Instructor’s Manual for

NARRATIVE THERAPY WITH CHILDREN

from the series

CHILD THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS

with

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Instructor’s Manual for Narrative Therapy with Children
with Stephen Madigan, PhD

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

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

2. 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.

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

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

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

6. ROLE-PLAY IDEAS
After watching the video, organize participants into groups of two or more. Assign each group to role-play a session with a child or family using a narrative therapy approach. Each role-play shall consist of one therapist, one child and as many other family members as the group
number allows. The client(s) may resemble the client(s) in the video, or you can create different scenarios, and you can even have pairs switch roles if time permits. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss their experiences. First have the clients share their experiences, then have the therapists talk about their experiences in the session. Finally, open up a general discussion on what participants learned about narrative therapy with children.

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

7. WATCH THE SERIES

This video is one in a series portraying effective approaches to therapy with children of different ages. Each video in the series presents a master therapist working with real clients, just as you see here. By showing several of the videos in the series, you can expose viewers to a variety of approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for their own style and orientation.

**Key Aspects of the Narrative Therapy Model:** Narrative therapy is an affirming approach that centers people as the experts in their own lives. Before the first session begins, narrative therapists assume that the people seeking their help come to therapy with numerous (and very often forgotten) skills, competencies, beliefs, values, survival skills, commitments and abilities. Uncovering, discussing and appreciating people’s abilities assists them in the process of changing their relationship with the problems in their lives. When narrative therapists work with children, they do not pathologize the problems children have, or totalize children with any kind of psychological problems. Instead, they look at the child’s context, at how the child and the family are being taken over by the problem, and how—even in small ways—they are getting a leg up on the problem.
Narrative therapy espouses the belief that people’s lives are organized by the stories they tell and those that other’s construct about them. Narrative therapists work with how these stories shape people’s lives. The therapist assists people on ways to challenge certain patterns of daily living and thinking that they find distressing, subjugating, hopeless and abusive. The therapist encourages people to discover ways to re-author their lives according to their own preferred stories of identity and relationships, and provides discussion on how best to support these preferred ways of living over the long term.

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

- How does the model explain the therapeutic process?
- What assumptions does the model imply about the purpose of therapy with children and teens?
- How is theory translated into practice in real-life situations?
- What is the role of the therapist?
- What outcomes are associated with successful therapy?
- How does the therapist work with family members besides the child, including parents, siblings, others?
- What kinds of research support the approach?

8. 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.
*A NOTE ON PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal life with us.
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. Politics: What do you think about Madigan’s blending of politics and psychotherapy? How does that sit with you? How do you react to him having an agenda as a therapist—or is he merely making explicit that which is usually implicit in therapy models? What is your implicit value system or agenda in therapy that comes out of your preferred theories?

2. Global vs. Local: What do you make of the discussion of global knowledge versus local or alternative knowledge? Do the differences Madigan talks about hold true for you? When you sit with clients, how do you hold these two kinds of knowledge? As you listened to Madigan speak, did you find that any of your assumptions about clients and their stories were called into question? If so, how?

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

3. The Problem: What do you observe about Madigan in how he helps this family identify the reason that they have come for therapy? See if you can describe his approach to helping the clients define the problem. What did you like about this process? Were there any parts of this identification of the problem that rubbed you the wrong way?

4. Taunting: Once David and his mother identified taunting as the problem, what did you notice about how Madigan fleshed out the problem story with them? What specific questions or comments from him stood out for you? If you had been the therapist here, how might you have worked differently with the issue of taunting?
5. **Why:** Madigan talks about bringing “why questions” back into therapy. What do you think about the way he uses why questions in this session? How do they help or hinder the process? Given your experience as a therapist, were there any surprises in his use of why?

6. **The Story:** Madigan spoke in the introduction about the Story of the Problem and the Story of the Person; or how the problem affects the family and what skills and resources the family has to stand up to the problem. How did you see Madigan develop these two stories in this session? How did it go? What specific interventions/strategies/techniques did he use that seemed most effective in helping this family get both stories out?

**DISCUSSION**

7. **Passion:** How did you find yourself reacting to Madigan’s passion for his approach? Did you get excited about this way of helping people? How do you think this kind of passion impacted the work that he did in this session with David and Kim?

8. **The Therapeutic Relationship:** How would you characterize the relationship between Madigan and the family in this video? Did Madigan form a therapeutic alliance with David and his mother? How significant do you think the therapeutic relationship was in this particular course of therapy?

9. **Madigan’s Style:** What was it about Madigan that allowed David to feel comfortable enough to engage in the therapy? How did Madigan join with him?

10. **The Model:** What do you think about using this model with children? Does it make sense to you? Do you see yourself using it in your work with families? What in particular would you do differently from Madigan’s model?

11. **Personal Reaction:** How would you feel about being Madigan’s client, or about bringing your own child to him for therapy? Do you feel an alliance could be made and that he would be effective? How so?
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

• Assignment: Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

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

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

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

1. Key points: What important points did you learn about Narrative Therapy with children? What stands out in how Madigan works?

