Instructor’s Manual
for
IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES
A SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH TO MARITAL THERAPY
with
INSOO KIM BERG, MSSW
by
Randall C. Wyatt, PhD
&
Erika L. Seid, MA

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Published by Psychotherapy.net
150 Shoreline Highway, Building A, Suite 1
Mill Valley, CA 94941
Email: contact@psychotherapy.net
Phone: (800) 577-4762 (US & Canada) / (415) 332-3232

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Wyatt, Randall C., PhD & Erika L. Seid, MA

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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. PREPARE VIEWER’S BEFOREHAND
Share information with viewers from the section Berg’s Approach to Solution-Focused Therapy so that they have a sense of where Berg is coming from in this session and where she is going.

3. GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.
7. ROLE-PLAY IDEAS
After watching the video, organize participants into groups of three. Assign each group to role-play a couples therapy session using Berg’s solution-focused therapy approach. The clients may resemble those in the video, or you can create different scenarios, and you can even have players switch roles if time permits. As a basic instruction, suggest to therapists that after quickly identifying the client’s problem, worry or complaint, they focus in on the client’s strengths, exceptions to the problem, and what has worked in the past. Or they can try using the Miracle Question. Encourage them to help clients shift away from the blaming and accusations associated with the past. See Berg’s Approach to Solution-Focused Therapy in this manual for a brief review of how she works. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss the exercise. First have the clients share their experiences and then have the therapists talk about their experiences in the session. What did participants find challenging about the focus on strengths and what is working instead of on problems? Finally, open up a general discussion on what participants learned about solution-focused therapy with couples.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client couple; 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 clients. 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 Berg’s approach.

8. WATCH INSOO WORK
This video is one of several in Psychotherapy.net’s collection featuring Insoo Kim Berg. These videos demonstrate her approach to solution-focused therapy with individual, couple and family clients. By sharing several of these videos with your audience, you give them an opportunity to develop a deeper and more thorough understanding of how Insoo applies her model in different therapy contexts. If you have viewers write a Reaction Paper – see suggested format in this manual
– have them address commonalities and differences in how Insoo applies her model to working with these different kinds of clients.

**More Videos with Insoo:** In this video. *Irreconcilable Differences*, Insoo demonstrates solution-focused therapy with a couple. Watch her consult with an individual adult female client in *Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW*, and with a family consisting of two parents and their teenage daughter in “I’d hear laughter”: *Finding Solutions for the Family*.

9. PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists or clients in videos may be nervous, putting their best foot forward, or trying to show mistakes and how to deal with them. Therapists may also move more quickly than is typical in everyday practice to demonstrate a technique. The personal style of a therapist is often as important as their techniques and theories. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, participants must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.
Berg’s Approach to Solution-Focused Therapy

Insoo Kim Berg’s approach is founded on the premise that clients come to us equipped with solutions to their problems. It is the therapist’s role to guide clients towards their own strengths and resources to solve the problem. Insoo believes that it is not enough to remove the problem. Once a problem is removed, there is then an empty space and that space must be filled with a solution. Indeed, too much focus on the problem can interfere with solving it and developing a new way of living and being.

Insoo, along with her husband, Steve de Shazer, developed this approach by listening closely to her clients, and listening was one of her chief techniques. She responds to clients using their words, carefully tracking how they talk about their problems, and mirroring back the strengths and skills they already possess. Other techniques, like The Miracle Question, Scaling, Coping and Exceptions (see below for examples), help clients assess their situations and get to the solutions behind their problems.

Insoo designed her approach to work with clients of all ages and ethnicities, including individuals, couples and families from all socioeconomic backgrounds. She takes her lead from her clients, adapting to their situation, and she brings in no set guidelines, timeframes or goals. The approach can be used in one session, leaving clients with a greater sense of confidence in their ability to solve problems and develop solutions, or a longer course of therapy where skills are built up and applied in many situations. One of the most important tenets of her approach is that she leaves all this up to the clients to decide, since they are the experts on their case.

Insoo’s solution-focused model is process-oriented, which makes it a good fit for couples therapy. In the session, Insoo first listens to the troubled or conflictual side of the relationship--the side of the relationship that the partners do not want. The therapeutic task is then to push the relationship toward a healthier side. The questions
she asks are generated by asking herself, “What can I as the therapist do to push this couple or suggest to them or elicit their view of how to move in a direction that is helpful?” The solution-focused approach is about helping clients create a view of the future that is consistent with what they want and then begin to move toward that future vision.

EXAMPLES OF SOLUTION-FOCUSED TECHNIQUES:

*Miracle Question:*
Suppose that one night, while you were asleep, there was a miracle and this problem was solved. How would you know? What would be different? What would the first signs be that the miracle occurred?

*Scaling Questions:*
On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the day after the miracle, and 1 is when this situation was at its worst, where would you say things are today? On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being when the problems were just before you made the call and 10 being the problem is solved and a thing of the past, what number would you give where you’re at now? What will tell you that you have moved up one notch? What number will tell you that you have made enough progress in solving this problem that you can consider it solved?

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being absolutely no hope and 10 being complete confidence, what number would you give your current level of hope? What will tell you that your score has gone up some? What number will be high enough to warrant your working hard to try and change things?

*Exception Questions:*
These questions help shift the clients’ attention towards the times when the presenting problem is not operating in their life. For example:

Are there any times in the past when this has not been a problem? Times when you have been able to overcome it?

Describe to me some things that happen in your relationship which you want to continue to have happen.
Coping Questions:

These questions both acknowledge the difficulty and painfulness of some situations and also highlight clients’ contributions to their resiliency. The therapist can show genuine curiosity and admiration that emphasizes strengths without dismissing the clients view of reality:

How have the two of you managed to keep going? Given the terrible situation, how bad the arguing has been, how is it that you have been able to avoid it getting even worse?

I can see that you have really been struggling, yet I am struck by the fact you still manage to get up each morning and do everything necessary to get to work and take care of your kids. How do you do that?
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Irreconcilable Differences

• **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 paper:

1. **Key points:** What stands out in how Berg works with this couple? Note any key or turning point interventions. What important points did you learn about solution-focused therapy, or about couples therapy in general?

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 Berg did in the therapy sessions 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


RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

“I’d hear laughter”: Finding Solutions for the Family

– Insoo Kim Berg

*Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW*

– Insoo Kim Berg

*Solution-Focused Child Therapy*

– John Murphy

*The Angry Couple: Conflict Focused Treatment*

– Susan Heitler
Couples Therapy for Addictions: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach
   –Barbara S. McCrady

Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy
   –Sue Johnson

Experiential Therapy
   –Gus Napier

Harville Hendrix on The Healing Relationship, with Randall C. Wyatt
   –Harville Hendrix

Psychotherapy with Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Clients, Program 3:
Relationships, Families and Couples Counseling
   –Ron Scott (Producer)

WEB RESOURCES
Psychotherapy.net interview with Insoo Kim Berg
   www.psychotherapy.net

A Tribute to Insoo Kim Berg
   www.sfbta.org/insookimberg.html

The Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Association
   www.sfbta.org

The European Brief Therapy Association
   www.ebta.nu

Downloadable Solution-Focused Therapy
Treatment Manual for Working with Individuals
   www.sfbta.org/Research.pdf
Group 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.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Problems and Solutions**: How do you react to Berg’s statement that there seems to be no connection between clients’ presenting problems and the solutions to them? How does this fit with your own ideas about psychotherapy particularly regarding the relationship between problems and solutions in therapy?

2. **Posture**: What does the therapist’s posture of not knowing mean to you? What about this posture is important in terms of building solutions? As the therapist, do you consider it important to figure out what the client needs to do? Talk about your responses.

FIRST SESSION

3. **“Let me come back to that”**: How do you react to Berg repeatedly saying to Bill and Leslie, “Let me come back to that,” throughout the beginning of the session? What do you think Berg intends with this response? In what ways is this effective in shifting to the solution or would it be better to go into the problem more?

4. **Treatment Goals**: What stood out for you as new, different and/or particularly helpful about Berg’s approach to setting treatment goals?

5. **Strange Questions**: How did you react to the various *strange questions* Berg asks in the session, like the miracle question and the scaling questions? How do you see these questions contributing to the therapy process? How did you react to her decision to ask the risky question about the chances of the marriage surviving? Do you see yourself using these kinds of questions with your own clients? Why or why not?
6. **Solution Building:** What specific interactions did you observe where Berg remained future focused and emphasized doing things differently? What impact do you think these interactions had on the overall course of the therapy?

**SECOND SESSION**

7. **Practice:** Bill and Leslie report that they had a great time with the family when Bill took a Saturday off work, but Bill points out several times that this is not something he can “make a practice of.” What was it about Berg’s approach that helped the couple avoid getting stuck on this issue? If you had been the therapist in the room, would you have felt pulled to intervene directly in some way with Bill’s setting limits on the future?

8. **Helpful:** How does Berg impact the therapeutic process by sticking with the “what was helpful” line of questioning despite the clients bringing up what was not helpful? Was this an effective way to work with this couple? What about this approach might be challenging for you?

9. **Lois:** What do you think about the way Berg worked with the couple in regard to the question of giving money to Lois, Bill’s ex-wife, for the care of his son, Bill Jr.? What about her interventions was effective here? What did you notice about your own personal reactions to this part of the session?

10. **Following the Client:** At the beginning of the video, Berg instructs viewers to watch how closely she follows the clients’ ideas of what the solutions are. How successfully do you think Berg fulfilled this goal in these two sessions? Where did you see her following the clients’ ideas about solutions?

