

Instructor's Manual

for

SATIR FAMILY THERAPY

with

JEAN MCLENDON, LCSW, LMFT

Manual by

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psychotherapy.net

The *Instructor's Manual* accompanies the DVD *Satir Family Therapy with Jean McLendon, LCSW, LMFT* (Institutional/Instructor's Version). Video available at www.psychotherapy.net.

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS

Make notes in the video **Transcript** for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during and after the video.

2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers' observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The **Discussion Questions** section provides ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning. The **Role-Plays** section guides you through exercises you can assign to your students in the classroom or training session.

3. ENCOURAGE SHARING OF OPINIONS

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

4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL

Assign readings from **Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading** prior to or after viewing.

5. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER

See suggestions in the **Reaction Paper** section

6. WATCH THE EXPERTS SERIES

This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application in work with families. Each video presents a master family therapist working with a real family who have real problems. By showing several of the videos in this Family Therapy with the Experts series, you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.

PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

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

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

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

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains actual therapy sessions, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients who has courageously shared their personal life with us.

Satir Theory

Twenty years after her death, in the 25th Anniversary Issue of *Psychotherapy Networker*, (March/April, 2007), Virginia Satir (1916-1988) was named one of the top ten most influential therapists of our time. This ranking was no surprise to those who knew her well, as she was a master at bringing order out of chaos and new possibilities to the old status quo. Virginia taught her students to think systemically and non-linearly, and to practice holographically. The therapist's point of entry might be from the inside or the outside of the client's cognition, emotion, behavior, pain from the past, fears of the future or vulnerability of the present, but the therapist's steadfast aim is to connect to the spiritual spaciousness of the client's core self. Virginia often spoke during her meditations of that place "...deep inside yourself where you keep the treasure that is called by your name." Satir worked tirelessly to teach her approach and she had absolutely no doubt about its efficacy. To understand the Satir system, one needs to know its basic underpinnings, i.e. beliefs, premises, and postulates. To use the system, one needs resources and practice. Review the resource list for more information.

Beliefs

For sustained effective use of the Satir model, practitioners must both know and value the belief system. Perhaps the most important tenet is that everyone has the internal resources needed for change and growth. Regardless of what else the therapist does, the primary intent is to connect as early as possible to the core of each person. Connecting from and to this place is enlivening for the client and therapist as a sense of well-being and wholeness emerges. "It is something you can call 'spirit,' 'soul,' or whatever you want. In any case, it is there and the only thing that really changes people is when they get in contact with their life force. That is the essence of self-worth." These were some of the words Satir spoke in an interview for a 1985 issue of *Common Boundary*.

Given that the quality of one's relationships, performance and health

are in large part determined by one's level of self-esteem, interactions with clients are oriented toward that end. In this model, people come into the world with the birthright of self-esteem. Clients bring in their problem but learn that the "problem" is not the problem, rather it is the coping. Problem behaviors have purpose and no matter the level of dysfunction there is a seed of value and potential in them. Perhaps the most challenging belief imbedded in the Satir system is that at any moment in time, we are all doing the best we can. The therapist helps clients become aware of and access their inner resources, gain new learning, practice new behaviors, and make choices that result in healthier behaviors. In her first book, Satir postulated that "the most important concept and touchstone in therapy is maturation: the state in which a given human being is fully in charge of himself,...able to make choices and decisions based on accurate perceptions about himself, others and the context...while acknowledging, owning and accepting responsibility for those choices and decisions" (Conjoint Family Therapy, 1964, pp. 117, 118).

Survival Behaviors

The basic theories are sufficiently expansive as to provide a platform for understanding how people become who they are and communicate in the ways that they do. In a sense people get their first Ph.D. in life from what they learned during their early years when their sustenance was dependent on the big people who were around and provided care. Children craft unique ways to cope with trying to get their needs met and not getting them met. The content of early learnings, as well as the way they are taught, has relevance for one's self-esteem and behavioral effectiveness. The internal stress of growing up gets expressed outwardly in behaviors that are designed for self-protection and preservation. Satir made distinctions between human systems that modeled hierarchy, threat and reward and those that were organic and growth-oriented. Through these ways of viewing the world one learns what it means to be a person, how to be in relationship, as well as how to feel about change. These worldviews are foundational in shaping the development of a person.

