Instructor’s Manual for

PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH MEDICALLY ILL CHILDREN

from the series

CHILD THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS

with

GERALD P. KOOCHER, PhD

with hosts Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD and Don Keat, PhD

by

Randall C. Wyatt, PhD

&

Erika L. Seid, MA

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4625 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
Email: orders@psychotherapy.net
Phone: (415) 752-2235 / Toll Free: (800) 577-4762 (US & Canada)

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

Instructor’s Manual for Psychotherapy with Medically Ill Children with Gerald P. Koocher, PhD

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# Instructor’s Manual for

**PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH MEDICALLY ILL CHILDREN**

with Gerald P. Koocher, 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 to four. Assign each group to role-play a session with a medically ill child. Each role-play shall consist of one therapist and one child. For
groups of three or four, have the other members play one or both parents of the child in a collateral session with the therapist. The client can be like the child in the video or you can develop other scenarios that fit with the participants needs, and if time permits you can even have players switch roles. 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 therapy with medically ill children and their families.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one child client and/or her parents; 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 therapy with this population.

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 beliefs.

Key Aspects of the Medical Child Therapy Model: Serious illness in children is often frightening and overwhelming not only to the child, but also to the adults taking care of them, and adults may hold the belief that it is best for the child to avoid talking about the illness with others. Psychotherapy with children coping with physical illness helps children to open up about their experiences regarding their illness in ways they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. By gathering information about the illness and building relationships with the child’s collateral resources, including family members, medical staff and others involved in the child’s care, the therapist establishes a foundation upon which to create a safe and creative environment for
the child to share thoughts, feelings, fantasies and fears about the illness and all that comes with it.

Dr. Gerald Koocher’s model for psychotherapy with medically ill children draws upon psychodynamic and social learning theories, as well as behavioral interventions. With an emphasis on collaboration with collateral resource people, Koocher maintains a developmentally focused, problem-solving approach. He explores the child’s experience of the medical problem, as well as the meaning the child holds of the illness and the symptoms. Whether the meanings are culturally rooted, are based on interpretations of life experience, or are an internalization of meanings ascribed by parents and others around the child, Koocher works within the child’s metaphors to ease psychological distress.

*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. Note that the discussion questions apply to the session as well as the post-session discussion.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Medical Personnel:** What do you think about this idea of working closely with an ill child’s medical treatment team? What about that model do you like and find helpful? What might be some challenges in collaborating with medical doctors and nurses who are treating your client?

2. **Effectiveness:** Given that the client’s medical problems may worsen or change in significant ways, what do you see as the goal of medical child therapy? What do you imagine might be indicators of treatment effectiveness when working with such clients? How do you make sense of trying to improve a child’s behavior with psychotherapy, even as medical symptoms persist or increase?

3. **Meaning:** Koocher indicates that it is essential to work with the meaning and causal attributions of the medical condition for the child and the family. What is the significance of understanding and sorting through the meaning the child has given to the illness or whether or not the parents believe their behavior caused the illness? What about this would be important to you? How do you think the beliefs or meanings held by the therapist about the illness influence the therapy (e.g., a belief that illness is caused by withheld anger or is a punishment for the parents’ fighting)?

4. **Countertransference:** What comes up for you when you think about working with children who are medically ill, especially those that may be terminally ill? Would this population push any particular buttons for you? What would be the unique rewards and challenges for you working with this population?
PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

5. **Initial Assessment:** What do you notice about how Koocher assesses Leah’s needs and how he forms and tests his hypotheses? Which specific questions or interventions did you find productive? What did Koocher miss, or what else would you have wanted him to explore?

6. **Relationship Building:** In what ways did Koocher work on building a therapeutic relationship with Leah? How significant do you think the therapeutic relationship was in this particular course of therapy? What did you observe about his approach that you would like to emulate?

7. **Worries:** Leah expresses her fears of her mother leaving her alone in a number of different ways. What do you think about the way Koocher interacted with Leah around her fears? Were his interventions effective? In what ways? What might you have said or done differently here?

8. **Interviewing Mom:** What is your overall impression of the collateral session with Leah’s mother? What did you notice about the way Koocher interacted with her? Given that he will only see this family one time, what aspects of this meeting did you find productive? How might you have used the time differently, especially if you had the opportunity to see this family more than once?

9. **Needs Therapy:** Do you think Leah “needs therapy”? Are her issues more complicated than what this family could deal with on its own? If you had been the therapist in this situation, would you have recommended that they continue therapy on an ongoing basis? Let’s talk about your thinking on these questions.

DISCUSSION

10. **Separation:** What about the possibility that Mom’s feelings and fears about Leah entering kindergarten are influencing Leah’s moods and behaviours? If you were Leah’s therapist, in what ways might you work with the family around separation issues?
11. **Balance:** Koocher talks about the importance of balancing questions that might be threatening or tend to shut down the interview with lighter subjects like favorite TV shows. What do you think about this approach? How does this fit with the way you typically interview children? Can such questions also give clues to what the child enjoys and values? Are you conscious of mixing up questions in this way?

12. **The Model:** What do you think about using this model with medically ill children and their families? Does it make sense to you? Do you see yourself using it in your work with this population? What in particular would you do differently from Koocher’s model?

13. **Koocher’s Style:** What was it about Koocher that allowed Leah and her mother to feel comfortable enough to engage in the therapy? How did Koocher join with each of them?