2. What I found most helpful: What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

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

4. How I would do it differently: What might you have done differently than Madigan in the therapy session in the video? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

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

BOOKS


WEB RESOURCES

Stephen Madigan’s website

www.stephenmadigan.ca

Yaletown Family Therapy

www.yaletownfamilytherapy.com

Planet Therapy

www.planet-therapy.com

NarrativeApproaches.com

http://narrativeapproaches.com
RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Adlerian Play Therapy
  –Terry Kottman, PhD

Exploring Narradrama
  –Pamela Dunne, PhD

Object Relations Child Therapy
  –David Scharff, PhD

Person-Centered Child Therapy
  –Anin Utigaard, PhD

Solution-Focused Child Therapy
  –John Murphy, PhD
Complete Transcript of a Demonstration of Narrative Therapy with Children with Stephen Madigan, PhD

Note to facilitators: We have indicated on-screen minute markers throughout the transcript. You will find chapter markers on the DVD at five-minute intervals so that you may easily skip to desired points within the session.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

2–1

Stephen Madigan: Hi, I’m Stephen Madigan. We were just.... You’re David. You’re Kim. Welcome.

We were just talking about your golf shirt here. And it’s a what? A…

David: It’s Adidas golf.

Madigan: Adidas. And are you a golfer?


Madigan: You just like the shirt. But you are a, what did you say, a hockey player?

David: A soccer player.

Madigan: A soccer player. And do you play other sports?

David: I play basketball, and I used to play football. But then we had football practice every week and I couldn’t do it with soccer and basketball, so I play soccer and basketball now.

Madigan: And of the two, which is your favorite?

David: Probably soccer, because I’ve been with the team for like three years.
**Madigan:** How old are you?

**David:** I’m 10.

**Madigan:** You’ve been playing since you were how old?

**David:** Well, I’ve been playing…

**Kim:** Five.

**David:** … since I was 5.

**Madigan:** Since you were 5. So would you consider yourself a fairly good soccer player?

**David:** Yeah, I play for a traveling team.

**Madigan:** You do?

**David:** Mm-hmm.

**Madigan:** And what does that mean?

---

**2–2**

**David:** Like because there’s recreational teams where you automatically make the team and you always go to the same place to play games. And then there’s traveling, where like you have try-outs and some people don’t make the team and like, you’ll go from like, you’ll go to like tournaments and…

**Madigan:** What? Like down the road?

**David:** No, like Park Forest tournaments, and we live in…

**Kim:** It’s different towns.

**Madigan:** Different towns. Oh, okay.

**David:** Yeah, like… Yeah. We go to different towns and different cities.

**Madigan:** Well, you know what we call that kind of team in Canada?

**David:** What?

**Madigan:** We consider you to play on an all-star team.

**David:** Yeah.
Madigan: So you’re a bit of an all-star soccer player? Wow. What position do you play?

David: Forward.

Madigan: Forward. On the right or the left?

David: What? Middle.

Madigan: You’re center forward.

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Now wait a minute. Center forwards are like the best guys on the team, aren’t they?

David: What? Well, our defense is really strong, so, probably already…

Madigan: Yeah. Yeah. So you’re a goal scorer?

David: Yeah.

2–3

Madigan: Did you, did you score any goals last year?

David: Yeah. But last year I was playing defense, but then we got this other kid that was like awesome at defense, so now I’m not. So now I play forward.

Madigan: Wow. So do you expect to… They must have seen potential in you to be a goal scorer?

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: That’s fantastic. Does your mom ever—I know you have, come from a really big family—but does your mom ever get to see your games?

David: Yes.

Madigan: She does.

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: And does she yell “go—” What does she yell from the sidelines?

David: Well, well, she doesn’t yell anything and that’s what I like,
because my dad, he’s always like, “Help the—” because I’m supposed to be, I’m supposed to like stay like in front of everybody and my dad just always yells, yelling out, “Help the defense!” But if I do go back to help the defense, then my coach will get mad because I’m supposed to be up there just in case like the ball does get up there.

**Madigan:** So your dad’s saying one thing and the coach is saying something.

**David:** Yeah, and he says, and he thinks that he knows like everything about every sport, but… no.

2–4

**Madigan:** You know a little bit about soccer by the sounds of it.

I’d like to ask the table—thanks for that update on soccer. I’m a real soccer fan, you know. My father, he was, he played professional soccer. He’s Irish, born and raised in Ireland. He played professional soccer for a little while, so I grew up knowing a lot about soccer because Canada’s just coming into soccer now.

But listen… Shall we end the soccer discussion now?

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** Yeah? We can talk about it more if you’d like later.

Kim and David, why is it that you’ve, can I ask you why it is that you’ve come to see someone like me at this particular time?

**Kim:** Do you want to answer that or do you want me to?

**David:** Can you?

**Kim:** Okay. Well, I thought this would be a great—

**Madigan:** Do you mind if I take some notes?

**Kim:** No problem.

**Madigan:** Okay.

**Kim:** I thought it would be a great opportunity for the both of us. I know that sometimes David can be pretty hard on himself, where he’s an excellent student. Very bright.
But sometimes gets very frustrated if he doesn’t do everything just perfect. And that can also carry through to other things he does, and so I thought that this could be helpful for him. Unfortunately, it can be kind of a family trait to, to want to excel, so. But maybe we can bring home some stuff to the rest of the family.