The child begins early on to develop a protocol or standard operating manual for dealing with threat and vulnerability. Over time these behavioral reactions are coded into one's internal program and show up in patterned ways of communicating when one is stressed. Since these behaviors worked for survival and were used many times, they become reflexive and challenging to change. Therapy that merely seeks to change a specific behavior without appreciating its historical value is not Satir work.

Communication

Communication is the milieu of relationships. Dysfunctional communication patterns emerge from low self-esteem and can be understood by a simple Satir premise: the universe of one's reality can be divided into three parts: the Self, the Other and the Context. Accordingly, if one can attend concurrently to each of these three spheres with care and respectfulness, then congruent communication can happen. Satir observed that most people have great difficulty in doing this when they are under stress. Though congruence offers individuals more satisfying connections, better health and more effectiveness, the basic mode of operating when one is feeling threat and low self-esteem has been constructed long ago. It is common to develop a preferred orientation, or coping stance, which can be experienced, observed, felt and heard via verbal and non-verbal information. Noting what is being discounted or over-emphasized among one or two of the three components of congruence suggests that the communication is placating, blaming, super-reasonable or irrelevant, according to Satir's typology for defensive stress stances. For example, when one is oriented towards the Other, protection will likely be a diminished assertion of the Self and a placating response emerges. When emphasis is on the Self and the feelings, needs and thoughts of the Other are discounted, the communication reflects a blaming stance. When conflict and chaos caused by the challenges of differing and opposing feelings and positions are threatening, and one focuses only on context, the quality of the interaction is much like a computer. This stance is called super-reasonable. This defense gives the individual a surface experience of control and order. The content

deals in this kind of interaction with such things as facts, rules, regulations, time constraints, policy, precedent and purpose: all things of the head. The irrelevant stance ignores the grounding boundaries of the Context. Distracting and often humorous interactions emerge providing an immediate avoidance of the difficult situation.

Congruence

Congruence offers one an experience of authenticity, a response that reflects a harmony between one's internal and external world and the Self, Other and Context. These responses exude balance, flow, integrity, understanding and compassion. They tend to invite mature and engaging interactions that build trust and connection. Since neither the value of the Self, the Other or the Context is being squelched in the moment of the interaction, energy flows naturally, often creating synergy and intimacy. One has the experience of freedom to express one's humanness and one's true self; in other words, emotional honesty. The most powerful intervention into a system happens when the therapist brings congruence to the session and when the skills and value of congruence are taught.

Change

Satir provided practitioners a map to help them traverse the sometimes tricky and tumultuous territory of change. Intentional change usually requires that a client feel the pain of the old status quo while holding onto hope and vision for a better way to live. Grief is a part of that process, as change requires a leaving or letting go of some aspect of an old way of operating. The old status quo and its familiarity are comforting, but costly. Invited or not, foreign elements come in the form of symptoms, major events of loss or gain, as well as therapy. The foreign element shakes one's grounding. Chaos follows with its array of feelings: confusion, fear, sadness, excitement, etc. When people feel this chaos they can continue to work toward a better future or they can return to the old status quo. This process requires that one hold onto an awareness of the pain of the past while having the necessary support to access one's internal and external resources. With this

level of awareness and support, the client can proceed with openness to seeking a transforming idea that brings forward a creative and innovative leap. This experience can be birthed by reading, journaling, dreams, art, prayer, meditation, nature, music, intimacy, therapy, etc. The new vision of doing business and living differently often feels like an “aha” moment. It is as though the mind, body and spirit convey an affirming “yes!” This begins the process of integration and ownership where the new conception is tried on for size. From here the individual or system seeking change must practice the new behaviors. Over time the performance of the individual, whether internally or externally, is improved and one arrives at a new status quo. All along the journey of change, the therapist is not only assisting the client with a specific change, but actively teaching the client about the process. The client learns that change is an inevitable part of living.

Interventions: Tools and Vehicles

Given the basic beliefs and premises of the model, there are infinite possibilities for intervention. Only the creativity of the therapist and the quality of the client-therapist relationship limit the multi-modal and multi-sensory experiences that can be offered. Some of the most commonly used tools and vehicles are presented in summary and overview form. Though they are categorized into three primary areas of application—The Self, The Self and Other, and Context-- each can be modified to assist an individual and individuals in relationship regardless of their context.