14. **Personal Reaction:** How would you feel about being Koocher’s client as a parent, 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 psychotherapy with medically ill children? What stands out in how Koocher 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 Koocher 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 AND ARTICLES


WEB RESOURCES

Gerald P. Koocher’s Website

www.ethicsresearch.com

“Helping Children Deal With Tragedy.” A video interview with Dr. Koocher on WFXT, Boston, Massachusetts

www.myfoxboston.com/myfox/pages/ContentDetail?contentId=750844

Families, Systems and Health, a journal of the APA

www.apa.org/journals/fsh/homepage.html
PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH MEDICALLY ILL CHILDREN

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
    www.aacap.org
American Academy of Pediatrics
    www.aap.org
Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health
    www.tapartnership.org
Research & Training Center for Children’s Mental Health
    http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Adlerian Parent Consultation
    – Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD

Adlerian Play Therapy
    – Terry Kottman, PhD

Cognitive-Behavioral Child Therapy
    – Bruce Masek, PhD

Gestalt Therapy with Children
    – Violet Oaklander, PhD

Narrative Therapy with Children
    – Stephen Madigan, MSW, PhD

Object Relations Child Therapy
    – David Scharff, MD

Person-Centered Child Therapy
    – Anin Utigaard, MA

Solution-Focused Child Therapy
    – John J. Murphy, PhD
Dr. Gerald Koocher: Well, thank you. Thank you for coming in to talk today. And I’m a psychologist. Do you know what a psychologist is?

Leah: No.

Koocher: I work in a children’s hospital in Boston, and my job is to talk to boys and girls about the stuff that they worry about. And sometimes people like to play while they talk. I don’t know about you. Would you like to play with something while we talk? Or make a picture or something? Or do you just want to sit and talk?

Leah: Probably just make a picture.

Koocher: Great. Let me get some stuff here. I’ve got some paper. Would you like to use some of these pretty colored things?

Leah: Sure.

Koocher: We’ve got markers and crayons.

Leah: Okay.

Koocher: What is your favorite thing to make pictures of?

Leah: Usually my mom and dad and my cats.
Koocher: Well, why don’t you make a picture of the family then?
Leah: Okay.

Koocher: The whole family. And I’ll sit and talk to you while we do that.

2–2
If I can help, you just let me know.
Leah: Okay.

Koocher: What would you like to use first? Is it stuck? It’s not easy to get out. There you go.
Are there any things that you worry about?
Leah: Yeah. I have inflectional bladder problems.

Koocher: You have an infectional problem?
Leah: Yeah, and it’s my bladder.

Koocher: Can you tell me a little bit about that?
Leah: Well, I’m not usually making it to the potty on time.

Koocher: That’s, that’s bad. You mean for like pee or poop?
Leah: Usually just pee.

Koocher: Pee. And, and sometimes you don’t know that you have to go.
Leah: Uh-huh.

Koocher: And then all of the sudden, it’s leaking before you know it?
Leah: Uh-huh.

Koocher: What is that like?
Leah: Well, it’s usually like that I never know and then I just…

2–3
After I didn’t know that that was going to come out, I finally knew.

Koocher: And, and I heard that they gave you some medicine to help make it go away.
Leah: Uh-huh. But it’s not working.
Koocher: It’s not working? It came back again, huh?
Leah: Yep.
Koocher: The leaking problem started again.
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: How do you feel about that?
Leah: Well, I feel kind of bad because, well, I don’t know. Probably just because my mommy always wants to check me.
Koocher: Yeah. Your mom always wants to check you and…
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: …and I’m sure you don’t like having accidents, do you?
Leah: No, not really. But sometimes it just, didn’t know it always. And I just didn’t know it until it probably happened maybe.
Koocher: That’s, is that one of your cats?
Leah: Um, it’s Madeleine.
Koocher: It’s what?
Leah: Madeleine.

2–4
Koocher: It’s Madeleine.
Leah: But we call it Maddy for short.
Koocher: I guessed, because you told me that your cats were grey and white and that’s the colors that you’re using.
Leah: Usually, I just make stripes. This.
Koocher: So can you tell me what happened when you, when you first started having accidents?
Leah: Well, my mom made a doctor appointment for the same day and we went and we went up.
Koocher: What’s your doctor’s name?
Leah: Well, I do know the one who gave me my shots.

Koocher: They gave you shots?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: What was that doctor’s name?

Leah: Doctor Lesivic.

Koocher: Oh. And what did they give you the shots for?

Leah: Because I’m going into kindergarten.

Koocher: Uh-huh. And what else happened?

Leah: Well, well I’m not, I wasn’t sure that I want the shots.

2–5

But I was hoping that I was going to get the silver needles instead of the brown needles. I got a silver needle on this one but brown needles on here.

Koocher: How many shots did you get?

Leah: Four.

Koocher: Four. Wow. And did the shots help you?

Leah: They’re kind of helping.

Koocher: They’re kind of helping?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: That’s great. Now what is, what is this…Now what is this? Is this the cat Madeleine?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: That’s great. Are you going to put the rest of the family on the paper, too?

Leah: Mm-hmm. First I’m going to do the legs.

Koocher: Sure. There you go.

Do you have any clue about what might have gone wrong that made you start to have the bladder problems?
Leah: Mm, no.

2–6

Koocher: No. Was anything happening in your family around that time?
Leah: No.

Koocher: Was anything happening at, at your nursery school at that time?
Leah: No.

Koocher: You just sort of got your, you got bladder problems. Do they have a name for what was the matter with you?
Leah: No. Not really.

Koocher: Is the doctor ever been able to explain why?
Leah: No.

Koocher: Gosh. How do you feel about it?
Leah: Well, I don’t know.

Koocher: I bet you’re not happy, though. I can tell by the way you look when you told me it’s not something that you like, huh?
Leah: Uh-uh.

Koocher: If you feel, by the way, if you feel like you have to go to the bathroom, will you tell me? Because we can go. Right outside there’s a bathroom.
Leah: Yes, I do right now.

Koocher: You do right now?
Leah: Uh-huh.