**CONCLUSION**

11. **The Past:** What do you make of Berg’s statement that talking about the past tends to escalate and then turns into blaming, accusations and defensiveness? How does this approach work with Bill and Leslie? Do you think talking about the past would have produced different results than Berg’s solution-focused approach did?
12. **The Model:** What do you think about using this model for couples therapy? Does it make sense to you? How do you see yourself integrating it in your own work? What in particular would you do differently from Berg’s model?

13. **The Therapeutic Relationship:** How would you characterize the therapeutic relationship in this video? Do you think a working alliance developed between Berg, Leslie and Bill? In what ways was the therapeutic relationship significant in this particular course of therapy?

14. **Personal Reaction:** If you were seeking couples therapy, how would you feel about being Berg’s client? Do you feel she could create an alliance with you and that the therapy would be effective? How so?
Complete Transcript of
Irreconcilable Differences:
A Solution-Focused Approach
to Marital Therapy
with Insoo Kim Berg

The notation *** in the transcript below indicates a chapter break on the accompanying DVD. Use the breaks to skip to specific points in the video.

FIRST SESSION

INTRODUCTION

Insoo Kim Berg Commentary: This is a marital couple session with Bill and Leslie. Before I go into a session, I like to say a little bit about what to look for. As you may know, the solution-focused approach is very much into building solutions. We make a distinction between building solutions and problem solving, because we have found over the years that problem-solving activities are very different than problem solving, ah than solution-building activities. That what one engages in...in solution building is very much about the future focus, that what they need to do differently, you know, to find solutions.

Also, that the second point I’d like to make is that there seems to be no connection between the presenting complaint and presenting problem and the solutions to them. And I, I believe that you will watch how this will manifest clinically.

The third point is that the therapist’s posture is that of not knowing. Harry Goolishian and Harlene Anderson’s term, that is the therapist’s not-knowing posture that takes, and that is the therapist not the expert but ah, the client is the expert to their problems and to their solutions. And so, the therapist, therapeutic task, that is, through the conversation, how to figure out what to, what they need to do in order to generate the solutions that is consistent with their vision of their ideas about what will
be satisfactory life for them.

Let me come back to a little bit about the couple. Leslie and Bill have been married about seven years, and they have two children, ages five and three. Bill also has another child from a previous marriage, but he rarely sees this child even though he makes child support payments.

Bill is an attorney working for a large law firm and Leslie is a consumer service…director of consumer services for a large telephone company. And as you watch, I would like you to pay attention to how closely the therapist follows the clients’ ideas of what their solutions are.

MARITAL THERAPY SESSION

Berg: Nice to see both of you

Leslie: Nice to see you

Berg: I understand, Bill, you are working with…what kind of job, what kind of work do you do?

Bill: I’m an attorney. I do taxes primarily for corporations.

Berg: I understand that’s where the big money is?

Leslie: We don’t see any of it.

Bill: I think over the, in the next few years, I’ll be up to a fairly decent income. Right now, I’m trying to build up with the clientele.

Leslie: He tries very hard. He sees so many people in terms of building up that clientele. He’s trying very hard.

Berg: Is he? Is he good? Is he good at what he’s doing?

Leslie: Well, you probably should ask some of the ladies that he sees so much. You know, those are his clients—excuse me—those are his clients, but he’s out every evening, so I guess he must be good.

Bill: I’m in the stage of trying to develop a partnership. I’d like to be a partner in this firm. So I spend a lot of hours with a lot of clients, and a lot of them are women. A lot of women are in corporate America today.

Leslie: Which is really our problem...part of our problem, because I know that you have to spend time at work. He spends an awful lot of
time out of the house, so that I have the primary responsibility for our children. My question and my concern is, and that’s one reason that I wanted us to come here so that maybe through talking he could come to understand that he has some responsibilities too. And they don’t include spending evenings out talking to women who are not always your clients, Bill.

Bill: This is…

Berg: Just hang on a minute. Hang on a minute. Let me come back to that. I’m going to come back to that. What about you, Leslie? What kind of work do you do?

Leslie: I work, too, and I have to work, and I have to be out of the house a lot. I work for Central Telephone Communications, and I’m the director of customer service there. That, needless to say, requires a lot of time and effort. And plus, with our little children and Bill not being...

Berg: I don’t know how… I don’t know how you do that.

Leslie: We’re not doing it. That’s exactly what’s happening. At least, I’m doing the best that I can.

Bill: I work on the average of 70 hours a week. And you know what…

Leslie: I work close to that out of the house and then that doesn’t include the time in the house. I have the primary responsibility of doing the housework, the shopping, the childcare.

Berg: And your children are very small.

Leslie: They’re very small.

Berg: Very small: 5 and 3.

Leslie: Right.

Berg: I’m sure they keep you very busy.

Leslie: Yes. And I actually take responsibility for Bill’s son by his first marriage, Bill, Jr.


Leslie: It’s more than on occasion…
Bill: I mean…

Leslie: When is the last time that you went to pick up Bill, Jr. and took him back home? Or made the arrangements?

Berg: OK, Let me come back to that. Let me come back to that. I’m sure you have lots of issues. It sounds like you…How long have you been together?

Bill: Seven years.

Berg: Seven years. Okay.

Leslie: Seven long years.

Berg: So it sounds like you’re both left feeling very frustrated about what’s going on or what’s not going on with the two of you.

Bill: Well, you know, I mean, she has zero understanding about what’s going on. It makes it very difficult…

Leslie: See, that’s part of the problem…

Bill: We used to communicate. But now…

Leslie: See, I have…it’s always me. I have the zero understanding. He understands it all. He understands it all. That’s the problem. You know. He, I don’t think he is frustrated. We wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for me making the appointment. I think he’s happy that it just goes on and on and I just work myself to a frazzle.

Bill: I’m frustrated, but I think it’s our responsibility. You know, I mean, we should be able as two adults to sit down and talk about our problems. But when we do, it goes just like this.

Leslie: Well, as two adults, we ought to be able to do a number of things.

Bill: She just goes on and on and on and I don’t have an opportunity…

Berg: Again, let me come back to this. What do you suppose needs to happen as a result of you being here today so that you can say, sort of looking back at this time, oh, let’s say three months from now, six months from now, when you look back at this period in your life, so you can say to yourselves, “That was a good idea that we went and talk to Insoo. That was helpful.” What needs to happen? What needs to
happen?

Leslie: Well, I would hope that Bill could come up with some kind of understanding of what his responsibilities and that in these sessions, he could really hear what I am saying because at home, he really doesn’t listen, and therefore, he could change his behavior so that we could be as we were earlier in the marriage, you know, listening to one another and communicating. But he seems to have strayed from that.

Bill: That’s what it is, that’s what we need.

Berg: What?

Bill: Communication.

Berg: Okay.

Bill: If we can come out of this with some ground level communication, I will think that it has been successfully, but I mean, you know, we just have a problem being able to talk together in the same room and hear each other.

Leslie: I talk. You don’t even say anything when I talk anymore.

Berg: Okay. Hang on a minute. Hang on a minute. Now, let me come back to this. You mentioned Bill being more responsible.

Leslie: Yes. I would like to see more of that. I appreciate him as a provider. You know, I appreciate him as a husband. I do love him.

Berg: You do?

Leslie: And I know he does work hard.

Berg: You do love him?

Leslie: Yes, I do. I do.

Berg: Okay. So when he is more responsible, what will he be doing that he is not doing right now that will let you know that he is being more responsible?

Leslie: He will take responsibility more for our children. He will take more responsibility for his own son, whom I love very much, too. He will take responsibility to include me and have respect for me, include me in his activities and have respect for me. It hurts me to be out and
hear my girlfriends talk about his girlfriends that they see.

**Berg:** Let me come back to this. Let me come back to this. What will…

**Bill:** At 70 hours a week, you know, it’s really difficult for me to be…

**Berg:** Okay, let me come back to this. Alright. Hold on. Hold on. I’m going to come back to you.

What will Bill be doing exactly that will let you know that he is being responsible around the house, with the children, with his son and what, what will he be doing that he’s not doing right now that will let you know?

**Leslie:** Well, right now, I’m always reading the bedtime stories because he’s out doing whatever. I’m putting the children to bed.

**Berg:** So he would be doing some of those?

**Leslie:** Yes. Especially on the weekends when you don’t have to carry the load that you carry during the week. I would like some help around the house. He thinks that I’m a built-in maid, it feels like.

**Berg:** What would he be doing?

**Leslie:** I’m doing all the cleaning. I’m doing all the washing. I’m doing all the ironing. And I’m doing all the cooking. He doesn’t. I have to cook for the children; he’s never home.

**Berg:** What would he be doing? When he’s going to help you?

**Leslie:** He would be helping. He would be planning. He would be going to the grocery store.

**Bill:** Look, we could hire, we could hire somebody but for some reason, you don’t want to do that. You keep saying you don’t want nobody around the kids.

**Leslie:** Bill, how can we hire somebody? We don’t have the money. We don’t have the money, dear.

**Berg:** Hang on a minute.

**Leslie:** We’ve been spending a large portion in child support for Bill, Jr.

**Bill:** How much would it cost? How much would it cost?
Leslie: More than we have.


So he would be reading bedtime stories?

Leslie: Yes.

Berg: He would be doing what else?

Leslie: He would be helping with the shopping. He would be helping with household duties, to clean up.

Berg: Like what? You mean washing dishes?

Leslie: Shopping...yes, he could help once in awhile. Once in awhile, you could help wash some dishes.

Bill: Hold it baby. I’m going to be frank.

Berg: Okay.

Bill: If I’m going to work 70 hours a week, I do not have time to wash dishes. Okay. I’m not going to wash no dishes.

Leslie: But I have time because I work 50 plus I have all the responsibilities with the children.

Bill: That doesn’t even make sense. That doesn’t—look—that doesn’t even make sense.


