I repeat my question and for the first time during the session, I gently challenge the mother. I believe that validating the mother earlier in the session afforded me with a few “challenge chips” that I could use with her. I always believe that the degree to which I can challenge a client is dictated by the degree to which I have validated the client.

**Mother:** Yeah.

**Hardy:** And how do you think that happened?

**Mother:** I don’t know. I don’t know. I can’t explain the fragileness. I do believe there is a baby girl syndrome because I have a few friends that have baby girls that they just like to be loved and nurtured. And some of these friends, they do have baby girls that we talk, the mothers, one of them has a father right there in the house but they still have these tendencies to want to be nurtured and cared for or they can’t – they are very indecisive. Very indecisive. Very insecure. And so I don’t buy into all of this about the single parent type of thing because there are a few of them that do have fathers.
Hardy: That’s what I’m trying to understand. I mean I don’t know whether she is or not and I probably have a slightly different view about it, but if we assume for a moment that she is fragile, then like I think the two ways that we become fragile in life, there are things that happen in our lives that wear us down and break us down. Or I guess there is a possibility that – I wonder, is it possible for her to have been born that way?

Hardy Commentary: I thought during the latter part of the aforementioned statement, the mother was beginning to express some underlying worry that she was to blame for Erica’s behavior.

Mother: I know.

Hardy: And it seems strange that she would…I mean they are all your kids. And so I’m wondering whether it is just maybe that boys and girls are different. Did you grow up with brothers?

Hardy Commentary: Once again, I am trying to invite the mother to think more broadly about Erica’s behavior and to have her become more attentive to issues of gender.

[36:00]

Mother: I’m the oldest and my brother is second and I have a sister that is the youngest one. So there are three of us. I’m the oldest.

Hardy: And was any one of your siblings fragile?

Hardy Commentary: I continue to pursue the fragility issue in hopes of helping the mother find a different way of thinking about it that is less negative and pathology driven. My goal is not necessarily to get the mother to abandon what she believes, but rather to broaden what she believes. My hope is that she could entertain the possibility that there could be a “positive” or “functional” side of Erica’s fragility. In other words, to help the mother embrace a both/and position. So far, we are not there yet!

Mother: No. No. My sister was slightly indecisive but her and I are very, very close. And we talk all of the time. And she kind of just grew out of that fragileness. We always tried to protect her.

Hardy: How old was she when she grew out of it?
Mother: About 23 or 24. Because even her mother-in-law commented to her not too long ago that when she first met her she was a little girl and she has watched her blossom into a woman. So even her mother-in-law has...

Hardy: And Erica, how old are you?

Erica: 19.

Hardy: 19. So she still has another four years if she is on the same track that your sister was on.

Mother: Yes, and there are some similarities between her and my mother. My mother is a baby girl. They are very much alike in certain areas. They don’t see it, but other family members see the similarities between her and my mother, which that is another conflict between her and my mom that puts me in the middle of it.

Hardy: Well Erica you have been very patient to sit here while we talk and I have been eager to hear from you because I have to admit to you as your mom was discussing this situation with your former boyfriend or boyfriend, I couldn’t help but think, I always think there is this connection between being dissed and rage. And so I was wondering if you could tell me what happened because I already have a bias about this thinking, well maybe, in some way in which you felt disrespected by him. What happened? What pushed you over the edge?

[38:00]

Erica: Okay, what I don’t understand is what does my relationship with him have to do with us? Because I have just been talking to him the last year or so, maybe two, and the things that are going on with us have been going on since I was 12 or 13. I mean, I don’t understand.

Hardy: So tell me what has been going on.

Erica: What’s been going on with him and I or with my mother?

Hardy: Well, you and your mother. We can get back to him later.

Erica: Oh, I feel that everything she is saying is true and all but she is telling you like the candy side of it. I mean, so she did all of that stuff, but I mean there are things that you expect your mother to do for you and be there for you and she has not. Even if we live in the
same house, you know, I feel that it was things that she needed to deal with issues that she needed to deal with before she started to try to parent kids. And I tell her that all the time. And I feel that because of that that I have been on the bad end of it. That I have to suffer the consequences because she is not right in what she is doing as an adult and as a parent and now it is leading over to me and maybe my brothers, but I can only speak for myself.

Hardy: Yes, I think you can only speak for yourself. See I am of this opinion that, I mean it is why I asked you what was going on because I think it is possible for the two of you to live in the same family, under the same house, and have very different perceptions about what goes on.