Koocher: Okay, why don’t you go right outside.
Leah: Okay.

Koocher: How much older is she?
2–7

Leah: Two weeks and this one’s six weeks.
Koocher: Six weeks.
Leah: Probably make her bigger, though.
Koocher: You like those cats, don’t you?
Leah: Mm-hmm. They’re just kittens.
Koocher: Kittens. You help take care of them?
Leah: Yeah.
Koocher: Do they know how to use their litter box yet?
Leah: Um…yeah, they’re working on it. They’re potty trained.
Koocher: Good.
Leah: But it’s usually, but sometimes they need help with cat Madeleine, cover up her poopies, because they have diarrhea.
Koocher: Oh. Well, sometimes they have accidents, animals have accidents like people sometimes, too.
Leah: Well, Chloe’s are an accident all the time.
Koocher: All the time?
Now I forgot what you told me. You told me you live at home with Mommy and Daddy and two cats? What’s your mommy’s name?
Leah: Karen.
Koocher: And what’s your daddy’s name?
Leah: Um, Bill.
Koocher: So there’s Karen, Bill, Leah, Madeleine and Chloe.

2–8

Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: Does Bill feel outnumbered? There’s four girls and one guy in the house.
Leah: Usually, he calls these two “guys,” but they’re both girls.
Koocher: I know, with names like Chloe and Madeleine. But now you’ve got to put the rest of the family in.

Leah: It’s a good watch.

Koocher: It’s a very pretty watch. When did you get that?

Leah: My Uncle Paul gave it to me, I think, on my 3 year old birthday.

Koocher: It’s a very pretty Mickey Mouse watch. I like it. I can see the, this is Madeleine. Or is this Chloe?

Leah: Madeleine.

Koocher: This is Madeleine, and this is Chloe.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: And they’re both happy. They’re smiling.

Well, who should, what colors should we use for the rest of the family?

Leah: Use this color.

Koocher: And if you don’t have enough paper, we can use more paper, too.

Leah: Okay. Now that one’s hard, huh?

2–9

Koocher: Yeah. These are not easy to get out.

Leah: Well. Well, my family is kind of difficult because there’s usually two cats mostly and they usually don’t have accidents anymore.

Koocher: I’m glad. I’m glad. And I know, I know you wish that you didn’t have accidents anymore. Is the doctor trying new medicine with you?

Leah: Um, yes. She…actually, my doctor that they made the shots put me on some medicine that helps me settle down and go to sleep a little faster at night.

Koocher: That’s good. Do you have trouble falling asleep sometime at night?

Leah: Well, I usually stay awake and my mom’s usually stays with me
until I go to sleep.

**Koocher:** Oh, does she sit in your bed with you until you go to sleep?

2–10

**Leah:** Mm-hmm. Usually she waits because I have, she, my Aunt Mish and her just put up my bunk beds.

**Koocher:** And what time do you usually go to bed?

**Leah:** I come in at 8:00, and I usually go to bed a little bit late.

**Koocher:** Well, you’re going to get to stay up late tonight, aren’t you? What color do we need next?

**Leah:** Orange.

**Koocher:** I’m going to, I’m going to help you by grabbing the end. There we go.

Now who is this that you’re drawing now?

**Leah:** Me.

**Koocher:** This is you.

**Leah:** And usually my mommy goes on the…usually she talks to the man to wait to see if there’s any accidents. And there’s usually no accidents now.

**Koocher:** Great.

2–11

**Leah:** And usually, and sometimes my mom breaks the toilet seat and it pinches sometimes. But the first time I noticed it, my mommy gave me a paper towel and she put it on where that, and I had to hold on. But now my dad, I keep forgetting to tell my daddy that it’s broke, but he didn’t hear me because he usually doesn’t get pinched.

**Koocher:** Well, it’s not…So sometimes when you sat on the toilet seat, you would get pinched?

**Leah:** Mm-hmm.
Koocher: And your mom knows how to fix that with a paper towel? But your dad doesn’t know how?

Leah: Yes, we thought...that’s not the only one we had. We had two and Mommy broke it two times. That’s our new one. We had two. My mommy broke it two times.

Koocher: Oh, well, I hope they get it fixed because it doesn’t feel good when you sit down on the toilet and get pinched, does it?

2–12

Leah: We don’t fix it. We usually buy one.

Koocher: Oh.

Let me know if you want me to help. This, this is, this is heavy. Oh, there you go.

Do you, do you sleep with anything special on in case you have an accident at night?

Leah: Um, no.

Koocher: No. Do you do, do you do stuff to try and, do you ever have accidents when you’re sleeping?

Leah: Sometimes, usually when I’m sick.

Koocher: Usually when you’re sick. But you, I hope you haven’t been sick lately. I heard you had a urinary tract infection?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: And do you have to take a lot of medicine for that?

Leah: I had Ditropan, but now I’m still taking the Ditropan. And now I’m not. I had, I’m still on that white, but I’m not on the, on the brown anymore.

2–13

Koocher: How did that stuff taste?

Leah: Um, there wasn’t really much taste to it.

Koocher: Good, so it wasn’t like you had to take some yucky tasting
medicine.

Leah: Uh-uh.

Koocher: That’s good.

Leah: I used to, but there was that medicine when I had a sore throat that was dark purple and that was my favorite kind because it taste like grape.

Koocher: Well, I’m glad you’re not sick and you don’t have to take it, that medicine now.

Leah: Uh-uh.

Koocher: So there you are with the two cats. Is this a ponytail?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: And you’ve got a ponytail for real, don’t you?

Leah: Uh-huh.

Koocher: And I like, I like the colors. You have an orange outfit with purple legs. That’s very attractive. What are you going to do next? Who are you going to put in the picture next?

Leah: My dad.