Leslie: Well, we have a dishwasher. It’s not that difficult. You could help.

Berg: Hang on a minute. Okay, you guys. Hang on a minute. Slow down a little bit. Because I need to know how I can be helpful to you. Okay. I need to know from both of you what needs to happen so that I am helpful to both of you. So let me come back to this.

What would he be doing different, let’s say, three months from now, six months down the road?

Leslie: I think, even though it’s important that he is building a partnership and I realize it takes time and I try to be supportive, he
also has to build a relationship at home. We have little ones that don’t even know you.

**Berg:** So what would he be doing, so what he be doing to build a relationship at home?

**Leslie:** He would be communicating more with me. He would be taking an active, making, taking an active role with our children. Our children, he is just someone who comes in the morning and leaves. I mean, they don’t even have a concept of who you are, and I think that’s a shame.

**Berg:** Okay, now. Let me come back to you, though on this. I’m assuming you want to have this relationship with Leslie also?

**Bill:** Yes.

**Berg:** You do?

**Bill:** Yes. I love her.

**Berg:** You do. Does she know how much you love her?

**Leslie:** Do I know?

**Bill:** She should.

**Berg:** She should.

**Bill:** I mean, you know…

**Berg:**Yeah. What do you think? What do you think? Does she know?

**Bill:** You know, we’ve been together for seven years. I love her. I haven’t left her. I wouldn’t leave her. This is my wife. I love her. I love my children as well. The thing is…

**Leslie:** Do you see a wedding… Can you see? He has a wedding ring. I wear mine; he doesn’t wear his. He doesn’t wear his.

**Bill:** Look, here’s the thing. I figure that my children are 3 and 5 years old.

**Leslie:** So you don’t wear your wedding ring because of that?

**Bill:** And I can put in these…Will you let me talk, please?

**Leslie:** Go on.
Bill: I figure that they’re three and five years old, that if I put in these hours now when they are older and they’ll be able to appreciate me more that I will then have more time to spend with them. That’s, that’s the principle that I’m operating on. I just, I mean, I have an option here: either I can stay at home and wash dishes or I can spend 70 hours a week trying to build up this practice so that as an eventuality, you don’t even have to work, and you don’t seem to have any patience or understanding or cooperation to try to…

Leslie: I don’t have to work!

Berg: That’s what you would like to happen. So you really are working for the future?

Bill: Yes. Absolutely.

Berg: And what would it take…

Bill: And I’m trying to secure a future, not just for myself but for all of us.

Berg: Right. Now what can Leslie do to be helpful so that she understands how hard you are working?

Bill: If it’s unbalanced right now, if she needs to do more at home and I need to do more away from home, she needs to be able to understand that. You need to be able to work with me on this. Okay. I mean, we have a seven-year investment. As an eventuality, you know, I mean, we’re going to be together. So all I’m saying is, she should be able to do most of the stuff at home, okay, let me work these… It’s like I’m working two jobs right now. Let me work these two jobs and within…

Leslie: I’m working three.

Bill: Within…Within a couple years…

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Berg: Okay. Let me ask, I’m going to ask both of you some very strange questions. It will take some imagination on both of your parts. Do you both have a good imagination?

Bill: Yeah.

Leslie: I’ll try.

Bill: She does. She does.

Berg: Alright. Alright. Here it comes: let’s say as a result of a miracle… you believe in miracles?

Leslie: Known of a few.

Berg: Yes? Is that right? Yeah? Okay. So as a result of that, the problem that brought you here today, gone. Just like that. Just solved, just like that.

Leslie: That would be a miracle.

Berg: It would be nice. It would be nice. Okay. Alright. It would be nice. But this miracle happens to happen in the middle of the night when both of you are sleeping. Like tonight, for example. When you go to bed tonight when you go home and go to bed tonight, this happens. So you don’t know that this has happened. So when you wake up tomorrow morning, what will be the first small clue to you, “Wow, something must have happened during the night! The problem is gone.” How will you discover this?

Bill: A smile first thing in the morning instead of avoidance.

Berg: You’ll smile at Leslie.

Leslie: He would put his arm around me.

Berg: You would put your arm, okay, he would put his arm around you. Okay.

Leslie: Would be a real sign of a miracle at this point.

Berg: Okay. Alright. So suppose he does. What will you do in response to that?

Leslie: I won’t turn my back to him.

Berg: Okay. Okay. Is that right? Is that what she would do? Would that be a miracle for you?

Bill: Yeah. Yeah, I think it would.

Berg: That would be a miracle for you.
Bill: It would be very different.

Berg: That would be different. Okay.

Bill: Yeah, it would be a miracle. It would, it, yeah. It would really be different than what’s been going on as of late.

Berg: Okay. So when she turns her back towards you instead of… I mean, so she’s facing you. When you smile at her, she’ll face you instead of turning her back toward you. What will you do when you see her do that?

Bill: Oh, I suppose I’d embrace her probably.

Berg: Uh-huh. So you’ll give her a hug.

Bill: Yeah.

Berg: What about you, Leslie? What will you do when he gives you a hug?

Leslie: Well, if he hugs me, I’ll hug him back.

Berg: Ah ha. Okay. Okay. What will come after that?

Leslie: Tomorrow’s Saturday? You never can tell.

Bill: A miracle!

Berg: That’s true. Okay, that’s true. Okay. When was the most recent time when you had a morning like that? When would you say was the most recent time? Maybe not all of it, but just pieces of it, parts of that sort of miracle picture.

Bill: Been awhile.

Leslie: Probably right after Evelyn was born.

Berg: Is that right?

Leslie: That’s almost two, two years, almost three years ago.

Berg: Wow. That was a long time ago.

Leslie: I think so. Am I right? Can I be right sometimes?

Bill: Well, I don’t know if it’s quite that long. You know, somewhere in that frame. I wouldn’t say it’s been that long.
Berg: Well, not all of it, but just the pieces of it.

Leslie: It’s been a couple years.

Berg: It’s been a couple years.

Leslie: But we’ve been avoiding.

Bill: It’s been awhile.

Leslie: Yeah, we’ve been avoiding. You know, he’s out a lot. I take care of the kids. I bury myself in my job, but I don’t, I’m not married to my job. You know, I’m married to him. And my job is important. My children are precious to me, but I want the whole thing and I want to be…

Berg: You want…Right. So you want this relationship back.

Leslie: Right. I know it won’t always be, you know, peaches and cream, but it’s not supposed to be you know rotten cherries, or whatever.

Berg: Okay. Okay. So let me come back to this tomorrow morning. What, when the children see the two of you tomorrow morning, what would they see different about the two of you that would tell them, “Wow, something happened to Mom and Dad”? I mean, if they could talk. I realize they’re very young, and they may not be able to have the right words for it, but if they could talk…

Leslie: Well, Carl knows something is going on because he’s always asking me, “Why are you and Daddy always yelling at each other?” You know, I tell him not to yell at his little sister, and he—see, I haven’t even told you this—and then he says, he says to me, you know, “You and Daddy are always yelling. Why do you always tell me not to yell?” See, what do I say in situations like that?

Berg: So what would he notice different about the two of you tomorrow morning?

Bill: Some warmth.

Leslie: Yeah, I don’t think our kids have seen us embrace. They probably don’t even remember it.

Berg: So he may see the two of you embracing? Okay. What else? What else would he see?
Leslie: Well, we would go somewhere together. I bet that would really be a miracle, you know, instead of me…

Berg: You mean the family of four of you…

Leslie: All four of us.

Berg: All four of you will go somewhere.

Leslie: Right. Someplace nice.

Berg: Okay. Someplace fun?

Leslie: Yeah, someplace fun where we’re not just dropping them off on the way to work, you know.

Bill: Just all of us being in the same space together.

Berg: That would be a miracle for him.

Bill: That would be different.

Berg: That would be different for him. Okay.

Leslie: Not getting ready to go to the babysitter’s or daycare and not ready to go to bed.

Berg: That would be different for them.

Leslie: I mean, we don’t… that’s when we’re all four together and sometimes the kids are in bed when you get home.

Berg: Sounds pretty hectic. Sounds like your life is pretty hectic.

Bill: Yeah, it is, but I still say, you know, I mean, it’s not always going to be like this.

Berg: Question. I’m not sure if this realistic or not, but suppose you do? How would Leslie be different with you? What would she do different?

Bill: Well, I suppose, you know, I mean, she’d be warm with me. We’d get along.

Berg: She’d be warmer with you?

Bill: We’d get along better, you know, when we communicate better, probably.
Berg: Okay, say some more about this getting along. What would go on?

Bill: You know, I mean…

Berg: What would go on between the two of you?

Bill: You know, the thing is that, that, that if we have to sacrifice one for the other, you know, I mean, we can, you know, I mean, if we don’t, if we just try to get along, we could get along. But if we have to get along at the cost of me suddenly, you know, not giving the time that I need to give to my job, that’s an eventuality that’s going to affect us financially.

Berg: Right

Bill: And I’m trying to look out for our future, and I think that we have to invest some time in that…


Bill: …in order to…you know, to make the whole thing work.

Leslie: There are some ways we could be investing and doing our money differently.

Bill: I love, I love our children. I love our children, and I love you. You know. But I’m trying to build something, and I’m trying to build something…

Leslie: There’s ways that we could be saving money and doing better financially that doesn’t require you to be out of the house 70 hours a week and meeting with these female clients—“clients” in quotes—okay.

Bill: Well you tell me, you tell me what it is.

Leslie: I mean, that’s an issue. Because if you were home every night and you worked 10 hours a week…

Bill: You tell me what it is, then. You tell me what it is.

Leslie: If you’re out with these clients all the time, we would still have a problem and it’s not just that.