And I think that the two of you can fight for the rest of your lives trying to convince the other that one is right and one is wrong. Or you can sort of find some way to sort of appreciate that, for example from Erica’s perspective, maybe you have done this outstanding job as a mom in terms of being a provider and doing those kind of functional tasks.

[40:00]

But maybe when it comes to, and I don’t know if this is what you mean, being nurtured and providing emotional support, that you have needed more than she has supplied. And now it is possible for the two of you to see that differently. I think until you appreciate that you can have different perspectives then you are never going to work on your relationship, you will just end up fighting about who is right. “Well no it is this way. Well no it’s that way.”

And so where is it that you feel that she has failed you?

Hardy Commentary: I am trying to get Erica and her mother to invest in the notion that multiple realities can co-exist. My goal is to help them move away from their respective rigid assertions about “reality” and who is right. As long as they remain committed to this way of thinking and behaving, their relationship will remain stuck and highly conflictual.

Erica: Basically I should say like if I come to her and say well I want to do this mom or –
**Hardy:** Do me a favor. I want to do something that is going to be very complicated. I am going to ask you the questions, but I am going to ask you to talk to your mom.

**Hardy Commentary:** I intervene and request that they talk to each other directly rather than through me for several reasons. First, I want to get a snapshot of “how” they communicate with each other and what are the interlocking patterns that define their relationship. Secondly, I believe that talking directly to each other personalizes the interaction more, enhancing the potential for intimacy and closeness.

**Erica:** Okay.

**Hardy:** So if you can tell her where you feel failed in the relationship. And if you, [Belinda], if you could just kind of just listen at this moment, okay.

**Hardy Commentary:** I assign both Erica and her mother tasks that they must carry out while having the conversation. While I don’t offer them an explicit rationale for why I want Erica to speak and the mother to listen, their assigned roles were dictated by the distribution of power in their relationship. My premise is always that the party with the greatest power in the relationship has the greatest responsibility to (repair) the relationship. I wanted Erica to have a moment to describe her experience free of the mother’s labels, diagnoses, and analyses about what she was or was not. Finally, I wanted the mother to be in a much better position to possibly hear and experience some of the pain that her daughter obviously was feeling.

**Erica:** Just that when I come to you and I ask you for advice and things you just never listen. You blow me off.

**Hardy:** And can you tell her how she blows you off?

**Erica:** Like when I came to you and said that I wanted to get my license you didn’t help me.

**Hardy:** And Erica can you tell her, like if we stick with that one issue, can you tell her how you felt when she didn’t help you? Not what you thought, what you felt?

**Hardy Commentary:** I want to solicit Erica’s thoughts but also to direct
her attention to any emotions that she might have in connection with her thoughts. Up until this point, the only emotions that have been subscribed to Erica have been anger and rage.

**Erica:** Hurt. Disappointed.

**Hardy:** Can you tell her about that? Can you tell her about the hurt and the disappointment that you felt?

**[42:00]**

**Erica:** I felt embarrassed. I was the only one that wasn’t driving of all my friends almost. And you could have helped me; you chose not to. If there is a will there is a way. You could have helped me. I mean I got through the class and I had my permit and you didn’t help me. And I could have…been working or had a better life and just did stuff and you refused to help me. We are going to argue on it all the time.

**Hardy:** So there is a way in which, and again I will come to you in a minute, but there is a way in which she responded to you that left you feeling hurt emotionally and so you didn’t get you license. And so are there other types of experiences you have had with her where you felt like she didn’t.

You said a minute ago that you felt like the stuff that she needed to deal with before she became a parent. Can you talk to her about that?

**Erica:** Things like, you know about, I came to you and asked you things about going to the gynecologist and things like a girl would ask her mom. You would never sit down and talk to me about that, you know. And personal things like something you would talk to a woman about. And I would ask you questions and you would say, “I don’t want to talk about it,” or it could be just a straight out little info. You don’t go into details. You won’t sit down and explain anything to me. Everything I learned I either don’t know or I had to learn on my own.

**Hardy Commentary:** I thought this was important feedback for Erica to give and for the mother to receive. It affirmed the claim that maybe there were some ways in which the needs and expectations that the children had of the mother and vice versa were just as influenced by gender as they were by strength and fragility.
Hardy: And so like when you went to her or wanted to talk with her about – like the gynecologist, for example, and it doesn’t happen… because it seems to me like then you have these series of experiences. It is almost like if there is a big block of ice that someone with a chisel that goes over and chisels a little piece off and a piece of residue from the ice ends up on the floor. It sounds like you have had, that these experiences in and of themselves have all been little experiences but they are pieces that have been chiseled off the big block.