2–14

You did it yourself! That’s great.

What kind of work does your dad do?

Leah: He does on motors.

Koocher: Great. He takes care of cars?

Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: And how about your mom?

Leah: She does, she works at a green house where my preschool is.

Koocher: Where your preschool is. So you get to see her during the
day sometimes?

**Leah:** Yeah. Whenever she wants a hug, and sometimes she comes and eats with me at lunch.

**Koocher:** That’s very nice. I bet sometimes you like to get hugs in the middle of the day, too, huh?

**Leah:** Sometimes she used to sing to me while I was going to nap.

**Koocher:** Whoops. There you go.

**Leah:** And sometimes when I started trying, Miss Barro, my art teacher, our sight teacher, she brought me in her desk room and then usually I settle down sometimes.

---

2–15

**Koocher:** What happens when it’s hard for you to settle down? Do you get nervous and worried about stuff?

**Leah:** Yeah.

**Koocher:** What do you worry about?

**Leah:** Well, I worry about that my mom will forget to come and pick me up.

**Koocher:** Yeah, I know a lot of kids who worry about stuff like that. Has she ever forgot? But you sometimes worry that she might. You know something: I think she loves you and she’s going to remember, and she’s never going to forget to come get you.

**Leah:** Yeah, but now she, now she won’t because the bus is going to come pick me up.

**Koocher:** Oh, so you get a ride home on the bus?

**Leah:** Yeah, but I’m going to go to Miss Blanch’s and it’s Vicky’s mom and her name is Miss Blanch. And I’m going to go there.

---

2–16

**Koocher:** And you’re going to go there until Mommy finishes work.

**Leah:** Yeah, and then she’s going to pick me up.
Koocher: Great. Okay, so we’ve got the cats and you and your dad. We’re missing one person.

Leah: My mom.

Koocher: This one. Whoops. We’re missing Karen.

Leah: Well, sometimes my mommy goes out, when I’m sick and she goes out and gets us some lunch and my daddy stays with me, I didn’t know where my mom was gone.

Koocher: And you were worried about her?

Leah: Yes, and then my daddy called her for, she pulled out the driveway, maybe sometimes when she answers before she pulls out the drive, after she pulls out of the driveway.

Koocher: Does your mom have a ponytail, too?

2–17

Leah: Yes, usually she does. She did yesterday.

Koocher: How did I know that she has a ponytail? This is great. This is great. We have the two cats. This is your dad, and this is you with your ponytail, and that’s your mom with her ponytail. That’s a great picture.

So tell me about some of the other stuff that you sometimes worry about, sometimes worry that your mom might not come home or that your mom might forget to pick you up.

Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: What other kind of stuff do you worry of sometimes?

Leah: Well, sometimes I worry about that, coming, Mommy won’t pick me up at Grandma’s, and I’ll have to spend the night. And sometimes she comes and picks me up so I can pack and then brings me back.

Koocher: Did you ever, did you ever spend the night at Grandma’s house?

Leah: Yes.
And sometimes my aunt after, after Tumblebee’s that’s on Saturday, sometimes she comes and, she comes with us and usually she takes me home after Tumblebee’s and after lunch.

**Koocher:** Do you like to sleep over at Grandma’s?

**Leah:** Uh-huh, and when I sleep over at Misha’s and watch a movie because they have a TV, they have three, four TVs, one in my room, too.

**Koocher:** Wow. Who is Misha?

**Leah:** She’s my aunt, and she’s the one who made me this dress.

**Koocher:** She made that for you? That’s wonderful.

**Leah:** She always finds the material and then she uses the, how much she’ll need and then—

**Koocher:** She’s a good sewer.

**Leah:** She made me…

She made me a Valentine dress, too, and this is the Valentine, and if you look…

**Koocher:** I see. It’s little white hearts. Oh, and look: the spots on the Dalmatian are Valentine spots. That’s very nice. Well, you, she’s a very talented person. Maybe someday she’ll show you how to make dresses like that.

**Leah:** I do know how to make.

**Koocher:** You do?

**Leah:** Yeah, I know how. When, when, sometimes when I’m making doll clothes, my Grandma helps me because she has a sewing machine, and I know how to use it. And sometimes I usually make bobbins, and it’s really fun because you put a piece of thread on and you put a plastic bobbin on and you press the pedal, and it makes the bobbin. The first, I think yesterday, I mean, the other day, we made a, a dark
pink bobbin and a dark blue bobbin.

2–20
Koocher: This was you and Grandma?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: Is this your mommy’s Mommy or your daddy’s Mommy?
Leah: My mommy’s Mom.
Koocher: That’s very nice. And does she live nearby?
Leah: Manhattan world.
Koocher: Oh, great. So you get to spend time with her, too?
Leah: I spend all day and I take a nap there, and I spend the day with her.
Koocher: And does she help take good care of you?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: I just noticed something special, too. I just noticed that you have all different colors of nail polish. That’s great.
Leah: My mommy painted them.
Koocher: Who put it on you.
Leah: My mom.
Koocher: Your mom. And you have a different color on each finger. That’s like a rainbow of colors. That’s very nice.
Leah: This is silver.
Koocher: I see. It’s silver, blue, purple, pink.
Leah: Purple. Usually it’s freckly pink.
Koocher: That’s very artistic. And I think this was a great picture. Would you like to play with something else or would you like to make another picture while we talk?
Leah: Well, there is someone that I really like.
He’s my imaginary friend.

Koocher: Oh, tell me about your imaginary friend. I love imaginary friends.

Leah: Well, his name is Fluffy, and he’s a puppy.

Koocher: What color?

Leah: White and he’s a boy poodle and he kind of looks fluffy. That’s why I named him Fluffy Puppy.

Koocher: A fluffy, white boy poodle puppy.