The Self

The Self-Esteem Maintenance Tool Kit is a symbolic set of tools, each one useful in building and maintaining self-esteem. The tools can be created and used in their concrete forms—e.g. using a wand called a wishing wand can stimulate one’s awareness of one’s hopes and wishes. Other tools in the kit can be used similarly. They are the golden key for new possibilities, the detective hat for analytical thinking, the yes-no medallion for knowing one’s true “yes” and true “no,” the courage stick for moving forward despite fear, and the

wisdom box, which connects one to the quiet, soul-filled inner voice. I have added the heart, believing that Satir forgot that her students needed to be reminded of the power of love and compassion.

The mandala offers a way of referencing parts of the self; the parts are physical, nutritional, intellectual, sensual, contextual, interactional and spiritual. Similarly, Satir created a psychodramatic process called “parts parties.” Its objective is to help a person gain awareness of one’s parts, see them in action, and accept them. Working with the Iceberg, a metaphoric map, helps clients appreciate the layers of one’s self from behavior, to feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings and the deep spirit-filled place called the “I Am.” Family reconstruction is also a psychodramatic process that allows a client, referred to as the “star,” to accept the personhood of the parents, thus freeing the “star” for more congruent and empowered living. Meditations nurture the right brain’s powerful ability to stimulate and support change. Using metaphor and imagery makes use of the brain’s plasticity with messages that affirm the belief that the client, like all people, has a basic orientation toward growth and wholeness. Satir’s meditations are filled with the model’s empowering beliefs, thereby creating in the individual a valuing of one’s own uniqueness and humanness.

The Self and Other

Other tools are designed more specifically to deal with the interactions in relationships. Ingredients of an interaction is a conceptual methodology for surfacing the often unrecognized or unconscious steps that lead to incongruence. The exercise called “With whom am I having the pleasure” helps an individual become aware of memories that cloud one’s ability to clearly see the person with whom they are interacting in the present moment. Temperature Reading gives the individual, couple or family a structure that tends to invite and prod individuals to share appreciations, new information, puzzles, and complaints with recommendations, hopes and wishes. This tool is used widely outside of the therapy room, in schools, management, project teams and other groups who need a high quality of connectivity to accomplish their desired goals. Sculpting, which can be utilized also with individuals, is particularly helpful in externalizing the

communication patterns among couples or families. Each of the four incongruent stress stances as well as congruent responses carries with them a physical posture that helps build awareness for what is happening, both at the “intra” and “inter” personal levels. Sculpting the “stress-dance” reveals the defensive dynamics within the system, supporting the development of awareness, which opens the possibility of choice. The Satir model emphasizes the importance of language and its influence on one’s psyche and self-esteem. The technique of reframing is used to shift a potentially negatively loaded comment to one that connotes a deeper, more positive and congruent response that could not have been expressed due to limited ability, vulnerability or lack of awareness.

Context

Family mapping and the family life chronology help explore the context of one’s life by surfacing and underscoring the influence of generational and cultural patterns. The wheel of influence brings into focus the historical and current significant sources of support.

Summary

Satir tools and vehicles for change are merely maps. The real territory of change is filled with mystery, magic and miracles, all waiting to be discovered. Learning and using these interventions will demonstrate to the practitioner the strategic, structural, experiential, systemic, solution-seeking, process-oriented and outcome-driven nature of the Satir system. Of course, more important than any intervention or one’s ability to know the theoretical basis of particular tools is the therapist’s use of Self. In one of many conversations with Virginia over the course of nearly 20 years, she acknowledged that the only times she ever felt she was not helpful to a client was when she was not congruent.

McLendon's Reflections on the Session

It is now some time since I met with Jonathan and Janice. I continue to have vivid memories of our brief and special time together. Thinking about the session from this distance, I find my mind going back to Virginia Satir's last years when she so often spoke about "peace" and *The Third Birth* (the title of what was to be her next book). For Virginia, healing families healed the world. In talking about peace, she used a phrase, "Peace Within, Peace Between and Peace Among." Later her students added, "and Beyond." Though she suggested a sequence for this healing, she knew the process was nonlinear. When she referred to our "third birth," she was speaking about our being mature enough to be able to accept full responsibility for our choices and actions. High self-esteem is a prerequisite for experiencing peace and our third birth.