[44:00]
At some point you look around and you see all of these pieces of that block of ice is now on the floor and it seems like that is what it is like for you, that it is all of these little experiences that have chiseled away at you that have left you feeling hurt.

Erica: Mm-hmm.

Hardy: And so what is it that you want from your mom?

Erica: I want her to respect me and what I do because I think for the most part, not all part, I make pretty good decisions. And I just want her to stand behind me as far as school and work and something like that.

Hardy Commentary: Here Erica voices and affirms the powerful connection I believe often exists between “being dissed” (respect) and rage. While we have yet to discuss Erica’s enraged and violent outburst overtly, I believe it is being addressed indirectly via the current therapeutic conversation and process. I believe that the more love, affection, and respect that Erica experiences with her mother, the less likely she is to desperately seek the fulfillment of these needs from a boyfriend or someone else. And her sense of injustice and outrage will dissipate.

Hardy: And like your mom was saying earlier that she thought that you were fragile. And I was thinking/wondering whether it is fragile that you are or just sensitive. Like in this moment you seem, like I don’t see you as being fragile, I see you as being really sensitive. I mean I don’t know. I will ask your mom in a minute how she responded to what you said. But I just thought it was a very
mature thing for you to...because you obviously have some anger and
disappointment towards your mom, but at least here you were able to
communicate that in a way that felt respectful to me. I don’t know
how it felt to you. Maybe it felt disrespectful to you.

**Hardy Commentary:** I once again revisit the fragility issue and I
purposely talk directly to Erica about it rather than ask Erica and the
mother to discuss it. My message to Erica also contains a message to the
mother as well. I am now introducing a possible connection between
“being fragile” (a negative connotation) and “being sensitive” (a
positive connotation). I am also attempting to overtly validate Erica
and her experiences in a very small effort to counteract some pieces
of devaluation that I believe she feels even though she has not directly
named it.

**Mother:** [No]

**Hardy:** And it is such a loving thing for...because I think beneath
your messages are here are some things that I think you are not saying.
Mom, I admire you and I need you and I know you have done a lot
of wonderful things for me. I need more from you. And I feel guilty
even identifying these negative things. Is that part of how you feel?

[46:00]
I mean I don’t know, if it is not, don’t agree with me just to make me
look good. Is that part of how you feel?

**Erica:** You mean something positive that she is doing that I should
comment on?

**Hardy:** No, I’m saying do you feel like she is...there’s a party of you
that feels like she has done a good job in some ways...

**Hardy Commentary:** I thought this was really important for the mother
to hear. Being a mother is a huge piece of her identity and I thought she
had a great deal of unexpressed fear and anxiety regarding whether she
was an adequate mother or not.

**Erica:** Yeah.

**Hardy:** ... that you admire and respect her and you want more from
her.
Erica: No.

Hardy: You don’t want more from her?

Erica: No.

Hardy: Okay. But see I thought I just heard you asking her for help.

Erica: You mean more as in things I just said?

Hardy: Do you want.

Erica: I mean I want her to be more understanding, is that what you mean?

Hardy: Right, not more materially.

Erica: Oh, okay.

Hardy: But more in terms for her to be more available. For her to be able to talk with you about the gynecologist, to be more supportive towards you. Those things you want?

Erica: Yeah. Definitely.

Hardy: And so before I switch back over to your mom, could you tell me then, like the experience with your boyfriend, what happened there? Just…I mean I feel like it’s something that I have some understanding but I want you to have the opportunity to talk about it in your own words.

Hardy Commentary: Now that I had established some rapport with Erica, found genuine occasions to validate her experiences, and to get a clearer sense of the broader mother-daughter relationship dynamics, I thought the timing was appropriate to introduce the issue that brought the family into therapy: Erica and her violent behavior with her boyfriend. If I am remiss in addressing the issue at all, I risk fracturing my relationship with the mother. I thought finding the right timing to raise this issue was essential to the success of the therapy. If I raise it too soon, I risk Erica seeing me as an extension of her mother. If I delay too long to raise the issue, I risk sending an unintended message to the mother that her concerns have been marginalized and/or dismissed by me. Erica’s response to my question would be a good barometer regarding the appropriateness of the timing. If she is thoughtful and compliant, I
would infer that the timing was good. If, on the other hand, she is abrupt, abrasive, or dismissive, then I would infer that the timing was off a bit and that more validating and trust-building with Erica was needed.

My belief in the centrality of relationships is guiding both my thoughts and actions throughout this process. It would be my assumption that my developing relationship with Erica and her mother, as well as their relationship with each other, has as much or more to do with how she responds than does the fact that she is hostile, recalcitrant, or resistant.