Leah: Get off.

He’s scratching…

Koocher: Oh, is he on you now?

Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: Have you given him his dinner yet?

Leah: Usually when I take him somewhere, he kind of scratches on me.

Koocher: Oh. He doesn’t need to be walked, does he?

Leah: Um, no, because I don’t have a leash for him, but sometimes when I take him places inside, I have imaginary leash.

Koocher: The good thing about having an imaginary puppy is, though, your mom won’t be allergic to him, will she?

Leah: Uh-huh. Because she can’t really see him. Only I can.

Koocher: Does he chase the cats?

Leah: No. He’s a dog that likes cats.

Koocher: How long have you had that imaginary puppy?

Leah: For about, since I was 3 years old.

Koocher: Since you were 3! You’ve had him with you a long time.

Leah: Mm-hmm. Yeah, for a year, maybe.
Koocher: Wow. For at least a year. Well, that’s, that’s a nice pet to have.
Leah: He’s a really nice pet.
Koocher: Does he do anything special for you?
Leah: Well, sometimes, when I’m on my mom’s bed—she has a new bed—and sometimes he just jumps on my face and I fall back and he just licks me.
Koocher: And your mom says to you, “What are you doing, Leah? Why did you fall back on the bed like that?” What do you tell her?
Leah: She knows that it’s my imaginary friend. And usually, I have a friend. I have a black friend and a white friend. My white friend, Samantha, she lives across the street now. She’s moving to this one, and she’s right next door to our old house.

2–23
She owned a dog, and now they gave her away, but I usually see her because she lives in our neighborhood somewhere. And the black friend lives right next door on this side.

Koocher: So you have two friends right nearby.
Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: What are their names?
Leah: Mercedes is the black one. Samantha is the white one.

Koocher: Samantha and Mercedes? And you play with them a lot?
Leah: Usually when Mercedes and Samantha aren’t home, I usually play with my cats. And we’ve got leashes and harnesses for them. Usually when I take them outside to play with them—we have a gravel driveway—and usually when I play with them, I, they have their harnesses on sometimes. They only need to have their harnesses on one time. And usually this, I have a little trampoline, and sometimes we put their leashes on and we hook them under the step of the trampoline.

2–24
Koocher: Do they like to be outside?
Leah: Yes.

Koocher: I wonder if they’ll like to be outside when it’s cold and windy and wintertime.

Leah: Nope.

Koocher: Probably not.

Leah: Mm-mm. When, when owls like to came outside and do this back up and all, and if they do that, I’ll just take their leashes off. I don’t know if one of them likes winter or not.

Koocher: We’ll have to find out. This will be their first winter, won’t it?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: I have a question to ask you. What is your most fun thing to do in the whole world? If you could be doing anything for fun, what would you want to do?

Leah: Well, I like to play with a kitten and, and I’d like to play with Chloe, she’s right here, and she, and we have a stick and I put a, I put her leash on it and then I tie a little mousie onto the hooking thing…

2–25

Koocher: And then you dangle it in front of her?

Leah: Like this. And she usually plays with it. I tried it while I was waiting for Miss Bev to come and pick and me up.

Koocher: And that’s one of your most fun things to do? What is the most scary or sad thing that happens to you sometimes?

Leah: Well, it happened about, probably, there was, when I got my shots with brown needles.

Koocher: Yeah, and why did they give you those shots?

Leah: Because I’m going into kindergarten next week.

Koocher: You’re going into what?

Leah: Kindergarten next week.

Koocher: And what’s going to happen there?
Leah: Well, I’m going to paint and there’s a little play area, and we’re going to get to do homework, too.

Koocher: So they had to give you the shots so that you can go to kindergarten.

Leah: Yeah. Every kindergarten needs shots they said.

Koocher: Yeah. Yeah, it was probably things like a measles shot and a mumps shot, things like that.

Leah: Well, they said that there was for so I won’t get sick in class.

2–26

Koocher: Yeah.

Leah: But I could get sick, but they’re just all worried because of that.

Koocher: Well, I hope you don’t get sick, and I hope you don’t need to get any more needles for a long time.

Leah: I won’t be able to get those, this one until I go back into, I don’t know, probably high school.

Koocher: Good. Did the needles hurt, or did they only hurt for a minute?

Leah: They hurt. When I was…we read a horsey book and I was supposed to put it back and I tried walking and I just walked slow.

Koocher: Oh. What else, what else has happened to you recently that’s been very scary or sad?

Leah: Well, when my kitten happened to [inaudible] I mean, when we first got home tonight and Madeleine, when I was holding her up in the air like this, she scratched my chin.

2–27

Koocher: Ooh. Did you get a bad scratch?

Leah: I don’t know.

Koocher: I’m looking at your chin now and it doesn’t look like it’s scratched, so that’s good.
Leah: Maybe it’s over here maybe.

Koocher: But did that hurt? Did that scare you a little bit?

Leah: Mm-hmm. I have one right here.


Leah: I got one from my bike. You know those things on the ends? I got it on my big toe on this side.

Koocher: I’m sorry that you got scratched there. When you’re trying to fall asleep at night sometimes, and you’re having a hard time settling down, what’s, what are you thinking about? What’s worrying you?

Leah: Well, sometimes I think my mommy when I’m turned over, my mommy’s don’t take her medicine and that usually scares me.

Koocher: When your mommy goes to take her medicine?

Leah: Mm-hmm. She does it sometimes when I’m not asleep.

2–28

Koocher: Oh, and then all, and then you’re all alone.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: So you wake up sometimes at night and, and when you’re trying to fall asleep, and she’s not there and you worry.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: And what happens then? What do you do?