**Madigan:** Okay. But first off, David would you agree with your mom that sometimes you get a little frustrated with yourself and are a bit hard on yourself?

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** What would you call that? When that sneaks up on you. I don’t know if you have a name or your mom does or the family does.

**David:** We usually just call it getting frustrated but…

**Madigan:** Getting frustrated?

**David:** Yeah. Or at least, that’s what I call it. I’m not sure about [inaudible].

And would you also agree that, with your mom, that you’re not, you may not be the only one in the family that frustration gets the better of?

**David:** Yeah. Probably the most, my little sister. Because like, she’ll have like, she’ll do all this cool stuff one day and then like one bad thing and like she’ll have it ruin, like let’s say it’s a vacation, it’ll ruin her vacation.

**Madigan:** Oh, I see. And how do you see that being what we’re describing as frustration?

**David:** Because she, because usually she thinks that it’s her fault that she did it, and she gets frustrated with herself. So that’s how I…

**Madigan:** Oh, I see. Now are there different kinds of frustration in the family, or is frustration primarily works the same on each person?

**David:** Different kinds, probably. Because when Ben gets frustrated—
Madigan: Who’s Ben?
David: My big brother. He like, kind of throws a fit, and like he’s mean to everybody.

2–7
And then like, but then my big sister, she just kinds of stays in her room until she gets like, until she starts to feel better or she’ll talk on the phone with somebody.

Madigan: So she might get sad? Would you say sad?
David: Yeah. Yeah, sad probably.
Madigan: Isolates herself a bit.
David: Yeah. And then me, I just kind of, I just get mad and I just get in kind of a grumpy mood.

Madigan: Grumpy mood. So sometimes frustration brings on a, like helps along a grumpy mood in you?
David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Okay. And is there any other kinds of frustration that affects the family?
David: I can’t think of anymore.

Madigan: Okay. If you think of anymore, David, would you, would you just interrupt me and, so I can write it down?

2–8
David: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Because I get a sense that because you’ve been able to define three different kinds of frustration, you’re a bit of an expert on frustration. Would that be right?
David: What?
Madigan: Little bit of an expert?
David: What?
Madigan: Well, I’d like to call on your expertise as we go along, if that’s all right with you.

David: Okay.

Madigan: Now, Kim, what is, when you mentioned something about a reason why people were getting frustrated in your family and then it was, I think you called it a family trait. Could you describe that to me?

Kim: I think that most members, probably all members of the family tend to overachieve.

Madigan: What’s that mean?

Kim: That we try to do our bests at everything we do.

Madigan: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Kim: I think it has both positive and negative side effects.

2–9

Madigan: What, could you tell me the positive aspects of, you know, overachieving? Or trying to be the best in everything you do?

Kim: Well, you tend to do very well, which, you know, I see that with all the members. Everybody does very well at school. And you know, athletically. I’m not involved in athletically, but all the children tend to excel in athletics.

Madigan: Yeah, well, by the sounds of it, this one here certainly has, being the center forward.

Kim: Mm-hmm. And so the positives is that there’s a lot of successes in the families, but also, there’s probably not a lot room that we allow ourselves for faults or mistakes.

Madigan: So not a lot of room for mistakes.

Kim: Mm-hmm. And I don’t know if it’s like a, I think it’s an unspoken rule. I don’t think it’s anything that we impose on the children. Or anything else, but obviously they’ve picked it up.

2–10

Madigan: So how did this happen? I mean, obviously there’s trying
to be the best in everything that you do. You all do very well. You’re all athletically inclined, at least the children are, and it brings you to success. So how does it happen that this sometimes takes a turn where people feel that they’re not allowed to have room for any mistakes or... And then, I guess, would you say that then frustration enters into the picture, into your lives?

Kim: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Do you have any hunches or guesses as to...

Kim: Well, I think it’s generational. I see it with my parents and my father especially. And I think that the children have probably, you know, picked it up from me. And I see it more with my new husband, too. He tends to be very self-critical.

Madigan: So there’s some frustration and there’s some self-criticism.

Kim: Mm-hmm.

2–11

We don’t sound like a very fun family, do we?

Madigan: Oh, no. I’m not hearing that at all. I just... Well, let me just go on. And I’m not, I’m not hearing that at all. I just think that sometimes your best intentions take a turn and somehow this criticism sneaks up on all of your lives.

Do you have any ideas as to how you’re going along trying to do very well, and then all of the sudden, you’re not allowed any room for a mistake? It seems kind of unfair to me.

David: Like... Can you repeat that question, please?

Madigan: Yeah, I’d be happy to. And if I sometimes get discombobulated in my questions, so just say what you just said.

David: Okay.

Madigan: It seems a little unfair that all you’re trying to do, David, and the rest of your family, is just move along and try and do the best you can.
And then at some point, it takes a turn and there’s no room for you to make any mistakes and you get frustrated and mad. Like how do you understand this?