**Erica:** I mean as far as what she is saying, she heard bits and pieces. It was not because of a child, because I knew that he had a child. That wasn’t it. It was anger and frustration that we had in our relationship and it got built up. I mean, I didn’t want my mom to get in the middle of it but she did and that couldn’t be helped. But it was just anger for something else. It wasn’t because he had a baby because I knew that.

**Hardy:** Do you know how she ended up in the middle?

**Erica:** How did she end up in the middle? When I walked over there she heard me, she came across the street, she heard me when I hit the first window.

**Hardy:** But do you know what caused her to get in the middle? Do you know what would have motivated her?

**[48:00]**

**Erica:** Well she probably…see what was going on…make sure that I wasn’t going to get hurt, to see what the cause was for me to do it in the first place.

**Hardy:** So there is some piece of care that she had for you.

**Erica:** Yeah, you could say that.

**Hardy:** Would you say that?

**Erica:** I would say that.

**Hardy Commentary:** Through these series of exchanges, I was trying to help Erica see her mother differently. In some ways, she sees her mother every bit as rigidly as her mother see her. Both appear to be unable--largely because of their respective fears and anxieties--to see the redeemable parts of each other. Since Erica has questioned her mother’s
love and emotional availability to her, I wanted to slow our process down a little so that she could revisit the experience and develop a new found appreciation for why and how her mother ended up in the middle of the fracas. At this point in the treatment my positioning and use of self have slightly shifted from being an advocate for Erica with the mother, to being a lobbyist for the mother with Erica. Ultimately, my goal is to assist in the repair and healing of their relationship.

Hardy: Because there is a way when your mom was talking about that, had all this compassion for you, that it is not unrealistic for a parent to see a daughter she loves out with a baseball bat and to think horrible thoughts in these days. And I don’t mean this in a disrespectful way about your boyfriend, but you know there is no way to know when there is a gun involved, if you are going to end up lying on the street. So I am sure that must have been one horrible moment for you. And there is a way in which she threw herself in the middle of that. So that suggests to me that there is some connection there.

And it seems like the two of you, that the fight between the two of you is not around not caring. But it is the two of you care so much about each other and trying to figure out how to do it.

Mother: Yeah.

Hardy: And I think it is different. I come from a family where I have all brothers and one sister. And I just see the relationship between my mother and my sister; I envy that relationship. Because while my mom like you - is a wonderful mother, beautiful mother, would give me her right arm, I have no question about that, but there is a way in which I also know as her first born son, I will never have the kind of relationship my sister has.

Hardy Commentary: I am a firm believer that therapist transparency and the effective use of self are critical to the therapeutic process. As a way of augmenting the clients’ story and illustrating my belief about the mother-daughter bond, I share a small piece of my personal experience with them—not as an expert therapist but as a member of a family.

Hardy: I mean they have the kind of relationship that you want. You know, they are like this. They shop together, they talk girl stuff
together. And that is marvelous. And so I appreciate you wanting that. And it seems like you have spent a whole lifetime giving to your children.

[50:00]

…Now your mom. And I think it is a statement about the job you have done that you have your 19-year old daughter here asking things of you that some mothers out there would absolutely kill to have from their daughter. To have a 19-year old daughter look up to you enough that she wants you to talk to her about the gynecologist.

**Mother:** Can I say something? The issue with the driver’s license was that at the time three years ago that was around the time after my mom had her stroke. And that son was in college, out of state at that point.

**Hardy:** Do me a favor. I’m interested in hearing. I want you to tell her and let me listen.

**Mother:** Okay, and her being a twin, you being a twin, I had to juggle two other people along with [Jamal] wanting to drive my car. I mean I know you had to remember that. Now you guys didn’t have Driver’s Ed at the same time. I think Jamal started before you, am I right? Okay.

And not only that, as far as - your blue slip expired…

**Hardy:** Can you let me interrupt you for a second. Because here is what… I just want to tell you what I think and you can tell me to go to hell if you want to.

**Mother:** Oh, I wouldn’t do that.

**Hardy:** But I have been touched by your relationship and we have so little time here and I want to make sure that I put something back out here to give the two of you some halfway decent chance to work on this because I am just sensing love and connection here and I would hate to see the two of you destroy this more and you have worked too hard, you have carried too much on your shoulders to get to this point, to lose her.

But here is what, so it sounds like what you are about to do is to
explain to her why this didn’t happen.