Berg: Hang on a minute. Hang on a minute. What has to come first? In order to do whatever you would like to see happen between the two
of you, what might be the first small step to help you move toward that, what you’d like to see happen? It sounds like for you…

**Leslie:** He needs to be honest.

**Berg:** What would it take for her to believe you, that you are being honest?

**Bill:** I don’t know. What would it take? I mean, I’m willing to try.

**Berg:** Oh, you are?

**Bill:** What would it take?

**Leslie:** It would help if you would call, if you would let me know about what time you’re going to come home. It would let…I don’t need to know every client that you’re going to meet, but I would like to be included in your life in a way that I think is respectful.

**Berg:** Ah, that’s what you really want, isn’t it?

**Bill:** Okay. I’ll call.

**Berg:** You want to be part of Bill’s life.

**Bill:** I’ll call. I can do that. That’s not unreasonable. Okay. And sometimes I get caught up into the throes of business and I don’t call. Okay, but I can call. I can do that.

**Leslie:** I would also appreciate…

**Berg:** What about for you? What about for you, Leslie? What can Bill do to be helpful so that you know that he is committed to this marriage as much as you are?

**Bill:** Well, I just said I would call. What would she do? Not what could I do. What could she do? Isn’t that the question?

**Berg:** Okay.

**Leslie:** I’m already doing as much and more than my share. That’s the problem. That’s why we’re here.

**Bill:** Oh, please. Look: I just said I’d call, Leslie. I haven’t been calling. Okay. I admit to that. I cop to that. I don’t call regularly when I’m late. I just assume you know. I’ll stop. I’ll take the effort to call. Okay, to try to appease you.
**Berg:** Would that help, do you think? Would that help?

**Leslie:** You’re going to do it because you think it’s going to help or is it just to appease me? Because then I’m going to hear it later in an argument. “You got me calling in. Sneaking in.” So if that’s not sincere, don’t even say that.

**Bill:** See, now she’s, here she is, she’s programming, she’s programming an argument that hasn’t even happened. Okay. No, please don’t do that.

**Berg:** Okay, now, let me come back to you, Leslie. What can, what can, what do you need so that you feel that Bill understands how hard you are working to make this marriage work, to make this family go? What do you need from Bill?

**Leslie:** I need some support from Bill. I mean, I work, I work more than eight hours a day, also, and then I come home. I mentioned that I needed him to take more responsibility with childcare arrangements, everything: doctor’s appointments, you know, visits, you know shoes, clothes. I do that all. He doesn’t even ask me any questions about how was the day with the kids? You ask, you come in and say, “How are the kids?” Sometimes you’re not even listening. You walk right by.

**Berg:** So he’s asking?

**Leslie:** I could say, “They’ve both been in a train wreck,” you wouldn’t even hear it.

**Berg:** So he’s asking and being concerned. It sounds like that’s what you want.

**Leslie:** Well earlier…

**Bill:** She just made an assumption that I don’t hear. I mean, if I didn’t want to know, I wouldn’t ask.

**Leslie:** When you come in the house, I mean, common courtesy, you’re going to ask how your kids are, but one day I think I’ll try that. You know, “the kids have been in a train wreck.” I’m going to see if you’re listening.

**Bill:** That’s not common courtesy. That’s not common courtesy. These are my children.
Leslie: I wouldn’t come in the house… See, I’m a female. I wouldn’t come in the house without asking, “How are the kids?” I mean, I guess, you just expect that to happen you know, from a female perspective.

Berg: So what, what…

Leslie: Okay, I know he loves the kids. I’m not accusing him of that.

Berg: Oh, you do?

Leslie: You don’t spend time with them now. Darlin’, you do not spend time with them and that’s important.

Berg: The other thing I wanted to ask you: does Bill know how much you care about him? How much you love him? Do you think Bill knows?

Leslie: Earlier in the marriage, you know, we would tell each other…

Bill: No, no, no, no, no. We’re not talking about earlier in the marriage. Let’s talk about now.

Leslie: Well, right now, well, to be absolutely honest, I don’t, I don’t think he particularly finds me attractive, and I feel funny about that. I don’t think he, I think that—what’s the saying?—sometimes I feel it’s just, he thinks it cheaper to keep her. You know, that’s a saying. I’m sorry, I do feel that way sometimes because you’re not home. I have felt that you had other romantic, sexual interests. Nothing’s happening in our bed, so you know…

Berg: So you’re very concerned about this? It sounds like you’re very concerned about this.

Leslie: It’s not a marriage. You know, it’s sort of like a roommate, that we argue, and we argue and we happen to have some children together, you know. And it’s too inconvenient to move sometimes to find a place…

Berg: And you really want to change that?

Leslie: It’s going to have to change or else I am going to be someplace else. And he’s going to be somewhere else.

Berg: And you don’t want that? You don’t want that?
Leslie: No.

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Berg: Okay. Let me ask you another strange question. I have lots of these strange questions. Let’s say on sort of a scale of one to 10, 10 stands for as things right now, you know what you’ve been through. The two of you know what you’ve been through and you know what the issue’s been and you know what the issues are better than I do right now. Let’s say 10 stands for that you will do just about anything humanly possible to make this marriage work. That stands for 10, and one stands for you’re ready to sort of throw in the towel, and you’re ready to walk away from this. Where would you, each of you, say you’re at on this scale of one to 10?

Leslie: Honestly?

Berg: Honestly.

Bill: Seven.

Berg: Seven.

How about for you?

Leslie: The past year or so, I think I’ve been at a 10, quite frankly, but the way I’m feeling now, I’m probably…Let’s put it this way: I’ve talked to a lawyer. I’ve talked to a lawyer. I’m probably… just to enquire about what my rights would be. I’m probably about a five. I’m in the middle somewhere. I don’t want it to go to the one, but I can’t…

Berg: You don’t want it to be a one.

Leslie: No, but I can’t…I feel like I’m pulling it alone. I’m surprised you’re at a seven.

Berg: Okay. Now, I have another sort of a numbers question here. Knowing how things are right now between the two of you, let’s say 10 stands for you have every confidence that this marriage is going to survive. Okay, 10 stands for that, that this marriage has every chance of making it. And one stands for the opposite of that, there’s no chance this marriage is going to make it. Where would you say you’re at right now?
Leslie: Well, if we work at it, I could say we’d be more than a five.
Berg: Really? So you see a lot of potential in this?
Leslie: Well, we do love each other. I know it doesn’t sound like it, but I think we do.
Berg: You do.
Leslie: I know I do, I love him.
Berg: Does he know? Does Bill know how much you love him?
Leslie: He ought to.
Berg: He ought to. You think he does?
Leslie: Do you? I shouldn’t have told him about the lawyer thing. Now he’s mad.
Bill: I’m not mad.
Leslie: I didn’t see one of your co-workers.
Bill: I’m not mad. I’m not mad. I’m not mad. I’m just…
Berg: How about for you?
Bill: I’m just trying to…
Berg: What would you say the chance is of this marriage making it?
Bill: I would really say an eight because, you know, I mean, I want this to work. You know, I’m willing to try to make it work. You know, we have to find some kind of way to compromise. Because I’m just not, you know, I mean…I didn’t go through undergrad and law school and carrying letters and working in the mail and all that bullshit just to now suddenly, you know, chuck it all away. I mean, we can’t just live off your salary. You know.
Leslie: I don’t want you to chuck it all away.
Berg: What would it take, do you think, for these chances from your point of view, Leslie, what would it take for you to go from five to six, so you can say, “It’s just a little bit better. It’s not perfect yet. It’s not all the way up to 10, but it’s just a little bit better.” What has to happen between the two of you so that you can say that to yourself?
Leslie: Well, if he, he could call like he said he would, and if he…

Berg: That would help?

Leslie: Yeah, and if he could just make some effort, I would recognize it, with trying to share some of the responsibilities. I know he has to work, and…I don’t know if I could feel…

Berg: So calling would help you a little bit?

Leslie: I mean, I don’t know. Maybe if he could hug me sometimes. I don’t know. If he could hug me sometimes to make me feel like a wife.

Berg: Okay. That would help also. Now, what would that mean? What does that mean? How is hugging you and calling you…I don’t understand. How would that be helpful for you?

Leslie: Because for me…first of all, he doesn’t believe it, but I do worry about him. It can be dangerous out here. And two, I could, we could talk just about what his day has been like. I would know what time he was going to come home. I would sit up, and we could have a, you know, a light dinner together. You know, but I, sometimes I sit up and I don’t know what time he’s…you know, I just fall asleep and then he comes in, and the next thing I know, he’s in the bed. But then he’s asleep.

Berg: So some more personal private time together?

Leslie: The kids still go to bed relatively early, and I’m just, you know, doing some paperwork or I end up watching TV alone. I don’t know what time he’s coming home.

Berg: What about it that would be helpful for you, having those kind of private times between the two of you. What would that be like?

Leslie: We used to have those private times before the kids were born…

Berg: You used to have those.

Leslie: And it was something I looked forward to, you know. I mean, we, we, he was working. He was, you know, working then, long hours, but that was our special time and, you know, you know, we talked. I mean, I knew people at his office before, not always personally but
because we talked about those things, and I talked about my problems at the job. I just talk to my mother now, you know, about anything. She knows more about what’s happening at the company than you do, you know, because you don’t ask. You…

Bill: Let’s leave your mother out of this, okay.

Leslie: He doesn’t like my mother. But that’s who I have to talk to now.

Bill: I didn’t say that. I just said, “Let’s leave her out of it.” She doesn’t really have anything to do with this.

Leslie: That’s part of the problem too.