David: Well…

Madigan: Let me put it this way. Like, do you get a sense sometimes that frustration is trying to take over your whole family?

David: What? No, not really.

Madigan: No. No. It’s not waging a war on your family, is it?

David: Uh-uh.

Madigan: No. So how does it, how does it sneak up on your family? Because it sounds a bit sneaky. Because it’s not what you… Obviously you don’t play soccer to be frustrated do you?

David: No.

Madigan: And your little sister doesn’t do what she does to be frustrated and your mom doesn’t do what she does to be frustrated?

David: Uh-uh.

So how does it sneak its way into your family? If it’s, is it wanted in your family?

David: What?

Madigan: Well, you don’t invite it over for dinner or anything like that, do you?

David: Not usually.

Madigan: Not usually. So it doesn’t sound like much of a welcome guest in your house. So how the heck does it trick all these smart people?

David: Well, usually, when it happens to me, it’s because like I am like trying to do my homework, but it’s like super boring and, and when I read something boring, no matter how much I try to concentrate on it,
I cannot understand it. Like I can’t understand something that I find completely boring, and so then, like I get all frustrated because I’m not like, because, because I’m not getting it. And I just get all frustrated and I can’t do it.

Madigan: I see.

2–14
So sometimes boredom leads to frustration.

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: I see. And do you have any tricks to out-trick boredom so you won’t get frustrated? That you’ve learned along the way? Because I have a sense that boredom, for a smart person like yourself, might crop up in your homework from time to time. Have you found any tricks that you’ve been able to find your way around boredom?

David: Sometimes I try to make it funner or make it better, like…like when I’m reading, making it sound funner.

Madigan: And do you find that’s an effective tactic?

David: What? Yeah. A lot of times it is, because in social studies especially, because I’m like, I think that social studies is boring, like some, like some of the things…

Madigan: What’s social studies?

David: Like, that’s like where you learn about like Christopher Columbus and…

Madigan: History? Is it that sort of thing?

David: Yeah, it’s history. That’s what it is. And like, some of it’s like really fun, but then some of it’s like…

2–15

Madigan: Not that fun.

David: No.

Madigan: No.
David: So…

Madigan: Who’s the most boring character in history to you?

David: Probably … this one guy MacMillan. I just…

Madigan: Yeah. Yeah. He was kind, he was kind of a boring guy, wasn’t he?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: He only, he only sailed around the world a couple of times, didn’t he?

David: Yeah. Well, it’s just that… Not MacMillan. I know that he was one of those…

Madigan: But some, some of those guys.

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Do you think it, do you think it’s not so much about the characters themselves but is it the stories being told about them?

David: Yeah, like…

Madigan: Yeah.

David: I’ll find it interesting if they put it in a different way, but they put it in such a boring way: “He sailed around the world, but he didn’t make it all the way around because he got killed during a war.” It’s like, they put it out so plain and boringly.

2–16

Madigan: That sounds pretty dry and boring.

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Because this guy was a pretty, a pretty big explorer, wasn’t he?

David: Yeah. But if they would have put it out in like a cool way, like, like, “he, he nearly made it around the world before they got, they got like, they got in a war with the so-and-sos, he and 12 of his crew members died, but the other eight made it back around the world.” It’s like…
Madigan: Right. I’m just wondering if—tell me what you think about this—but if boredom strikes again, maybe you need write your own stories, you know. Because the way that you’re describing to me, you know, what is being told to you sounds fairly flat. And it’s like drinking flat pop. Do you call it pop or soda? Do you know what I mean? Or ginger?

David: I usually call it pop.

Madigan: Pop.

2–17
So I’m wondering if boredom strikes, if there would be a way for you to write these stories instead of being bored by someone else’s version of the story. Yeah?

There’s something that your mom said that intrigued me. And that, she said that all of you try to do the best in everything that we do. And you all do very well, but at some point, there seems like there’s no room for mistakes.

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Now, do you mind if I tap your intelligence on this one as well? I really liked how we solved the social studies question. So how does that happen, that you start off with really good intent, then all of the sudden you don’t know, or you don’t believe that you’re supposed to, can make any mistakes?

David: Well, it’s like, because you’re doing… I think it’s because we’ve got such a big family and all the brothers and sisters compete against each other. Like a lot of times, like because my little sister, she’s like way better than me at social studies and spelling.

2–18
And like, usually I get like B+’s or A-’s in spelling and social studies, but she gets like complete A’s. And then, she’s like, “Ha. I got better grades than you.” And she bugs me about it all week.

Madigan: I see.
David: And it’s like, so then it’s like I need to do better. I need to do better and then....

Madigan: So you let your younger sister taunt you into frustration.

David: Yeah, but then...

Madigan: Now I thought...

David: It’s not only my younger sister, though.

Madigan: No.

David: Like my big brother does it a lot, too, like...

Kim: But you do better than him at school.

David: What? Yeah, but he still taunts me a lot.

Madigan: So when does, is taunting sometimes fun?

David: What? It’s fun when you’re taunting someone.

Madigan: When you’re the “taunter,” not the “tauntee.”

David: Yeah.