[52:00]
And that there was some legitimate reason for it. Which I think is important. But, I think it is also important, so that is important. But it is also important I think to be able to appreciate that regardless of what the reason was, it left her feeling a little bit hurt. And so as you give her the reason for why it didn’t happen, could you also address her hurt?

**Hardy Commentary:** Once again, I am appealing to the mother to use her parental power in an effective, non-defensive way that will help heal and transform the relationship rather than misuse her power by over-explaining, correcting the facts, the details, the record, etc., and exonerating herself while indicting her daughter. This was the dynamic that brought them into therapy in the first place.

**Mother:** The hurt…I know it hurt you that you didn’t have your license when you wanted it. And we talked about this. I think my biggest concern was the few times that you and I…we drove…remember we used to drive from Prairie State parking lot to the bank over there, was that I also noticed that as a young person who wanted to drive you really weren’t focused and I was so concerned…I don’t think your heart was in it. As much as you wanted to…

**Hardy:** But it seems like you had a very legitimate mother worry. Can you tell her what the worry was? Just give it to her straight.

**Mother:** I was worried that you would go out there driving and wouldn’t concentrate and you would get into an accident. I don’t care about the value of the car. I was just really concerned that you would get into an accident.

**Hardy:** And I think the worry is even deeper than just an accident. Can you tell her what the ultimate worry is?

**Mother:** I just…I don’t think you were responsible at the time.

**Hardy:** So it sounds like you are worried she would get into an accident, and you say you are not worried about the car, so then what is the worry?
**Mother:** That you would hurt yourself. That you would hurt yourself. I don’t think you were ready at the time. And we talked about that and then as far as the gynecologist.

**[54:00]**

**Hardy:** No, no, stay on the car. So did you tell her that at the time?

**Mother:** I told her that...we did talk about it. I told her that I didn’t think she was focused is the exact word that I used. I don’t think you were focused enough in your driving.

**Hardy:** And how did you respond to that Erica?

**Erica:** First of all that is not what she told me to begin with. She said that because we argue too much it is why I didn’t have my license or she felt that because nobody helped her get hers she wasn’t going to help me. She didn’t come out point blank and say that until the end. She used it as her third excuse. And I just wanted to say is that those few times that we drove, I mean I was 16. Those were three times. They weren’t anything for you to judge me on so quick. I mean when I took the course and I got my permit, my blue slip, I took in high school, I took “Behind the Wheel.” I passed the class. I did that on my own. So that would show from right there that I had some type of something just to start on. You know you couldn’t judge me from those few little times. I mean nobody is a perfect driver. You didn’t give me a chance, point blank.

**Hardy:** And you remember this differently. Do you remember saying those things to her?

**Mother:** Yes, because I even took her to Eastern Michigan for an open house and I let her drive part of the way back. I offered. She didn’t ask. I said, why don’t you...this was a prime opportunity because that part of the highway, not that many cars, so why don’t you get behind the wheel and I let her drive for I think a half hour.

**Hardy:** So do you still not have your driver’s license?

**Erica:** No.

**Hardy:** And would you still like for your mom to teach you how to drive?
Erica: Not anymore. I just want her to know that it hurt, but I don’t expect her to help me with it.

Hardy: I see that you have Guess Jeans on your shirt.

[56:00]
Imagine a line right between the word Guess and the word Jeans. Because I think you have two parts to you, two sides to you. There is the angry Erica side and the hurt Erica side.

Now the part of you that doesn’t want her to teach you anymore, is that the angry part or the hurt part?

Erica: Well it might be a little of both, but it is different now that I am getting older. I mean it is a little of both. I’m angry and hurt but I just feel like I am getting older now and that I just feel that because she didn’t help me to begin with that I have to find another way. I’m getting older; I have to find another way. It didn’t happen that way so I have to try something else.

Hardy: And you are ready to…so you are not even interested in this possibility?

Erica: No.

Hardy: So I just wonder if that is the hurt part of your speaking.

Erica: No, truthfully, that is how I feel honestly.

Hardy: So is that the part of you that wants to pay her back?

Erica: No, I just, I mean I don’t ask anymore. And I told her just to stop the argument. I have to find my own way. But that is just how I feel. There is no vent or anger towards it. It’s just how I feel.

Hardy: Well, I’ll be honest with you; that saddens me because I would just hate to see what could be an even more fulfilling relationship destroyed. And I suspect that maybe you think the position she is taking now is a strong position. Is that how you feel about that?