Berg: So, when you have this private time you’re talking about, what his day’s been like, what his work is like, and he also asks you about what your day’s been like and having this time without the children, and that would...how would that be helpful?

Leslie: That was close. It was kind of, you know, your husband is your main confidante and we would have that relationship and then—remember the times?—we would even go to bed and make love, and it would be nice. And it was beautiful. And that doesn’t happen anymore either.

Berg: Okay. So that’s what you’re looking for? Those, some special moments with Bill that you feel close to and you feel like he’s your confidante? Okay.

Leslie: Didn’t you like those? I mean, I thought it was fun. I looked forward to it. I mean, no matter how bad the day was, I could look forward to at some point, you know, over a salad or whatever, maybe even a glass of wine. We would talk. We would have good times.

Berg: Suppose Leslie believes you, that you are working, when you are not home that you’re working, how would that be helpful for you to know that she believes you?

Bill: Well, you know, believe it or not, this stuff bothers me as well.

Berg: Of course. Of course it does.

Bill: You know. I mean, I can’t go off and work knowing, you know...And that’s, you know, I mean, that’s some of why I just don’t call.
Because if I call, we’re going to get in an argument about when I’m coming, what am I doing, who am I with, and all of that, third degree, and I’m trying to be in the middle of taking care of business and I can’t function like that. You know, I can’t take care of my business like that. So what do you…

Berg: Suppose she does. Suppose she believes. So she believes that you are working and not with other women, how would that be helpful for you?

Bill: It would put my mind at ease. It would make it easier for me to take care of what I need to take care of and some things that might take two meetings, I might be able to get done in one.

Leslie: Well, I’m for that. Well, I am.

Berg: Okay. Great. So you’re saying you’re willing to at least try that?

Bill: I said try. You know. I mean, I just, you know…

Berg: Is there something that Leslie can do to make it easy for that to happen?

Bill: Yeah.

Berg: What? What can she do to make it easier for that to happen?

Leslie: I’m listening. I’m all ears. What can I do? I’ll do it. I’ll do it. Within reason.

Bill: Just be understanding. You know, just don’t…

Berg: What, what does that mean? What does that mean: “Be understanding”?

Bill: Well, you know, I mean, don’t pressure me. Don’t pressure me.


Bill: And know that I’m trying. And know that I love you and I love our children, you know, and that I’m really, really and truly trying. You know, and I mean, you know, it’s difficult and, you know, a lot of times I just don’t have the time, you know. But, you know.

Leslie: You’re going to be able to make time? Is that what I’m hearing?

Bill: I’m trying. I will try to make time. You know, I’m going to try
to make time. I’m going to try the best I can. You know. But, but, but I have a vision and you need to help me with this vision, you know. And if the vision calls for you maybe to do a little more now, then you know, I guarantee you that you’ll do a little less later.

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**Berg Commentary:** That was a very difficult session. And I’m sure this is a pretty typical kind of a cases that you run into, and also, in a way, they both bring up some very important issues. That is, there is sort of a, for Bill, that his way of caring about his family is to be a good provider and to be successful. He kept saying, “I am working for my family. I am working for all of us.” And so his vision, he keeps also talking about this vision of his future is to be a good provider in such a way that Leslie can even stay home and not have to go to work, and so in some ways, I suppose, one could say he has a very traditional view of marriage. At the same time, he recognizes that there needs to be some balance between the two.

On the other hand, Leslie’s issue has to do with more here and now, the family relationship now. The more time spent with the children, watching, helping her out, doing things together, more intimate moments that they used to share in an early period of their life. And so what she wants and he wants, they both are related to relationships but comes from very different angles. So what they need to do is somehow not see this as an either/or situation but think of this as both/and, and obviously clients don’t see that and that’s what gets them stuck, is when they stick to seeing things from either/or point of view rather than both/and.

So our job, or my job, is to help them somehow figure out how to see how they could see themselves working cooperatively together. And I sort of believe that they need both: this vision of the future as well as also what needs to happen right now. And so, what I’m going to do next is I will ask, invite the couple back into the room and there will be three components to what I would say. The first one is some sense of acknowledging, validating their point of view, and also the task…some sort of bridging statement that leads to the suggestion that we’re going to offer. And since the couple are so out of focused, that is, Leslie is very concerned about what Bill not doing, and also, Bill is very concerned about what Leslie’s not doing and
therefore the task will be designed to watch each other from a different point of view than they have done in the past. That is, they have been very focused on what the other person is not doing, and so this time, we will have suggest to them about what the other person is doing to help the marriage.

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**Berg:** I had to think long and hard and I really have to tell you that I think that your calling to set this appointment was a really good time, really good timing, because you don’t want to make things worse, and you don’t want things to get any worse than they already have been. And it sounds like you both, you are very concerned about what’s not happening between the two of you, and I think that you wanted to do something about that.

And I really am very impressed, Bill, that you responded to Leslie’s initiating this meeting and your willingness to take time from your very busy schedule, and obviously, this relationship is very important to you and that’s why you are here, to do something about this. And what occurred to me is that both of you really care about this relationship, about this marriage, a great deal. But both in a very different way… Let me sort of explain to you about this: Bill, your way of caring about this relationship is to have this vision of the future, how you want things to be. That is, I guess you’re sort of accustomed to sacrificing a lot for the future, and that’s how you still see it. That in order to have a better future even to the point of maybe Leslie staying home one of these days, that’s what you’re talking about, that financially you could become comfortable, you could earn enough money so that she could stay home, and so you have this vision of the future, how you want things to be, and so that’s how you care about this relationship.

On the other hand, Leslie, your way of caring about this relationship is to paying attention to now, when the children are young, you want the two of you to do more things with the children, you want to share this experience of raising children together. You want to stay close and have more intimate moments and somehow try to make it, make it, sort of have it all. Right? And that’s how you are, you care about this
relationship.

So really, you know, really, there’s no question in my mind that both of you care about each other in a very different way. Very different way. And oftentimes, that gets misunderstood. And I think that both of you need both ways, okay. Any relationship needs both. That is, you pay attention to here and now as well as the future. Okay. You need to do both. You need to, like Bill said, it’s a matter of balance, healthy balance, here and now and also worrying about the future. And so I think that you two have a very good start, because you already are there thinking about right now as well as the future. Okay.

So the next task for the two of you, next job for the two of you, is to figure out how to sort of fit two of your concerns together to make it fit better. I don’t think it’s either your way or your way; it’s the blending of the two that somehow how to make a balance. In order to do that, both of you have to work together to strike this balance. Okay.

And I really like the way that you want to get started on this. You really, you know, want…you have some ideas already. You have lots of ideas about how to get started on that. Like having this, sort of stealing these few moments here and there, you know, without the children. That certainly would help. So what I would like to suggest to you between now and the next time we get together, is for each of you to keep track of what the other person is doing, for you to keep track of what Bill does and for you to keep track of what Leslie does that makes things a little bit better, little bit better for the marriage. And it’s important for you to not to discuss it, but just keep track of them, just observe and keep track of them, and when we come back together, we will discuss it more, the details of that. But I want you to sort of observe it, file it away, and then when we get together we’ll talk about it. Okay?

SECOND SESSION

INTRODUCTION

Berg Commentary: Well, it’s been two weeks since the last session, and before the couple comes back, I want to talk a little bit about what I will be focusing on in this session. I guess the second session task is to elicit
whatever the small change is, because change… and what is different this time because the difference is going to lead to change. And so, some ways to eliciting their impression of what’s been different.

And also, the next comes then some amplifying how these small changes are going to have an impact on other parts of their life. So I may ask about, not only what the children noticed different, but also may ask about how their colleagues on the job or their employers or their co-workers may have noticed different about them. And then the view toward that is what is the next step? Not only reinforcing these changes but also moving toward what would be the next step. And that could be done in talking about by concrete step-by-step fashion, which I would guess that this couple would respond better.

Also, you could also find out about that through using the use of the scaling question. And then again, at the end, I would take a break and give the couple some comments and feedback as far as ideas or suggestions for what might be the next step.

MARITAL THERAPY SESSION

Berg: Nice to see you back.

Leslie: It’s good to be here.

Berg: Yeah, so it’s been about two weeks since we got together last time. What’s been better for the two of you?

Leslie: You first.

Bill: We managed to, I managed to bargain for some time and

Berg: You’re kidding? You’re kidding?

Bill: And we took the kids to the zoo. We had a wonderful time. We really did. We had a great time.

Leslie: We really enjoyed that.

Berg: Really? Wow. How did you manage that?

Leslie: How did you manage it?

Bill: Actually, what I did was I transferred a case that I had. Gave it to someone else in the office, which I told my wife I would not be making
a practice of. I’ll do this occasionally, but you know, I’m not, I can’t make a practice of it.

**Berg:** But you, but you were willing to do that this time?

**Bill:** Yes. Yes. I mean, you know.

**Berg:** That must have been hard.

**Bill:** I was understanding of the situation. And we actually spent, you know…

**Leslie:** I appreciated it. We had so much fun.

**Berg:** Oh, you did?

**Bill:** We spent some…intimate…

**Berg:** Really? Without the kids?

**Bill:** Yes. Intimate times together.

**Berg:** Wonderful. Wonderful.

**Bill:** So anyway, I’m hoping now that my wife will begin to understand that I love her and that I’m not out here to do anything for anybody other than ourselves.

**Berg:** Now would you agree that it was a fun time for you, also?

**Leslie:** That was really wonderful. I want to do it next week. I know. I know. We can’t every week, but it really made a difference. The children were so excited about going to see the animals and Daddy was coming, too. They couldn’t believe it. It was wonderful.

**Bill:** We had a good time.

**Berg:** You did? That must have taken quite a bit of coordination to pull it off. I mean, that’s not easy to do that with both kids. I mean, four people’s schedules.