Madigan: I see. And when this, when this taunting gets going, do you begin to think that you can do anything, or do you begin to think that there’s no room for mistakes?

2–19

David: There’s no room for mistakes, and you need to do better.

Madigan: I see. So the more they taunt you, the more frustration can enter into your life?

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Has there ever been a time where they’ve taunted you where frustration hasn’t entered into your life?

David: Yeah, like because a lot of times I’ll beat my big brother in something. Like, let’s say we’re having a soccer game, and I beat him. Or let’s say we’re like having like, like we’re playing video games together and I beat him, and he goes like, “Well, you’re not that good. It’s just I wasn’t playing good,” or, “I just did that.” And he keeps on
taunting me about it. I was like, “I don’t care. I beat you.”

**Madigan:** Yeah. Yeah. And you feel pretty good about that?

**David:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Madigan:** Yeah. Do you think that, given the size of your family, that you will always be frustrated?

**David:** What? I think that, yeah.

**Madigan:** You’ve pretty well given way to this idea that you’re going to be frustrated.

**2–20**

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** You have. Yeah. And is that a good thing or a not-so-good thing? Because there’s what, 10 children, right? All told?

**David:** Yeah.

**Kim:** That’s including the step kids. There’s like six in the family.

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** That’s, that’s what I mean. Like there’s, there’s six in the family. Yeah. I see. I see. So there’s six present day taunters?

**David:** Mm-hmm.

**Madigan:** And then do you ever get taunted from your stepbrothers and sisters outside?

**David:** Well, my two older stepbrothers, they moved out and they barely ever visit. And my two younger ones, they don’t really taunt me because they’re usually off playing with other little kids because they’re younger than me.

**Madigan:** Do you think that the source of frustration in your family for the other kids in your family, the ones that live at home, is it on a kind of taunting?

**David:** What?

**Madigan:** Do you think the level of frustration, you know, like you
said a brother does fits and a sister gets sad and you get in a grumpy mood.

**David:** Yeah.

2–21

**Madigan:** Do you think that the frustration that affects and takes over the lives of the people in your family, do you think that’s all from taunting?

**David:** Not all of it, but a lot of it is.

**Madigan:** So if we were to work together—your mom and yourself and I—to figure out how it might be that we might reduce the taunting in the family, do you think that the frustration in the family would get bigger or smaller?

**David:** Smaller, probably.

**Madigan:** Why is that?

**David:** Because if we stopped the taunting, then kids would, then people would go, “Well, at least my grades weren’t this,” or, “At least I didn’t lose by this much,” and you wouldn’t get frustrated. But if they do taunt, it’s like, it’s like, a B+ is good and all but then when they do taunt you, it’s like, “I need to beat her in spelling,” or, “I need to beat her in soccer.”

**Madigan:** Oh, I see.

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** And what do you think it’s like for your mom to be present and hearing all this taunting?

**David:** I think that it’s, that it’d be hard work to get the kids, like not frustrated.

2–22

Because like every day, at least one kid gets frustrated once or twice.

**Madigan:** Oh, you’re kidding. So frustration lives in your house pretty much full-time.
David: Yeah.

Madigan: Did it recently move in, or has it been in there for a long time?

David: It’s been in there for a long time.

Madigan: Has it? Yeah? Yeah? That frustration’s been there for awhile?

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Do you think that frustration is trying to take over your family?

David: I don’t think so.

Madigan: Well, let me ask you: if frustration did take over your whole family, what would happen to your family?

David: Every day, Ben would be in a bad mood. I would always be grumpy. My little sister would always be blaming herself for stuff. My little brother would be saying … he’d probably be hiding under the table in our dining room, because whenever he gets mad he hides under this one table.

Madigan: Table. Right.

2–23

David: Yeah. He would probably be hiding under there all the time. He would just like…

Madigan: And what, what about your sister?

David: Kyla? She would, well, she’s spoiled, so she would like want everything and like she would—

Madigan: And what about your other sister, I meant?

Kim: Marina.

David: Marina?

Madigan: Yeah, Marina.

David: She would like, isolate herself.

Madigan: Right.
**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** So is this sounding like a good house to grow up in? If frustration took over your family?

**David:** No.

**Madigan:** No.

**David:** Because no one would get along with each other, everyone would be fighting and it’s like…

**Madigan:** Yeah. I’m just wondering if, you know, if people in your family treat the attack by frustration seriously enough. You know, how it causes you to taunt. Or that the taunting causes frustration.

**David:** Yeah, we take taunting seriously, don’t we, Mom?

**Kim:** Well, why don’t you explain what you mean by that?

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**2–24**

**David:** Like, if someone’s taunting you in my house, it’s like, we don’t just go, we just don’t go, “Oh, he must just be taunting me to get me mad.” We … usually we take it seriously. Like sometimes we don’t take it seriously, but most of the time we’re like, “Well, this is a good grade,” or, “Were you guys cheating in soccer?”