Mother: Yes, because she is being strong about something that is making her codependent on me because I have to take her to school. I don’t mind taking her to school. I take her to work but I can’t pick her up from work because I work 3pm to 12am. And I have to take her to
go get her hair down. And occasionally, not like we used to, take her shopping. And so…

[58:00]

Hardy: But what if…see, life is complicated. Like I am thinking what if all of these things that you have to do for her are just these rather sophisticated ways for Erica to ensure that she had contact with you?

Mother: I don’t know. She is getting so now the young man has been taking her. They are back together I must say and I don’t…I think Erica is codependent on people.

Hardy: What does that mean?

Hardy Commentary: It seemed as if the mother was using the term “co-dependent” to describe a very unique set of behaviors and I wanted to get as sense of the behavior to which she was referring.

Mother: Meaning like she has been dependent on me to take her and sometimes she says, well, it’s like I “have to” type of thing as a parent thing, “you have to.”

Hardy: And I keep thinking maybe...see here are the possibilities. One possibility is that Erica is a fragile, codependent kid. And another possibility is that you have raised a very sensitive daughter whose desire and desperation to have contact with you is so strong that she will do anything to get it, even if it means you have to drive her around.

Hardy Commentary: I am proposing alternate ways of thinking about old behaviors. My hope is to help the mother to see and appreciate the pearls of functionality that are embedded within the web of pathology that she believes characterizes Erica life.

Mother: I never thought of it that way.

Hardy: So that because...just think...when you are picking her up or dropping her off, the one thing that it ensures is that there is a connection. The minute that stops – the two of you are going to see less of each other.

Mother: Well she has made a point. The thing is about the codependent thing is that I don’t want her to be codependent with
the wrong person. In other words, she has told me about the driving thing – “That is okay, mom, I don’t need you.” She emphasizes that – “I don’t need you to take me anywhere,” I will get somebody else and that “get somebody else” lately has been this young man.

**Hardy Commentary:** I believe the mother is very worried about Erica’s relationship with the boyfriend. Unfortunately, it seems difficult for her to emotionally express intimacy and tenderness to Erica. Maybe this would make her fragile in her own eyes. She expresses her love by the performance of functional tasks—that is, what she does, not necessarily by what she says. The mother’s overextension and overwhelming life as a single parent interferes with her ability to even perform the functional tasks well which leads her to questions her parenting abilities. The mother’s story is a familiar one for someone who occupies multiple positions of subjugation in her life. She is marginalized by virtue of her working class status, as well as being a single parent, African American, and female. Like Erica, devaluation is no stranger to her life. In fact, it profoundly shapes how she parents and fuels the values that she advocates regarding being strong and not being fragile. She understands all too well that the world out there that her daughter is on the verge of inheriting can be a menacing and pain inflicting one---like so many other parents like her, she believes that she can best prepare her progeny by making them tough and self reliant. These are messages that have not only been fortified for her through her interactions in the harsh outside world but ones that were an integral part of her family of origin upbringing as well.

[01:00:00]

**Mother:** And he a few times…well he said a couple of days after this incident, “Stop treating her like a baby. You treat her like a baby.” And so he sees something.

**Hardy:** Yeah, but it sounds like he wants to be her father?

**Mother:** I don’t know anything about he and hers relationship.

**Hardy:** Well I was just thinking, the little bit you said about him, and this is no disrespect to…

**Mother:** But I don’t like what I see.

**Hardy:** But I’m just saying, because if he says to you, in her absence,
“She needs help.” I mean, that is a very parental kind of response. So, here is Erica’s bind as I see it. She has a mother whom she cares about and wants a connection with, a very strong connection. She can’t quite have it. Her mother’s response is that she is fragile and codependent. So it is almost like the message is grow up and get stronger.

And then so when she finds a way to do that then she attaches herself to the boyfriend who is going to do some of those surrogate – be a part-time father, part-time boyfriend, part-time mother. That creates some difficulties for you, too.

**Mother:** Yes it does.

**Hardy:** So in some ways she can’t win. Do you see that?

**Mother:** Mm-hmm.

**Hardy:** That she can’t get what she needs from you because you are saying, “Be strong and grow up,” and then if she grows up by going to get it somewhere else, “I don’t like the decision you have made; that’s not the way to do it; that’s not what I had in mind.”

**Mother:** Yeah.

**Hardy:** So my heart goes out to you, Erica. If I were you it would be hard for me to know how to do it right. And I think you have done an extraordinary job but it seems to be, it is almost like where your buttons are, there are two of you.

**[01:02:00]**

There is this one side of you that is very strong woman whose shoulders have been incredibly strong, who just keeps going. It’s like the Energizer battery. And this other side of you that is fearful of having one more person who needs something from you.