**Leslie:** Right. Well, it was so wonderful because he told me in advance that, you know…

**Berg:** He did? He tell you in advance.

**Leslie:** “I’m going to be able to take this Saturday or this time. What do you want us to do?” So we actually thought about a couple
of things and decided upon the zoo. So there was that kind of communication because I did need to coordinate to make sure that I didn’t have to go into work that day and such, so I really appreciated that and I told him.

**Bill:** It worked out. It worked out. It worked out well.

**Berg:** That’s good.

**Bill:** The thing is, is that I’m hoping that we can continue to understand that, you know, that I can’t, you know, do this as much as I’d really and truly like to. And I mean, you know, I realize through coming here that, you know, that before our, you know, I mean, it just wasn’t working at all. You know. But in return, I expect a lot…

**Berg:** Before we get to that, before we get to that, let me ask you a little bit. What did Leslie do to make things a little easier for you to take time off? And even give up a case. I mean, that must have taken a lot. What did Leslie do to make things easy for you to do that?

**Bill:** Easy?

**Berg:** Yeah. A little bit easier for you to do that.

**Bill:** Easy?

**Berg:** Well, a little bit, little bit easier.

**Bill:** I mean, she drug me in here. She drug me, and I, you know, well, not really. You know, I mean, I think part of this grew out of us…as much as I hate to admit it, this was a level of communication and, you know, beginning to get a level of communication. Because we talked some more after we left here, and being able to talk gave us the, the impetus I guess, we needed to start to communicate, so our communication has improved. You know.

**Berg:** You agree with that?

**Leslie:** I’m trying to talk in more, in a calmer fashion, without being accusatory. I’ve tried.

**Bill:** You can hear it in, you can hear it in her voice. You can hear it in her voice.

**Leslie:** I’m trying. I’m trying.

Leslie: You didn’t notice the black nightgown I bought. See, he didn’t notice that, though. He didn’t want to say that. That didn’t make it easier?

Berg: What about Leslie’s voice? You mentioned her voice. What about it that helps? How is it different?

Bill: Well, I mean, you know, like she said, I mean, you know, we have found a level at which we can talk instead of argue, you know. Because I was not at all, you know, I just wasn’t into arguing. I don’t have time for that, so when we got to a conversation that was at the level of argumentation, I just sort of cut it off and we were not talking. And now, you know, we’re starting to talk a little bit, you know, and I mean, just the little things. I mean, our schedules still are absolutely crazy, and we still for the most part only see each other for a few minutes in the morning and a few minutes at night, and if I can steal a day every couple weeks, I don’t know if that’s going to be enough. I hope that it begins, you know, because this is the only way we can live. I mean, you know...

Berg: Right. Right. It seems pretty hectic.

Bill: All that arguing and shit, I can’t…I just can’t...

Berg: What did, what about what Bill did this past couple weeks? What, what did he do that was helpful for you?

Leslie: Well, one thing that was helpful was that, he—I did keep track—he called at least, I think, last week it was about four times. I know you probably thought, “Well, I gotta get on the phone and call my wife,” but I mean, it really made a difference to me to just kind of know and then, you know, that night, you know, that you called and said you’d be home around 10:30, and you know, so I waited up. Just the call, tonight he came in at the time he said he was going to come in, and it made a real difference.

Bill: The phone calls are still a little unpleasant. The phone calls are still unpleasant because she still does, she does, you know...

Leslie: It makes a difference to me.
Berg: It does?

Leslie: Wait, I can’t, I can’t…


Leslie: You dug it out from where it was hidden, huh? I appreciate that. I do.

Berg: Now, what does that mean? That he’s, that Bill has his wedding ring on? It sounds like it’s very important to you. It has some special meaning to you. What does that mean for you?

Leslie: Well, I recognize that doesn’t mean, I mean, a lot of married men have their wedding rings and they still fool around. I’m not saying you are.

Bill: Thank you.

Leslie: Okay. I’m not saying you are. But to me it meant that he knew that I was upset that he didn’t wear his. I didn’t nag him about it, but one day last week I just noticed it was on his finger again, and I think I felt that maybe it’s not that important to him, but he knew it hurt me and bothered me, so I think he was making effort, and I appreciate that.

Berg: Is that one of the things that he did to make things a little bit better?

Leslie: That was a, that was a very nice one.

Berg: Uh-huh. It was a very nice one. Uh-huh. Okay. Anything else you noticed he did to make things better?

Leslie: Well, I mean, for me, believe it or not, it sounds like a small thing, but the zoo was very important and interaction with the kids. Carl was just so happy being around his dad. It was beautiful. I got some nice pictures of them and everything.

I think we’re also making an effort. I mean, it’s not all there like it used to be, but you know, just being able to be close and to touch. I mean, I felt that he made an effort to make me know that he still desired me and wanted me.

Berg: That was most important to you, yeah. Okay.
What about for you? What did Leslie do to make things better? What have you noticed about her?

Bill: Well, you know, the big thing, like I said, is we’re talking instead of arguing. I mean, you know, the phone calls were a little difficult, because she still asks a lot of questions and, you know…

Leslie: I wouldn’t be honest if I didn’t at least…I’m trying to be honest.

Bill: Yeah, I know, but that whole point is that, you know, when I’m… take the time to do that, I’m taking time to do that and I just want to be brief with it, but…you know.

Leslie: Well, if it’s too much then if you do call for me to ask a couple questions, what should I do? “Hello? Oh, okay. I know you’re busy. Bye.”

Bill: I mean, you know… But…

Berg: What else did she do that was helpful? You said something about the communication.

Bill: Yeah, well…I mean, she’s just kinder. You know, I mean, you know. And I mean, you know, hey, come on now, you know, a few weeks ago, you know, I was just ducking out the door, getting out as quick as I could, you know. And coming in late enough so maybe she was asleep. But you know, I don’t know. Maybe there’s hope.

Berg: So there’s a big change. That’s a big change, isn’t it?

Bill: Yeah.

Berg: Yeah.

Leslie: Makes a difference…

Bill: It is.
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Berg: Now let me ask you: remember those numbers questions? I’m going to bring it out again, those numbers. Remember?

Bill: One to 10.

Berg: Yeah, one to 10, one to 10. Right.

Leslie: Oh, that’s right.

Berg: Right. Now, as of right now, if I were to ask you where things stand in terms of how hopeful you are and maybe, you know, maybe this marriage can make it… Remember? Ten stands for you’re very hopeful. You have, you know, every hope, any reasonable hope anybody can have. And one stands for might as well just throw in the towel. Where would you say you’re at right now with this marriage will make it?

Bill: Maybe a nine.

Berg: Nine! What do you think?

Leslie: Well, I was going to say eight, but maybe eight point five.

Bill: Oh, you push it up a half.

Leslie: Well, the fact that you said “nine,” I’ll try a little bit harder maybe. I don’t know. That’s what’s in my head.

Berg: That’s a big change. That’s a big change.

Bill: You know, I mean, I’ve always believed in the marriage. And I believe in the marriage. And I want the marriage to work. It’s just, I guess we just need to look at what it takes to make it work more clearly. You know. And as long as, as long as we can stay kind of on track about not, not harassing each other, not, you know, I mean, really believing in each other and trying to work our stuff out, maybe you know, maybe you know, maybe it will stay healthy. You know, I mean, I guess that’s my thought: it will stay healthy.

Berg: So that’s a good point. What would it take? What would it take for you to stay on this track at, you know, I mean, eight, eight point five, and nine—that’s very high—what would it take for the two of you to stay on this?
Leslie: Well, this may feel like a little honeymoon period this past few weeks…

Berg: I’m sure it does. I’m sure it does.

Leslie: So I’m aware that it’s easy to get back into the old ways after, you know, you make up. We’ve been through this before, kind of make up a little bit then you go right back into it, so we have to be vigilant. And I know I do appreciate the fact that you took off and, yes, it changed our finances a bit but I think what we got in exchange, you know, money can’t buy everything. Money is important, but it’s not everything, and I would never have traded that day at the zoo for I don’t care how much the case was worth. Well, I guess it wasn’t worth a million dollars, was it? Well, anyway, it was worth it to be out with the kids. It really meant a lot.

Berg: What needs to happen for the two of you so you feel like your life is moving on in the right direction? What needs to happen?

Leslie: I don’t mind someone coming in, but I don’t really think if we’re trying to build for what we say we’re building for, that’s a little… Well, my mother never had anybody in the house. I don’t know. I kind of feel that’s something wealthy people do or something, I don’t know.

Bill: Yeah, well…

Leslie: We’re not wealthy.

Bill: No, I’m just… Your mama. I don’t understand how anybody could live with your mama. I don’t understand how you live with your mama. The woman is…

Leslie: He doesn’t like my mother. Just leave my mother out of it!

Bill: See, see, see… I’m going to tell you something. I’m going to tell you something: part of… And that’s, that’s where you get that from. That’s where you get that. That’s the way she is. It is impossible to have a conversation without it turning into some kind of argument…

Berg: So what needs to happen? What needs to happen?

Bill: …without resolution. We need, we need to be able to communicate regularly, even, you know, even if the issue is money. You know. I mean, money is just another…
Berg: Okay. So how are you going to solve this? How are you going to solve this problem between the two of you about this issue?

Bill: Well, you know, I mean, it’s like…

Berg: How much help you need?

Bill: This, this, you know, over the past couple of weeks, we finally have begun to find a way to communicate. You know, we’ve finally begun to break through this armor that we’ve built up over, say, the last five years because the first couple of years of our marriage was sweet. You know. And then, you know, kids begin to come and…

Berg: What’s the next step for the two of you? What do you need to do so you can solve this issue?