Leah: Well, sometimes I stand up and walk and then I…and then I crawl down and then I sit when I’m on my big drawers, like in my shorts and tops and I crawl there, and then I go to my door and I peek out.

Koocher: And do you see her sometimes when you peek out?

Leah: No. I only see the light.

Koocher: Let me ask you another question. Do you ever have scary dreams at night?

Leah: Um, sometimes. One, I did and there was one when I was looking at different…
…aisle in a store it was a dollar store, I think, and my mommy left me without finding me. They thought that I was right behind her.

**Koocher:** Was that a dream?

**Leah:** Yes, it was.

**Koocher:** So what did you do in the dream? Let me see if I heard you right: you dreamed that you were in the store with your mommy and she thought that you were right behind her, and so she walked out of the store but she left you in the store. And you were lost in the store. Is that right?

**Leah:** No, I wasn’t lost but I did meet some men but I didn’t know their names but they left and then the person who owned the shop left.

**Koocher:** So you were all alone?

**Leah:** Mm-hmm.

**Koocher:** And what happened? Did you wake up then or did something else happen?

**Leah:** I woke up probably at the end. But sometimes when I’m having a scary dream, I fall off my bed.

**Koocher:** Oh! Do you ever hurt yourself?

**2–30**

**Leah:** Sometimes.

**Koocher:** Oh! That’s scary.

**Leah:** And I always wake up and then my mommy always hears me scream and she comes into my bedroom. And my Grandma, she had a white thing that helped you not fall off the bed, and I have it now.

**Koocher:** Was it like a bar?

**Leah:** Um, that was…

**Koocher:** So if you roll near the edge you bump into the bar?

**Leah:** It’s not a bar, but it has patterns and then the bar on the top and
the bar here, and then there’s two bars that go under your mattress.

Koocher: So you must roll around a lot in your sleep, don’t you?

Leah: Sometimes.

Koocher: But let me ask you a question. If you wake up and—Say you had that scary dream like you were all alone in the store and you couldn’t find your mom and you woke up in the middle of the night, would you go tell your mom that you were scared?

Leah: Usually when, when I woke up she…

Koocher: She hears your screaming?

Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: Because I remember a minute ago, you said you sometimes wake up and scream if you’re scared.

2–31

And she comes in and checks on you. Does that happen a lot or just a little?

Leah: Mostly when I was 4 and 3.

Koocher: Four and 3, but it doesn’t happen now?

Leah: No.

Koocher: Well, I’m glad that you don’t have too many scary dreams.

Leah: And there was one dream that I had and that was when my Aunt Misha and Uncle Jeff got married and I was their flower girl and they were going somewhere, and they didn’t invite, they didn’t invite my, they invited my mom and dad but not me.

Koocher: And that was a dream?

Leah: Mm-hmm. And they went on a boat.

Koocher: So you dreamed, when they were getting married and you were going to be the flower girl—

Leah: Mm-hmm. I was.

Koocher: You were the flower girl, and you were sprinkling flowers
when they walked down the aisle.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: Did you have a pretty dress and everything?

Leah: Yeah. I must have had a flower dress because someone else was a flower girl. It was Samantha.

2–32

Koocher: And then you had a dream that they went somewhere and invited your mom and dad but not you. And all the people went but what happened to you? Where did you go? What did you do?

Leah: I just stayed there until they came back.

Koocher: All by yourself? But it was only a dream. It wasn’t real. You know what it sounds like to me? It sounds like you have a lot of dreams of things that worry about you where you’re afraid that people are going to leave you alone. Did anybody ever do that to you?

Leah: Uh-uh.

Koocher: But you worry about that.

Leah: Mm-hmm. Sometimes when I have my preschool and I was the last one there, I would usually…. Well, when I was there with Molly one time, we made little birds, little baby birds out of pom-poms.

Koocher: But you were the last one to get picked up?

Leah: Yup.

Koocher: And you were worried about that, huh?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

2–33

Koocher: Do you, when you get worried about stuff like that, do you tell your mom that you’re worried? Or do you keep it inside?

Leah: I keep it until my mommy comes and picks me up.

Koocher: And then you tell her you were worried?
Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: What does she say to you?

Leah: Well, she says that I’ll never get left alone in there. But one time, we left our bears there last year, before last time. I brought my Elmo, but this year…

Koocher: Did you say you brought your Elmo?

Leah: Mm-hmm. Last year…

Koocher: Was it Tickle-Me Elmo or regular Elmo?

Leah: A regular Elmo. But this year, I brought, I brought a ballet teddy bear and my mommy had a ballet, my mommy had a bear collection, and I found a pretty bear and I got to keep it.

2–34

And I got a pretty bear shirt. And I got, and I got a big one that comes up to here.

Koocher: Do you know what I wonder? I wonder why a pretty girl, a nice girl like you who’s never been left all alone worries so much that somebody might leave her alone.

Leah: Sometimes my—

Koocher: Do you have, do you have any clue?

Leah: Well, sometimes when I’m at my Grandma’s, it does happen.

Koocher: Oh. What do you mean?

Leah: Well, that I usually get left alone, and I have an extra pair of clothes in my bag for tomorrow.

Koocher: You get left alone at your Grandma’s house sometimes?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: For how long? For a long time or just a little time?

Leah: Well, usually they, the whole nights.

Koocher: There’s nobody in the house except you for the whole night?
2–35

Leah: No, my Grandpapa in the next room after the furnace room.

Koocher: Oh, so you’re not really all alone but you feel all alone?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: Because your mom isn’t there? You miss her a lot, don’t you? When your mom, I bet when your mom is at work or when you’re, when you’re not around her you miss her a lot.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: Is there anything else that you worry about sometimes?

Leah: No.

Koocher: Do you know what I was just thinking? I bet one of the reasons why you have an imaginary dog friend is so you won’t be lonely sometimes.