**Madigan:** Yeah.

**David:** Yeah and, yeah, but usually we take it seriously. Yeah.

**Madigan:** Pretty seriously, so this is not a frivolous fun frustration and taunting.

**David:** No.

**Madigan:** This is, this is serious taunting. Serious frustration.

**David:** Yeah.

**Madigan:** Yeah. Yeah. If frustration was to continue creeping in and sneaking up and, you know, being serious but making all of you blind to the seriousness of it, what do you think might happen to your family?

**David:** Everyone would hate everyone else.
2–25
Madigan: Yeah, you think that frustration could get so bad where people, you know, people end up not liking themselves and hating each other a bit?
David: Yeah.

Madigan: Yeah. So I’m wondering what we can do with this taunting that leads to frustration, because I certainly…I mean, from all reports, you have a wonderful and loving family. And I would hate to see it move towards anything other than that. So do you have any ideas on how we might ward off this taunting, or do you think your mom might have some ideas about warding off this taunting?

David: Well, my idea, my idea would—my mom probably has better ones—but my idea …

Kim: Well, let’s hear yours first.

David: … my idea would probably be either don’t pay attention to taunting because—

Madigan: Hold on. Hold on. I’m going to write these down because it’s very important.

David: Okay.

Madigan: So number one is, “Don’t pay attention …”

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Okay.

David: Okay.

Madigan: “To…."

2–26
David: To the taunting.

Madigan: “To the taunting.”

David: Because if you pay attention to it, you just keep on getting more and more mad. And then number two....
Madigan: Hold on. Your brain is going faster than I can write here.

David: Oh, okay. Sorry.

Madigan: “If you pay attention, you will get mad more and more.” And it seems to me from what you’ve said, David, that not only will you individually get mad more and more, but the whole family over time could suffer. Like it’s an individual thing that each brother and sister, and mom and dad, but over time, I mean, it could really sneak up and do some pretty nasty things to your family.

I think that’s a good idea. I think I’m going to have a drink of water, too. So what was number two?

David: Okay, number two would be, don’t taunt people, and they won’t taunt you back.

2–27

Madigan: “Don’t taunt people, and they won’t taunt you back.”

David: Mm-hmm. Because my brother, he always taunts kids in like, like in our house and like, he’s always mean to them, and then like, and then like, me and my little brother will be like doing something, like playing soccer or playing a video game, and he’ll come up and go, “Let me play, too.”

It’s like, “No.”

And he’s like, and he’s like, “Why? What did I ever do to you?”

And it’s like, “You’re always mean to me, Ben.”

And he’s like, “That’s because you’re mean to me.”

I’m like, “Yeah, but you’re mean to me…”

Madigan: And then the taunting starts.

David: Yeah. And then…

Madigan: Okay. All right. “Don’t taunt people and they will, will not taunt you back.”

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Number three?
David: Number three. Treat people how you want to be treated.

Madigan: Okay. “Treat people the way you want to be treated.” Yes?

2–28

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: Excellent. Now why is that a good one?

David: Because if you treat someone how you don’t want to be treated, then eventually it’s going to come back to you and like you’re either going to feel bad about it or you’re going to, or they’re going to tell on you and you’re going to get in trouble. Or they’ll just get a whole bunch of kids to taunt you, and then there’ll be so many kids to taunt you that, you’ll just be a… And like…

Madigan: You’ll be like, you’ll be like frustrated beyond repair.

David: Yeah.

Madigan: I see. Okay. Number four. You’re doing great. This is, this is fantastic information here.

2–29

David: I don’t really have anymore.

Madigan: These three are great. Can I just go over them?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: It says, “Don’t pay attention to the taunting, because if you pay attention, you will get, you will get mad and you’ll get more and more frustrated.”

“Don’t taunt people, and they won’t taunt you back.”

And, “treat people the way you want to be treated.”

That’s fantastic. Okay. If the family were to take on these three anti-frustration, anti-taunting tactics—you understand what I’m saying?—how might the family start feeling about itself?

David: There probably wouldn’t be as like, as many like fights, like…

Madigan: Okay. Less fights.
David: There probably won’t be like...

2–30

Madigan: So it would be less fights. Do you think there’d be more taunting or less taunting?

David: Less taunting.

Madigan: Less taunting. How do you think you might begin feeling about yourselves individually?

David: Good.

Madigan: You’d feel better?

David: Yeah, you’d feel better.

Madigan: And how might you feel better? Would you feel better or worse as a family?

David: Probably better as a family because you’d get along more and have more fun together.

Madigan: More fun together.

David: Mm-hmm.

Kim: It sounds like there’d be more support than competition, too.

David: Yeah, there’d be a lot more support than competition.

Madigan: More support.

David: But I think that if we did follow those rules, that we wouldn’t excel in sports and grades as much.

Madigan: Oh! Oh! Do you think that? I’ve heard this one before from somebody. I’m wondering if the taunting and the frustration is tricking your mind thinking that you can’t live without it.

2–31

I think you’ve been double-crossed. I think that you have just been double-crossed. I think that the wool was just pulled down over your eyes. Do you understand why?
David: Kind of.

Madigan: Tell me how you kind of understand.

David: Like because I’ve been, I’ve been living with it so long that I think that it’s like, that’s how I got all my good qualities.