Leslie: Well, we keep this communication going on, but we can’t skirt around the issue of money and, for me, Lois is an issue and not romantically, but Lois, Bill, Jr.’s mother, financially is an issue. I admit I am resentful, and not because I don’t want Bill, Jr. to be… I mean, what kind of woman would I be? I don’t want him living in some slum or whatever, but I just kind of feel that his mother takes advantage of the fact that Bill is a good man and he will…

Berg: So what can Bill do to deal with Lois? Is there something…what would be helpful for Bill to do?

Bill: Wait a minute. Hold up, hold up, hold up. Before we start talking about me dealing with Lois, let’s talk about me dealing with Leslie, okay?

Berg: How’s that? How is that?

Leslie: That’s part of it.

Bill: Here’s what I’m saying. You know, if it’s a matter of financial, you know, it’s, it’s not so much the matter of, you know, our financial status, but it’s the matter of us being able to discuss finances because if we start talking about our house note, in comes Lois. If we start talking about our grocery bill, in comes Lois. And Lois is this hammer over here that she likes to swing into the budget periodically. And I’m saying, you know, that’s not, you know, resolutely speaking…

Leslie: It bothers me. I don’t mean to do it like that.
**Bill:** Resolutely speaking, okay, it’s a bill. It’s a bill that we know that I have to pay. Yes, it affects our income.

**Leslie:** That we have to pay. That we have to pay, dear.

**Bill:** But it doesn’t, you know, I mean, it doesn’t stop the ball from rolling.

**Leslie:** No, but it could be a smaller bill.

**Bill:** And I’m saying, what’s happening is we’re letting this be one of the things that stop…And you’re so demanding. You know, it’s like we just get to the point that we can begin to talk and, you know, you throw this thing in, too. You know, it’s…

**Leslie:** It’s always been an issue we really need to sit here and solve it.

**Bill:** Yeah, I know. I’m saying, you know…

**Berg:** What would it take, what would it take for you to…I’m confused about this. Are you saying, Bill, that what you pay to Lois is nonnegotiable? It’s just one of those bills that you have to pay? Is that what you’re talking about?

**Bill:** What do you mean “nonnegotiable”?

**Berg:** I mean, are you talking about negotiating this?

**Leslie:** The things that were decreed by the court…

**Berg:** I’m confused about it. Yeah.

**Leslie:** … the child support and alimony, I don’t have a problem with that. We know that when holidays and birthdays come up, just like our children, we buy things for Bill Jr. What I have a problem with is, the tuition or, “Gee, this bill is coming up and I didn’t expect it, so Bill, can you help us out?” Or you know, it goes on. I mean, I feel like the first person that she calls if she gets a little short is Bill.

**Berg:** I see. So what would, what would…

**Leslie:** It’s extra money coming. It is.

**Berg:** So what can Bill do that would be helpful?

**Leslie:** He would not like this, but I certainly wish he would confer with me about extra money. He wouldn’t like it.
Bill: Hold it. Hold it. Hold it. Please. Do you want for anything?

Leslie: I don’t buy everything I want.

Bill: Do you want for anything?

Leslie: I have a roof over my head. I mean, we’re not…

Bill: Do you want for anything?

Leslie: And neither does Bill, Jr.

Bill: Just answer the question. Do you?

Leslie: I have, we have what our needs are and more.

Bill: Do you want for anything? Yes or no?

Leslie: That’s not a yes or no question. It’s not.

Bill: Yeah, right. See what I’m saying? It’s hard to get a resolution.

Leslie: Yeah, I want, I want my husband to confer with me. I do want that. I want that.

Bill: You don’t want for anything. The children, our children, our children do not want for anything.

Berg: Okay, so what Leslie wants…

Bill: Okay, here’s my point.

Berg: Okay, what’s your point?

Bill: You know, she doesn’t want for anything. I don’t want for anything, and none of our children, okay. We are not, it’s not like we are in the shape that if she lost her job tomorrow we wouldn’t be able to pay the rent for the next month. We are beyond that. We have left that stage of life behind. So what I’m saying is, yes, what this does is it, it, you know, our car, for example, is three years old. And maybe, if we didn’t have Lois to worry, you know, to worry about, our car would be year to date. Okay, so what I’m saying is, we do not want for anything, but we are not, you know, it’s, we’re not quite at that pinnacle…

And I know that two things are happening. One, my financial status is increasing. I am… And we have…

Leslie: Yes, but he’s working 70 hours a week to get us to the point
where we don’t want anything.

**Bill:** Right. And as an eventuality, she’s not going to have to…

**Leslie:** But if you worked less and she needed less then you could be home more.

**Berg:** Okay, so what are some of your ideas about, Leslie, how can that, how to make that happen?

**Leslie:** I know in our relationship that Bill, Jr., is sensitive territory. We get along, he and I, well.

**Bill:** That’s not true.

**Leslie:** Well, no, I think it’s sensitive in this, to this extent. If we start involving, or if I get in a conversation with him about Lois and how I think that, I think paying her tuition is not correct. I think she should have gotten financial aid or whatever. She didn’t even bother to fill out those papers because Bill is there. If I bring that up, he often misinterprets—I think it’s a misinterpretation—my questions about money, extra money going to Lois—as I see it, extra money—as a lack of my concern for Bill. I think he’s making up for the fact that he can’t be with Bill, Jr. full time by appeasement of Lois and money, money, money. And I don’t think it could happen that way. I mean, it’s unfortunate that he’s…I would like him to be with us, but that’s not going to happen. Lois is not going to allow that. And I think that’s what happens, and it bothers me because I see my husband working 70 hours a week, complaining, and it’s partly because he’s got to keep Lois too.

**Berg:** Oh, I see. So it sounds like your concern comes from your concerns about Bill working so many hours to make, do all this, everything. That’s what it’s coming from. I see. I didn’t realize that.

**Bill:** Well, you know…

**Berg:** So you, if you…

**Leslie:** It doesn’t come from I hate Lois or I don’t want Lois to have this or whatever. He’s extremely generous. It’s the kind of guy he is. And this is one of the reasons I love him, yeah.

**Berg:** And I suspect that’s what attracted you, right.
Leslie: Yeah, I loved him. I met him and I loved him for that. So I would not take that part of his personality away. But I would just say that I think it would be better for us, and I think it would really be better for Lois and Bill. He doesn’t see his mother, Bill, Jr., he doesn’t see his mother as a strong person in the way he sees his father. But she could grow. I’m not saying she has to run out, and we just stop any time she would ask for anything...we would never consider...but she has not been independent enough of you. I really don’t think she’s made that separation.

Berg: When she becomes, when she becomes more independent, then it will be less of a burden on Bill. That’s how you’re thinking.

Leslie: Stronger for herself.

Berg: Right, where she becomes stronger for herself.

Leslie: I mean, I envision a time, Bill, Jr., would be 18 or whatever. Of course, we have visions of him going to college and so on and so forth. I see Bill, Jr., away earning his own living and Lois calling you up and saying, “I need this,” and you going to say, “Well, she doesn’t have it and I better drive over there and give it to her.”

Bill: Get out of here.

Leslie: I think you would. I think you would.

Berg: That’s what you don’t want to see happen.

Bill: Not hardly.

Berg: What do, what do the two of you need to do? What can, what can Leslie do to be helpful for you so that you can maintain this, where you’re at, about, you know, eight and a half and nine?

Bill: This is another one of those tough calls because we probably, I mean, you know, and I admit, I really love it and I appreciate it that my wife takes care of all the house bills, paperwork, et cetera. She does that. And I just have to cut her a check, you know, for whatever the deal is. But I mean, you know, the fact is I don’t really have time to do this at home because this is what I do all day for other people. You know, I mean...

Leslie: I don’t know a solution with the Lois situation. I would, I
would request—and I would try very hard not to turn it into an argument—I would request that at least you run other expenses past the child support and alimony for Lois and our son, Bill, Jr., past me so that I don’t find out in the bank statements at the end of the month. That’s all.

**Berg:** Now, let me understand this. Let me understand this.

**Bill:** It’s really, it’s really minimal. I mean, you know, I don’t think that’s unreasonable.

**Leslie:** You think it’s minimal; it’s really not.

**Berg:** Okay. Okay. Now how would that be helpful?

**Leslie:** Because I would like, since it’s our money, because part of my earnings go toward this extra money—we pool our finances—so his money is my money, my money is his money. And right, we knew this was a bill, you know, but I’m talking about the things above and beyond, that if she requests some tuition payment, he doesn’t come and say, “Well, I’m going to write a check for tuition payment.” It’s like when I get the statements, I say, “Oh, there’s a check written to Lois. Hmm.”

**Berg:** So his talking to you about it ahead of time…

**Leslie:** And it’s not just one check now, I mean… Yes, it would help.

**Berg:** How would that be helpful? What difference would that make for you?

**Leslie:** Because I think it would be respectful, and I think that there are times, quite frankly, when you have consented to give her monies that I think if we had talked it over, she might have found some other ways to get what it was that she needed to be done that were not…

**Bill:** Like how?

**Leslie:** That were not…

**Bill:** Like how?

**Berg:** I see. I see. So you want to…

**Leslie:** Like I do. Because I don’t have an ex-husband to go to and ask where’s the money, and if I need some…
Bill: No, you don’t have an ex. You have a husband. And you know, I mean, we just spent all this time...

Leslie: So that’s four years of that.

Bill: We’re just spending too much time talking about this. This is really... This doesn’t help. This is not helping.

Leslie: Right.

Berg: Right. Absolutely. You’re right about that. You’re right about that.

Leslie: Well, I should just say... put Lois away and not say anything about it anymore.

Berg: Yeah? Can you do that?