Leah: And sometimes he brings a yarn ball, his imaginary yarn ball, and he wants me to toss it, and he’ll drop the string that usually comes off.

Koocher: Well, it sounds, it sounds like you have, really, two things that worry you a lot or a little bit.

2–36

One of them is the bladder problem where you are having some of these accidents, and the other thing is worrying about being alone. Are those the two big problems?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: Mm. And it sounds like the doctors are trying hard to help with the bladder problem. They’re giving you some more of that medicine?

Leah: Well, I do have prescriptions. My papa already had that swallowed down and the first night I had it, it tasted horrible, but the next, next night, like last night, I didn’t taste a thing.

Koocher: Is it some, a liquid, or is it a pill?
Leah: A pill.
Koocher: A pill.
Leah: You swallow it with a drink. You don’t chew it up.
Koocher: Great. And do you know how to swallow pills?
Leah: Yeah, I put it way back in my throat and then I take a drink.
Koocher: Very good.
Leah: And I swallow it. Sometimes it doesn’t come down.
Koocher: Well, then you should drink more water, right, if it gets...

2–37
Leah: Mm-hmm. Sometimes I have Kool-Aid. Sometimes I have all different things.
Koocher: Good. So you learned a lot about how to handle that. And do you think that medicine is working?
Leah: No, it isn’t. I don’t think so.
Koocher: It isn’t working? Oh, that’s too bad. Are they going to try something different?
Leah: I don’t know. Well, I have to go back in six weeks to my bladder doctor and do the, and they go up to Chicago.
Koocher: In Chicago?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: Is it a long ride to go to see the bladder doctor?
Leah: Yeah.
Koocher: You have to sit in the car for a long time?
Leah: Mm-hmm. For probably 18 hours.
Koocher: Eighteen hours? That’s a long time.
Leah: There’s probably four tolls that we have to pay money to take the road going, and we just sometimes throw in the one that you throw in all day.
2–38
Koocher: When you go to the bladder doctor, do they do tests on you?
Leah: Yeah.
Koocher: What kind of tests do they do?
Leah: Well, sometimes they lay me down and then they put a jelly patch on me and then they scan me.
Koocher: And sometimes, sometimes there’s a test that they do with kids where they ask you to drink a lot and then they take an x-ray picture of you while you pee. Did they ever do that of you?
Leah: No. They usually just ask me to go potty on top.
Koocher: On top. And do they, do they watch you when you do that?
Leah: No, my mommy usually…
Koocher: Your mommy helps you?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: But they put jelly on you and they run the ultrasound on it?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: Does that feel funny when they do that?
Leah: No. The first time, it did. I laughed.
Koocher: Yeah. It’s sort of slippery. Do you know why they do it that way? Do you know what they’re doing when they do that?
Leah: Yeah, to make sure that all the pee out, but usually I don’t.
Koocher: Yeah, that’s right. That’s exactly right. When they do that on you, they actually can look inside of you.

2–39
They use a little radar machine to look inside.
Leah: Mm-hmm. And it makes something like how much you owe for money, and it does that, but it only shows how much I have left.
Koocher: Do they ever let you look at the pictures? Do you see them—
Leah: Usually when I sit up and, and it’s on the table, I usually can see it.
Koocher: Is it obnoxious, is it bad when they do it? Or is it okay?
Leah: Usually its has a whole lot.
Koocher: It what.
Leah: Usually it has a whole lot, but sometimes it just has a drop more.
Koocher: Good. But when they do the test to you, is it, does it hurt you, or is it a problem for you? Or is it okay when they do it?
Leah: It’s okay.
Koocher: It’s not as bad as getting shots.
Leah: No. But sometimes I do get the jelly patch.
Koocher: And what happens then?
Leah: Well, after that, we go home.

2–40
And on the way, I get to eat something.
Koocher: What is your favorite thing to eat?
Leah: Well, usually we stop at the Oasis Burger King, and I usually get a kid’s meal.
Koocher: With a prize inside, right?
Leah: Mm-hmm.
Koocher: Those are the best kind. What’s your favorite prize?
Leah: Well, my favorite things are when I get the Pokemon ones. I only got one.
Koocher: Do you like Pokemon?
Leah: Yes, but my mommy never lets me watch it. I only watched it once.
Koocher: Because it, does she think there’s too much television?
Leah: Mm, she usually thinks that it’s, I shouldn’t watch it because then I’ll start doing it.
Koocher: Doing what?
Leah: Doing stuff likes.... I don’t know.

Koocher: Is she afraid that you’re going to turn into a Pokemon and fight evil monsters? No?

2–41
Leah: She’s afraid that I’ll act like the throwing it.

Koocher: Oh. I don’t think you’re going to act like that, because I think you’re very nice. And you know what I think? You’ve been sitting here and talking to me for a long time like a very big girl, because a lot of 5-year-old kids don’t want to sit and talk. And you’ve been very good at talking, and you’ve been talking about some hard things, like things that make you afraid and things that you worry about. And what I’m going to do later is I’m going to try to help your mom make a plan to try to help you with things so that you don’t have to worry so much.

Leah: Well, we don’t live close to here. We live in Joliet.

Koocher: I know. And I don’t live close to here, too. I live far away, too. But I’m going to try to see if there’s somebody near Joliet that can help so that when you have some of these worries, we can help you with them so that they won’t cause...

Leah: There is, if you go past a water tower that says something—my aunt Mish lives there—and she can probably help sometimes.

2–42
Koocher: Oh, good.

Leah: And she’s making me a uniform dress.

Koocher: What kind of a uniform?

Leah: Well, she’s making me a powder blue one maybe or a dark blue one.