Madigan: That’s right. Do you, how is it that taunting tricked your mind into thinking that you could not excel at soccer without taunting being involved in your life?

David: I probably said that because, because a lot of times when people taunt you, you do better at like, like a lot of times when someone taunts you at something, you just like get all mad and you do something really good.

2–32

Madigan: Now hold on. Hold on. Have you ever played really well in soccer having not been taunted the morning before your game?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Well, how do you explain that?

See, I think taunting has like tricked your mind, but I know that you’re a really smart guy. Your mom told me that. So I’m wondering… I mean, you can test it out. I’m wondering what would happen to the family if they tested out not taunting one another and see if their grades dropped to F’s and D’s and see if they got kicked off their traveling teams just because there wasn’t taunting in the family. Do you think that would happen?

David: Probably not.

Madigan: Probably not. But do you think other people in the family believe that without taunting they can’t survive or they won’t be successful?

David: I think that my little brother, Steven, thinks that taunting is like what makes people get good grades, too.
Madigan: Yeah. I’m wondering if you need to have a conversation with Steven. Is his name Steven?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Does he spell it with a “ph” or a “v?”

David: V.

Madigan: Okay. I’m just wondering if you need—you’re his big brother?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Or a big brother. I’m just wondering if you need to have a conversation with Steven and set the record straight on this taunting business because, you know, he may have been tricked into thinking that without taunting, he’s going to be useless and a loser. My, I’m thinking that it wouldn’t be Steven who’s the loser. I get a sense that taunting is a loser activity. You would agree with that?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Why, why’s that?

David: Because usually when you taunt someone, it’s because they beat you at something. Or…

Madigan: All right. So taunting is about sore losing?

David: Yeah, like…

Madigan: Spoil sport.

David: Yeah, because like if, if you lose at something and like it’s like a really big game and everyone always wants to win, people will be like, “Well, it’s just be—” Well, they’ll just like start to taunt each other, and they’ll both get mad at each other and then…

Kim: I’m thinking of a situation that happened in the family yesterday where his younger sister, Shayla, was elected the captain of her team. So she came home, and this was a very big deal for her. You know, nine
out of the 10 girls on her team selected her to be the captain, so she was very proud.

Madigan: What an honor. And captain of … soccer?

Kim: Of her soccer team, yes. And so she came home to share this. Well, you know, first her brothers and sisters were all, “Oh, wow. That’s great. That’s great, you know. That’s great.” So you know, then they find that there were three captains. Well, it just so happened that one of her friends who used to be captain is no longer captain. So they turned it on Shayla and was just like, “You backstabber. You hurt Elena’s feelings. How could you do that?”

2–35

David: Yeah, because Elena was like her best friend…

Madigan: Okay, now I don’t want to hear about this story. I want to hear about this, though. How is it that the taunting tricked all of your minds to take that wonderful moment away from your sister? Because you seem like a really, really good person. And the only explanation I have is that the taunting tricked your mind. Because did you want her to have a good moment? Are you proud that she’s the captain?

David: I’m proud that she’s the captain.

Madigan: You’re proud that she’s the captain. So how is it that the taunting took you in a different direction than being really proud of her?

David: Well…

Madigan: See what I mean?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: This is a tricky little thing we’re dealing with, isn’t it?

David: Yeah. I think that the reason we were taunting her was just to make her like, so she’s like, “I didn’t mean to.” It’s like…

2–36

Madigan: Who didn’t mean to?
David: Shayla, like because she didn’t mean…

Madigan: Oh, yeah. So all of the sudden she’s thinking about being the captain of the team, and now she’s thinking that she’s a backstabber.

David: Yeah. I think we’re all just like fooling with it because that’s what…

Madigan: Yeah, but do you ever find that sometimes fooling around hurts people’s feelings?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Yeah, I find that, too. And do you think that that’s the point of taunting? That you start off playfully but it actually ends up hurting people? Like do you ever get hurt?

David: Like half the times.

Madigan: Half the time. Well, if you were to remove 50 percent or half of the taunting in your family, what kind of an effect do you think it might have on relationships between all the children?

David: Everyone would get, I know that everyone would get along a lot better.

Madigan: Yeah. How do you think that might be for your mom?

David: Easier.

Madigan: Easier.

David: Very easy, easier.

Madigan: And do you think you’d like to make it easier for your mom or more difficult?

David: Easier.

Madigan: Why would you like to make it easier for your mother?

David: Because if we make it easier for my mom, then like she’ll, then she’ll probably be easier on us or reward us or something.
2–37
Madigan: And maybe having an easier time for her?
David: Yeah.
Madigan: Yeah.
David: And then…
Madigan: So everyone gets to have an easier time.
David: Mm-hmm.
Madigan: So I’m wondering at this point, it seems—tell me—is there, are there more benefits to less taunting?
David: Yeah.
Madigan: More benefits than more taunting? More benefits to less taunting?
David: Yeah.
Madigan: Yeah. Why do you think that?
David: Because then everyone gets along better and you know how I was, you know how earlier I said if we taunt, we get better grades and stuff? But we also get better grades if we go, “Oh, good job. Maybe next time you can improve it to a B, though.” So.
Madigan: Right. Right. All right. So do you understand how you’ve been duped?
David: Yeah.
Madigan: Do you understand how you might—But you know, don’t feel bad. All of us get duped by this taunting business.