Bill: That’s... That’s...

Leslie: I could, I’m sure I could never say anything but it would eat away at me.

Berg: So that’s not an answer.

Bill: Well, you know. Look, I’m not suggesting that we not say anything. That’s not what I’m suggesting.

Berg: So what are you guys, what are you guys going to do? What are the two of you going to do about this issue?

Leslie: Well, I mean this has been going on, so this was not a new thing.

Berg: I understand. I understand.

Leslie: ...and I’d like to get it, get it resolved at some point. But I want to keep, you know...

Berg: But what would, what would resolve it.

Leslie: I want to keep communicating. I want to keep... well, you get angry sometimes because I raise the things that I feel, and then I feel funny if you get angry at me. It makes me feel very uncomfortable if you get angry at me because I’m being honest. It makes me want to go back into the shell and not say anything. I know this is a sensitive issue for both of us.
**Berg:** Okay. So you do want to keep communicating.

**Leslie:** I do, yes.

**Bill:** Yes. Absolutely. I mean, I think it’s imperative. Maybe, you know, maybe we can all sit down. Maybe you, Lois and I can all sit down and talk about her financial status.

**Leslie:** Maybe we can decide how much money above and beyond what’s court-decreed is reasonable. Because she has a generous settlement, you know. Maybe we can say this is the amount of money including the birthdays, including, you know, miscellaneous and emergencies…

**Berg:** So you two decide and let her know what is reasonable and what is beyond this is not reasonable? Is that the kind of thing you’re thinking of?

**Leslie:** Well, she’s just going to say, “Well, give it to me now.”

**Bill:** I mean, you know look, come on, Leslie. You know…

**Leslie:** She probably would.

**Berg:** She don’t see that as…

**Bill:** I think she picks on the woman because it’s my ex-wife. Okay.

**Leslie:** That’s how he feels.

**Bill:** Fine. It’s ex-wife. You don’t have to, I don’t think you have to necessarily have to like her. But…

**Leslie:** I think she’s perfectly nice. I just don’t want that aspect…

**Bill:** Okay. But it is…

**Berg:** Okay, you know, it sounds like this is, you know, this is one of those issues that’s going to take some time to come to some sort of resolution because…

**Leslie:** If ever.

**Berg:** …because Bill, Jr., is how old now?

**Leslie:** Thirteen.

**Berg:** Thirteen. You’re talking about another five years, right? At least.
Leslie: Well, I’m sure we’re going to see him through college, too, so it’s not going to stop. Right? We are. He is going to college, right?

Bill: Yeah. I don’t know what you mean by, “It’s not going to stop.”

Leslie: It’s not going to stop at 18.

Bill: It’s not going to stop. Come on.

Leslie: Children are forever.

Berg: So this is one of those problems that is going to take some time to resolve. Okay. So in the meantime, what else do you need to do to keep going in the right direction?

Bill: Communicate.

Leslie: We’re not going to have as many arguments.

Bill: Try to spend time together.

Berg: Spend time together.

Leslie: When I call you, I would appreciate it if you would tell me if you’re really busy at that point, then I won’t ask you questions. And I need to know what aggravates you. Asking what you had to eat to me is not, I don’t intend to harass you. I just want to make sure that you get, you had your lunch and such because I know that you go through McDonald’s and eat something terrible for you and I want you to stay alright. I don’t mean it as, “What are you doing?” and such, but you interpret it as such, then maybe I need to make myself more clear as to why I’m asking. I’m interested in what you’re doing. I mean, it’s not, “What are you doing?” It’s, you know, “What was fun today? Is anything interesting happening?” I know that you cannot always respond to that, but you, you should just tell me, “Baby, I can’t talk right now, but I just wanted to let you know.” That would make it easier.

What would you like me to say on the phone when you call? I don’t even know. What should I say?

Berg: Yeah, that’s a good question.

Leslie: What would make you…

Berg: Yeah, that’s a good question.
***

**Berg:** I have to tell you that I am just absolutely amazed by the degree and the intensity of the passion you have between the two of you. It is just... I mean, there is lots of energy, just lots of energy, and I mean, you’re just so involved with each other. And I guess what comes through is that the both of you value so much of what the other person thinks of you. For example, you really are sensitive to what Bill thinks of you, and you don’t want to be misunderstood. And same thing for you: you want to make sure that Leslie understands you accurately. And I mean, you, gosh, the passion is just... I can see why you love him. I mean, it’s just... You know, it’s just so intense. You know. And so you want, both of you want to be understood by the other person in an accurate way possible, and that’s because you care. You care what she thinks of you, and you care what he thinks of you. And I think that is just coming across very clearly.

And so, it seems like what you want is you want to be understood, you want to be involved in Bill’s life. You want him to involve you in his life. You want to involve him into your life. And the other side of it for you, from your side, Bill, is like you want to make things easy for Leslie. You want to take care of things on your own. You want to be responsible. You want to make her life easier. So it’s easier for you to just take care of Lois, take care of other things and not worry her and not burden her, and oftentimes that gets misunderstood and that gets miscommunicated.

But what both of you want is the communication, and I absolutely agree with that, that you want to stay in touch, you want to be understood, you want to know what’s going on. And I would say you have a very good start. Very good start. Certainly what you did this past couple weeks will certainly help and is certainly is in the right direction, and you need to do those things to stay in communication as you go. And obviously, you know I think I agree with you, you can’t do this every week, but you need to have more balance in that direction.

But as you go along, as you go along, I would like each of you, and you to think about, pay attention to what Leslie does in her own way
that she stays in communication with you. Okay, what she does in her own way. And also I would like you to pay attention to what Bill does. What does he do to keep you involved in his life in his own way. Okay, it may not be your way, but somehow he is, does it in his own way, and... So pay attention to those, and see how things are going. Okay? And when you come back with the information, then we will again figure out what might be the next step.

**Bill:** Do we still need to try to not tell the other person what we’re noticing and just wait until we come here?

**Berg:** Right. Right. Yes, I would like you to keep that up until we get together next time. Alright. It’s okay. Let’s set up a time.

**Leslie:** Thank you.

**Berg:** Oh, you’re welcome.

**Bill:** Thank you.

**CONCLUSION**

**Berg Commentary:** Well, since this model, this solution-focused model is very much process-oriented, I would like to comment on a couple of points on the process of what just happened in these two sessions that you have watched. That is, that the, I believe that with a couple like this, the... it’s very easy to escalate. The couple can get easily become escalated about the past. That is not terribly useful, because they can, the more they talk about the past, the more it comes out as a blaming and accusing, and then, of course, the response to that is to defend themselves and then accuse and blame the other person.

So instead of that escalation should be always about the future, the future focus, that’s one point that I want to make. And in, as we direct the clients toward the future focus, while we are doing that, we are also helping the client to create the future view that is consistent with how they like to be. And so, again, the answers to the future view comes from them rather than from the therapist.

With a couple like this where there is such a great deal of passion, lots of energy, and again, by the way, their calling their involvement and their conflictual style, calling it as a passion has a whole different meaning...
attached to it than calling it very conflictual. So I think the working was their passion style, and that’s their way of being in the world. That is, that’s the way they engage with each other and that’s the way they solve problems, and that’s the way they see things. And so using their style of engaging with a great deal of passion that perhaps the therapist now can start thinking about how can they use this kind of a passion in a more positive direction so that they can become passionate about making things better, for example.

I think that, again, the next point that I want to comment is, with a couple like this it is very easy to become pulled into right and wrong, black and white view. That is, that the wife’s view seems to make more sense than the husband’s view or the husband’s view seems to make more sense than wife’s view. And oftentimes, couples pull therapists into that role of agreeing with one or the other, and therefore it’s very important not to become allies for one or the other but focusing on the process of what happens between the two of them. So for example, what do you need to do to convince your wife to see things your way? Or what do you have to do so that Leslie or Bill will go along with your idea? Those kind of process-oriented questions are very useful.

The, while we are listening, I think that the whole therapist task, therapeutic task, is while we are listening to the unhealthful side of their marriage, the conflictual side, if you will, or whatever this sort of the, the side of their marriage that they don’t want, while we are listening for that carefully, our job is always pointing the finger towards how to push the marriage toward more healthier side. And so therefore, the questions we ask are generated from that point of view. How can I, what can a therapist do to push this couple to or suggest to them or elicit their view of how to move in a direction that is helpful?

Well, I hope this tape has been useful to you.
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About the Contributors

FEATURED THERAPIST

Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW (1934-2007), was co-founder and director of the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, WI. She developed the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) model with her husband, Steve de Shazer. A native of Korea, Insoo balanced her heritage with Western scientific training in her clinical practice and teaching.

Berg served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, Family Psychology and Counseling Series, Families in Society, and Family Process*. She was a founder of the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Association, clinical member and approved supervisor for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and was also active in the Wisconsin Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the National Association of Social Workers, and the European Brief Therapy Association. She was a frequent keynote speaker at international conferences and regularly conducted seminars and workshops on SFBT throughout the U.S., Canada, South America, Asia, and Europe.

A prolific writer, Insoo published eight highly acclaimed books in ten years, including *More than Miracles: The State of the Art of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, Tales of Solutions, Building Solutions in Child Protective Services,* and *Interviewing for Solutions*.

MANUAL AUTHORS

Randall C. Wyatt, PhD, Editor-in-Chief of Psychotherapy.net, is Director of Professional Training at the California School of Professional Psychology, San Francisco at Alliant International University and a practicing psychologist in Oakland, California.

Erika L. Seid, MA, LMFT, Educational Programs Manager at Psychotherapy.net, is a practicing psychotherapist in the San Francisco Bay Area, specializing in cultural issues and sexual offender treatment.
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