And so it seems like part of the reason you want Erica to be strong…

**Mother:** Mm-hmm.

**Hardy:** So because it liberates you a little bit. And while I think you certainly deserve that and need that, I mean you are a mother and I think that the most valuable lesson that she is going to learn about life
she is going to learn it from you.

So I hope that the two of you – I wish we really had more time. I wish I could see the two of you again because I just feel this connection between the two of you but it is so much anger and bad history and disappointment in here that it is almost like it is clogging up arteries and so it is blocking the two of you from having the type of relationship I think that you are ultimately capable of having.

And I think Erica here is my wish and my fear of you. I think...I love what you have shown here today. And I agree with your mother – I think you are going places. My worry is that the hurt and the disappointment you have about your mom’s relationship will push you to cut off from her, to decide I don’t need anything from her – there is nothing she can do for me.

And, that may be okay in the short run. But you know at some point I imagine one day you want to marry, at the very least have your own children, and that is where the stuff will come back to haunt you.

[01:04:00]

Because some of what your mom is struggling with and some of what the two of you are struggling with, I suspect if we had more time we would find out has something to do with your mom’s relationship in her family. That your mom is this woman who probably – it seems like you had to grow up awfully quickly. And she seems abnormal to you because she is fragile, as you put it.

Hardy Commentary: As the session nears the end, I wanted to encourage the mother to think about the possible connections that exist between how she was parented and how she parents. I also wanted her to think about how the stress in her life and the ways she feels overwhelmed may have connections to her need/desire for Erica to be less co-dependent and fragile.

Mother: Mm-hmm.

Hardy: But I don’t think she is abnormal. I don’t think she is fragile. I don’t think she is “abnormal.” I think you are extraordinary. And what you want, you are judging her by your standards. And I don’t know that I am as strong as you are; I don’t know that I could do the
things that you have done. So if that is what you are using as a yardstick, that is a hell of a standard for her to live up to.

**Hardy Commentary:** Here I make a concerted effort to “validate” the mother’s strength and resiliency while simultaneously ”challenging” her to appreciate how she unwittingly expects Erica to do as she does, to live as she lives. The mother undoubtedly had to be fairly independent and possibly parentified growing up, so it is probably difficult for her to understand why Erica would want her to teach her how to drive, or talk with her about gynecological issues. I doubt for sure the mother ever received this as a daughter and parenting two boys didn’t require carrying out some of these tasks.

**Mother:** I know. Like I said, I don’t mean as fragile as she needs…I just didn’t realize how fragile. I’m just looking at over the course of years, I didn’t realize how sensitive and how fragile she was.

**Hardy Commentary:** The mother isn’t quite ready to depart with her beliefs about her daughter’s fragility. However, I considered it hopeful that she would at least acknowledge “fragile and sensitive.” If I were continuing with the family, this would be one area where additional work would be necessary.

**Hardy:** And I suspect there is probably more sensitivity than it is fragility.

**Mother:** Yeah, more sensitivity.

**Hardy:** And I think that is a credit to you as a mother that you have been able to raise such a sensitive…there are plenty of mothers out there who would love to have the 19-year old daughter that you have, that could come here and sit - express herself so marvelously as Erica has done, be in touch with her feelings to tell you what she needs from you.

Because she has options to go out and pump stuff in her arm, put stuff up her nose. She is not doing that. She is coming back to you in this very mature way and is saying, “Hey, I need this from you.”

And it sounds like you have done this wonderful job raising these boys, but I also hope that you have given them a little bit of sensitivity, too, because we are worried about boys growing up, particularly
African American boys growing up feeling like they have to be tough because the world out there responds to them a little bit differently than they do other kids.

*Hardy Commentary:* My attempt to acknowledge the realities of race and the significance of paying attention to how contextual variables such as race, class, gender, etc. do in fact impact the internal workings of families.

**Mother:** I know.

[01:06:00]

**Hardy:** And so I hope they have a little piece of your sensitivity, too.

**Mother:** Yes, my oldest one does. My youngest one, I’m seeing something a little different. My oldest one does. Like currently he is mentoring other boys and he also worked this summer in a youth program as a counselor. So my point is I see sensitivity.

**Hardy:** So I think, I think you have done a great job, particularly in terms of…and there is a piece of your experience that I don’t think your daughter can understand at this point, and I probably can’t fully understand it.

I think it is only when you find yourself there with three kids, trying to raise them, and take care of mother on the side can you really appreciate just how many different directions you are pulled in, in the course of the day.