2–38
I guess the next plan of attack, though, is… I get a sense that you and your mom really have a good handle on how it is, the taunting affects your mind and… But I’m wondering, how are we going, how are we going to let the others in on this in your family? How are you going to educate them?
David: Well, maybe we could just like, like the, like the kids that weren’t here today could just be nicer to the other kids, and then they would probably be nicer to us. And then…

Madigan: So start with a couple and then move out?

David: Yeah. And then…

Kim: Should you tell them a message, though? Or… How do they know what went on today?

Madigan: I can help you out in some ways, if you’d like. I mean, I could write, do you want me to write a letter to them? I mean, I could… Do you have email?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: I could email you a letter and direct it to your mother and you and talk about what we talked about.

And then you could maybe read it to them or give copies to each of them. Would that be an idea? But the other thing is, is that you might, because you’re a good storyteller around the social studies and whatever, you might want to write a letter about this. And you, Kim, may want to write a… And I’m not talking 10 pages here, but just to recap and then your sister who’s watching, she might be… So then we’d have four letters, and we’d have four stories to support this anti-taunting campaign that we—Maybe we can get some buttons. “Anti-taunting.”

What else? What else might we be able to do to help convince your brothers and sisters that taunting may not be in their best interest?

David: We could, we could…

Madigan: I have an idea.

David: What?

Madigan: This is being taped.
David: Oh, send them a tape.

Madigan: You could show the videotape, and with one rule that no one taunts during the playing of the tape.

Kim: And then we could play the tape every day.

David: Yeah. Until they get it right.

Madigan: Until they get it right. Until they... Do, do you have confidence in your family that they could stand up to taunting?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Yeah? What gives you confidence in your family that you believe that with your mom’s help and your help they could—and your sister’s help—that they could stand up to taunting?

David: I think that we could just like be...

2–41

I think that we could just like... Can I hear the question again because...

Madigan: Sure. Are you getting tired?

David: What?

Madigan: Are you getting a bit...

David: Well, we had KET Tests today.

Madigan: You had what?

David: KET Tests.

Madigan: What’s that?

David: That’s like, that’s where they decide like, how like smart you are and what classes to put you in.

Madigan: You did that today, and you’re doing all this tonight?

David: What. Yeah, and we’re having, yeah, and we’re doing it all week.

Madigan: I really appreciate this.

David: Yeah, so.
Madigan: Okay. We’re going to wrap this up then, but my last question was this. And you’ve done fantastic here, and I really appreciate all the wisdom that you’ve given this, that you and your mother have given this issue. Why do you have confidence that your family will stand behind you and your mother and your sister in getting away from taunting?

David: Because a lot of times we taunt each other, but a lot of times when like something’s bothering a kid, everyone will try to help or everyone will try to pitch in and do something.

2–42

Kim: There’s a lot of support, isn’t there?

Madigan: There’s a lot of support.

David: Yeah, we support each other.

Madigan: So you already have a groundswell of support, a base of support. Would you consider it a pretty supportive family?

David: Yeah.

Madigan: Yeah. Yeah. So you have a lot going for you in standing up to this taunting?

David: Mm-hmm.

Madigan: And would you say that you have confidence in doing it?

David: Mm-hmm.

Kim: What do you think is stronger? The taunting or our family?

David: The family.

Madigan: Yeah, so there’s no way that this taunting is ever going to have a military coup over your family and completely take it over?

David: No way at all.

Madigan: A junta? I think they call it. No. It’s not, it’s not going to completely take over your family? Yeah.

Well, just from meeting the two of you and your sister, I would probably agree with you, but…but I will be cautious with you, because
I have seen taunting take over whole families and the effects are pretty hurtful.

2–43
People get hurt, and they don’t really mean to hurt, but people get hurt. And I think that the quicker that you can get rid of most taunting, the better off things might be. What do you think about that?

David: I agree.

Madigan: Yeah. Can I ask you how this has been for you? This, our talk.

David: I think it helped me a lot.

Madigan: Yeah? How come you think it helped you a lot?

David: Like it, it showed me not to taunt my brothers and sisters. It showed me that I could go on, like taunting isn’t what makes me a good sport, or good at sports and have good grades.

Madigan: Yeah. Was this all right for you, Kim?

Kim: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

Madigan: I have to say it was really great for me, and I learned an enormous amount. And I’m going to take some of this, if you don’t mind, across… across the border into Canada, and maybe use some of your wisdom with other families that might be struggling a bit with taunting.

2–44
Would that be all right with you? And I’ll tell them always that I met this wonderful person south of Chicago, at Governor’s State, and he’s the one to actually be credited for this, so you’ll be known internationally now. All right?

David: All right.

Madigan: All right. Well, thanks very much.

David: Thank you very much.
Madigan: Thanks.

Kim: Thank you.

Madigan: And I’ll be writing you this email, so I’ll have to get your email number from you, okay? All right. Thanks.

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