Koocher: And is this going to be like a school uniform?
Leah: Um…yes.
Koocher: Do people wear uniforms at the school that you’re going to?
Leah: Uh-huh.
Koocher: What color?
Leah: Navy blue and sometimes powder blue.
Koocher: That’s very nice. What’s the name of the school?
Leah: Oak Valley…
Koocher: Oak Valley.
Leah: … kindergarten place. And there’s all different times and I’ll see my friend, Samantha, at recess because they have a new playground and, well…
Koocher: Samantha goes to the school. Does Mercedes go to the school, too?
Leah: No.
Koocher: She goes to a different school?
Leah: Mm-hmm. Usually.

2–43
Koocher: Usually. Well, that’s very helpful. And you’ve been giving me a lot of information that’s very helpful. Are there any other things that make you afraid or that you worry about?
Leah: No.
Koocher: Nothing else?
Leah: Uh-uh.
Koocher: Well, I’m glad to hear that there, there isn’t anything else. But if you, if you do think of other things that worry you, I hope that you will tell your mommy about them, because she’s going to be able to help get some help for you so you that you won’t have to worry so much.
Are you feeling okay now, or do you feel like you have to run to the bathroom again?
Leah: I’m feeling okay now.
Koocher: Good. Because I don’t want you to be uncomfortable.
We’ve got a couple of minutes left. Is there anything special that we should talk about for the last few minutes before we stop?
Leah: Well, there is one thing.
Koocher: What?
Leah: Sometimes when I go over to Samantha’s old house, sometimes I see her brothers—she has two brothers—and sometimes we play with her Barbie’s and sometimes when I’m undressing and

2–44

… dressing one up again, and there’s one time, and we just hide it. Then we un-hide it. Especially to me and Sam but usually it’s probably Sam, I think.
Koocher: And why do you hide it?
Leah: Because…I don’t know.
Koocher: Do the brothers tease you sometimes?
Leah: Sometimes when we do.
Koocher: What do they say?
Leah: It’s never happened before, but I don’t know what they would say probably.
Koocher: Are you embarrassed about playing with Barbies?
Leah: No, not really. But sometimes when we play on my own Barbies at my Grandma’s, by myself, I don’t invite the boys across the street over.
Koocher: Yeah. Do boys like to play with Barbies?
Leah: No, but they do like to watch movies.
Koocher: They like to watch you play with them.
Leah: Not really, but they do like to watch movies.
Koocher: Oh, they like to watch movies. Oh, I’m sorry.
I didn’t hear you. What kind of movies do they watch?

Leah: Well, they will watch anything.

Koocher: Anything. But you like to play with Barbies.

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: What is your favorite thing to play with the Barbies?

Leah: Probably pet shop because I…

Koocher: Pet shop.

Leah: For pet shop thing.

Koocher: I bet there are puppies in that pet shop.

Leah: I use my puppies, but there is kitties that come with it. Three one of those long hairy kitties and, and I got to hold one of those because when we went to take Madeleine and Chloe, there was a kitten there and that was just like that, and I got to hold her.

Koocher: A long hairy one?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: Wow.

Leah: That was white.

Koocher: White. With long fluffy fur.

Leah: Yeah.

Koocher: And so you got to hold it?

Leah: Mm-hmm.

Koocher: But if you had a cat like that, you’d get cat hair on everything in the house, wouldn’t you?

Leah: That’s why we picked a long-haired one, so that it would grow up to be short hairs. My mommy didn’t know that.
the questions today. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

Leah: No.

Koocher: Well, thank you very much for taking all the time to do this. Would you do me a favor? Would you write your name on the picture for me? What would you like to write it with? Want to write with that one?

Leah: If I can get it.

Koocher: I’d like to see how you can write your name. L-E-A-H. That’s great. Leah. I think you should take this picture home with you and show it to your mom. Do you think that will be good? Thank you very much for coming in and talking to me today. There you go.

And I bet when we, when we go outside, if we go looking, we’ll be able to find your mom. Would you introduce me to your mom? I’d like to meet her.

2–47

Leah: Well, she just wanted me to come [inaudible].

Koocher: I think she may be outside. We could go find her. You don’t think your mom is going to be here?

Leah: No.

Koocher: Well, we’ll check. Thank you again for coming. You did a good job. Was this hard stuff to talk about? You did a very good job. Thank you.

Leah: You’re welcome.
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About the Contributors

VIDEO PARTICIPANTS

Gerald P. Koocher, PhD, Featured Therapist, is Professor and Dean of the School for Health Studies at Simmons College, Boston, and Lecturer in Psychology at Harvard Medical School. He has served as Chief of Psychology at Boston’s Children’s Hospital and Judge Baker Children’s Center. His expertise includes adaptation to chronic and life-threatening illness in childhood and coping with loss.

Dr. Koocher has served as President of the Massachusetts, New England and American Psychological Associations. Currently Editor of the journal Ethics & Behavior, Dr. Koocher previously served as Editor of the Journal of Pediatric Psychology and The Clinical Psychologist. He has published more than 170 articles and book chapters and authored or edited ten books.

Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD, Host, is Professor of Psychology and Counseling at Governors State University and a practicing clinical psychologist. He has authored 40 books, 150 journal articles, and developed over 200 videos featuring leading experts in psychotherapy, substance abuse treatment, and parenting and couples education.

Donald B. Keat II, PhD, ABPP, Host, was Professor of Counseling Psychology, coordinator of the school counseling program at Pennsylvania State University, and a practicing child psychologist. He has authored nine books and five chapters, published numerous journal, newspaper and magazine articles and edited the Elementary School Guidance & Counseling Journal.

MANUAL AUTHORS

Randall C. Wyatt, PhD, is Editor-in-Chief of Psychotherapy.net and a practicing psychologist in Oakland and Dublin, 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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