And I can imagine that you get to that time where this part of you, just a part of you feels like “my gosh I wish she would just take more responsibility because it would just be one less burden for me”. I think that is a legitimate feeling. But at the same time it is also legitimate for her to want a little bit more mothering from you, a little bit more direction. Because she needs things from you that maybe your sons didn’t need because she is reaching out to you, asking you to “help me figure out what it is like to be a woman.”

**Mother:** I know. I know. And it just recently, you know, I’m like oh my gosh – because they were boys I didn’t have to –

**Hardy:** There is no gynecologist discussion.
Mother: I know, you know, and I’m like oh my gosh, I never. And the thing about the personal hygiene thing, I told her that if I don’t know...I always taught my kids, if I don’t know I will find out. And, “No, you are supposed to know right now.” And I’m like, I don’t have the answers. So I don’t always...it’s not like mom knows all.

[01:08:04]
And sometimes, you know, they won’t agree with what I found.

Hardy: But that’s okay.

Mother: Yeah.

Hardy: And I think it is great. I think it is big of you that you can say those magical words, “I don’t know.”

Mother: But they get mad at the “I don’t know” part.

Hardy: Well and that is okay, too. But see that is what I am saying. As a child, she is supposed to get mad if you don’t know. And as a mother, you are to be strong enough to say I don’t know. Because you went through this I’m sure where you grew up thinking your parents were everything. And some of the biggest disappointments I have had in my own life is knowing that my parents are human.

Mother: I know.

Hardy: You know? We are at this phase now where my relationship with my dad is changing where I am becoming more like the father. That is disappointing to me because my gosh I have always known him to be this strong person on the pedestal. So it is okay if they get mad at you about that. They are just doing what kids are supposed to do. And what the parents supposed to do is give them room to be mad about them.

Mother: I can relate with the role reversal with the parents because currently my mom, well she has always said, “She’s the mom,” referring to me, “I’m the kid.” And it seems like she likes it that way. So.

Hardy: But I think Erica needs from you and she is not sure, I think she wants it and she doesn’t want it at this point because I think there is this part of you on that side of the Guess shirt that is angry, there is
a part that is hurt. And I would hope – this would be my hope – and I realize that I am just a perfect stranger in your life. You don’t have to concern yourself with my hope. But I would hope that you would continue to show that side of you that is hurt and what I hope that you would be able to do is respond to that hurt side so that you know that you give her the facts about what this happened – because it is important, again, what she wants from you as a mother is to know she is hurting, reach out and touch her in that place.

[01:10:00]

And I think you are certainly capable of doing that. And the other thing is to help her with...you know she is 19. And she wants some guidance from you about how to be a woman.

And I think there are things...you are a single parent mom so you have obviously had some experience with relationships that have gone south. And I think that you can help prepare for that because as she is probably going to find out the hard way, not every guy out there that looks her in the face and says, “Hey baby, you are the bomb,” means well. Not every guy that says that has her best interests at heart.

But I don’t think we can leave that up to her to sort that out for herself.

Mother: Okay.

Hardy: Does that make sense to you?

Mother: Mm-hmm.

Hardy: What do you think about that Erica?

Erica: I just want to say – I mean, what’s wrong with being sensitive?

Hardy: I think it is marvelous.

Erica: People always make it seem like that is a downfall. That could be a good characteristic.

Hardy: You know I think it is a characteristic that I wish more of the world had. That kid here in Chicago that tossed the kids out the window, I wish there was sensitivity there because then what he would have felt, would have the ability to feel for that other person and not hurt them. So I don’t want you to lose that part; I think it is
commendable. And I am hoping that you can spread a little bit of that around because I think it is great.

**Hardy Commentary:** I used this example because the session was conducted in a suburb of Chicago.

**Hardy:** And I also think... I don’t think you were born that way. I don’t think you were born sensitive. I don’t think you are born fragile. I think you are sensitive because you have passed something on to her. But it seems like the things you want to give yourself the most credit for are the survival, functional things – house, water, heat, hot water – which are important because you wouldn’t be here today without those. But it seems like you have done some important things around the regions of the heart, as well.

And I think your daughter, because you only have one, is testing you more of that.

**Mother:** Yeah.

**[01:12:00]**

**Hardy:** So please give it a try because I would hate for the two of you to ruin this because if it gets ruined here, then it just ruins the next generation. Your daughter when you have it someday, if you decide to go that route. Alright?

**Mother:** Okay.

**Hardy:** Well thanks so much for coming. I really appreciate your honesty here. I appreciate it. And good luck to you. Erica, good luck to you in school and everything.

**Erica:** Okay, thank you.
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