My initial question in this first meeting was general, "What would you like to have happen?" They told me the results they were seeking. They gave me a beginning map and some directions. Had I been able to see them a second time, I might likely ask them the same question but focus in on hopes for that session. Their answers would give me a different level of specificity. When someone is not able to speak about their hopes, I will often pull out a wishing wand, a symbolic tool in the Satir Self-Esteem Maintenance Tool Kit. Usually, this brings some humor into the room and adds to their experience that I genuinely want to know what they want. Though I had a wand with me, Jonathan and Janice did not need it.

Both of them gave me opportunities to validate their experiences, feelings and thoughts and to affirm them as people of value who had the resources they needed for changes they wanted to make. It took little time for me to understand that Jonathan's external world seemed filled with losses. Given this, I chose to focus on his interior. When I asked Jonathan what it was like to feel one way, while pretending to feel another, he said "Hard." I affirmed his awareness about his feelings by adding, "VERY hard." My intent was to reinforce his ability to be in awareness and to help him experience his feelings as acceptable

parts and aspects of being human. If he could accept his feelings, then he could own them. Being the owner, he would have the authority to make choices to live more authentically.

Later, I validated Jonathan and his wisdom by saying, “You are a very wise young one.” I wanted to empower him by noting this resource (wisdom box is another internal symbolic resource in the Self-Esteem Maintenance Tool Kit). I encouraged and challenged him when I told him that he would need to learn how to take care of himself: “the little one inside of you that has a hurting heart.” I wanted to convey my belief that he could take responsibility for how he responds to his woundedness. He could foster healing because he had the internal resources he needed. He could, in effect, become the author of his life’s narrative going forward. He could be free to be himself and free to choose change; he could have more “peace within” himself and he could take steps to live into his “third birth.”

My focus with Janice was less about work on her “within” nature and more about her relatedness to others, or the territory of the “between.” Though I attended to her feelings of anger regarding her divorce, her sadness about the loss of her mother, and her positive feelings toward her aunt, I wanted to underscore the power of connection as a source of support. I affirmed Janice in both her role as daughter and mother. While she was tearing up about the loss of her mother, I commented that her mom had been there for her when she was in need and that Janice, in turn, supported her mom when she was in need.

Being able to externalize the feelings and the narratives of their lives with family mapping helped me engage their detective hat, a tool in the self-esteem kit. They could partner with me as we thought through possible connections to Jonathan’s world of loss and anger. The mapping helped to underscore the realness and importance of their words. Using the stuffed dolls helped increase their awareness of their pain and their acceptance of their humanness. That I also took a stuffed little girl and put her in my lap indicated to them that I, too, have a part of me that needs special care. In so doing, I normalized Jonathan and Janice’s feelings, making them more acceptable.

In summary, I wanted to be real and relaxed so I could count on

myself to respond to them from a positive, creative and compassionate place. I wanted to make contact with their unique specialness. I wanted to feel that we were spiritually connected. I knew that that kind of contact would allow us to truly meet and partner in the work they wanted to accomplish. I wanted them to leave feeling empowered, respected and helped. I believe we each left feeling better about ourselves: stronger, more capable and more hopeful. For me, these feelings are essential for building and maintaining self-esteem.

Were I to have more sessions with Janice and Jonathan, I would again “start from scratch,” as Virginia would say. I would begin with creating safety, making contact, eliciting their hopes, engaging them in a discovery process and capitalizing on their strengths. I would use interior “within” work as a platform so that I could assist them in having the healthiest possible connections between themselves and whomever else we might invite to join us. I would do all I could to schedule a time when Chris, or Mr J. and/or Janice’s aunt could be with us. I would, above all else, want them to leave feeling hopeful, more fully resourced and with more capacity to love well--themselves and others.

Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: *Satir Family Therapy, with Jean McLendon, LCSW, LMFT*

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.
- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards. Respond to each question below.
- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

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

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about Satir Family Therapy? What stands out to you about how McLendon works?
2. **What I found most helpful:** As a therapist, what was most beneficial to you about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?
3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/interventions did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working?
4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than McLendon in the session in the video? Be specific about what different approaches, interventions and techniques you might have applied.
5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy sessions with McLendon? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?

Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading

WEB RESOURCES

Website for Satir Systems, where Jean McLendon is the Director

www.satirsystems.com

The Virginia Satir Global Network, formerly Avanta

www.satirglobal.org

The Satir Journal: Transformational Systemic Therapy

www.satirjournal.com

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Bowenian Family Therapy, with Phil Guerin, MD

Structural Family Therapy, with Harry J. Aponte, LCSW

The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: a Family Systems Approach with Monica McGoldrick, LCSW

Tools and Techniques for Family Therapy by John Edwards, PhD

Family Secrets: Implications for Theory and Therapy by Evan Imber-Black, PhD

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Banmen, J. (Ed.) (2008). *In her own words: Virginia Satir - selected papers 1963-1983*. Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker, and Theisen, Inc.

Banmen, J. & Gerber, J. (1985). *Virginia Satir's meditations & inspirations*. Berkeley, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

McLendon, J. A. (1996). "The tao of communication and the constancy of change." B. Brothers (Ed.), *Couples and the tao of congruence* (pp.35-49). Bingham, NY, The Haworth Press.

McLendon, J. A. (2000). "The Satir system: Brief therapy strategies." J. Carlson & L.Sperry (Eds.), *Brief therapy with individuals and couples* (pp.

331-364). Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker, and Theisen, Inc.

McLendon, J.A. (2001). *The Satir system in action*. D.J. Wiener (Ed.). *Beyond talk therapy* (pp. 33-44). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Satir, V. (2001). *Selfesteem*. Berkeley, Calif: Celestial Arts.

Satir, V. (1988). *The new peoplemaking*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Satir, V. (1983). *Conjoint family therapy*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Satir, V. (1976). *Making contact*. Berkeley, Calif: Celestial Arts.

Satir, V. (1978). *Your many faces*. Berkeley, Calif: Celestial Arts.

Satir, V. & Baldwin, M. (1983). *Satir step by step: a guide to creating change in families*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Satir, V., Gomori, M., Banmen, J. & Gerber, J.S. (1991). *The Satir model: Family therapy and beyond*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Discussion Questions

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

INTRODUCTION

1. **Self-esteem:** The Human Validation Process of therapy, developed by Virginia Satir, stresses the importance of self-esteem, which has become somewhat of a buzz word in recent years. What are your thoughts about the concept of self-esteem? Do you emphasize building self-esteem with your clients? What did you see McLendon do in the session with Jonathan and Janice that seemed to increase their self-esteem?
2. **Creating Safety:** McLendon stressed the importance of creating a sense of safety in the therapeutic relationship. Do you agree with her that creating emotional safety is of the utmost importance? Why or why not? What did you see her do in the session that you think contributed to emotional safety for Jonathan and Janice? What do you do with your clients to create safety?
3. **Inner Resources:** McLendon stated that within the Satir system of therapy there is the belief that we all have the resources that we need “to change, to grow, to learn and to heal.” Do you agree with this belief? What in your personal or professional experience has influenced your belief about this?
4. **Centering:** McLendon spoke about her intention to be present and relaxed in the session, and how she connects with her breath to facilitate this. Is this something you do as well? Why or why not? What other strategies, if any, do you use for centering yourself before and during sessions?

FAMILY THERAPY SESSION

5. **Beginning:** What did you think of how McLendon began the session by asking Jonathan what he wanted to have happen for himself and his mother in the session? Did

you like this way of beginning? Why or why not? How do you tend to begin family therapy sessions?

6. **Body:** McLendon asked Jonathan early in the session if he could feel the anger in his body and where he felt it. What did you think of this intervention? Do you tend to ask your clients about how they experience emotions in their bodies, or incorporate any body awareness in your sessions? Why or why not?
7. **Family Mapping:** How did you react when McLendon mapped out the family connections and the anger? Do you think this technique was helpful? Why or why not? What do you think might be some disadvantages to this technique? Is family mapping a technique you have ever used? If so, what has your experience been with it?
8. **Validation and Affirmation:** What responses of McLendon's stood out to you as being validating or affirming of Jonathan and Janice's unique human condition? Were there any moments in the session when you would have said something validating or affirming when McLendon did not?
9. **Janice:** What did you think of McLendon's question to Janice early in the session: "So, [you want] to help Jonathan with his feelings. How are you doing with yours?" Did you like how she directed the attention to Janice's feelings and her own inner world, as opposed to keeping the focus on Jonathan? Why or why not? When conducting family therapy, what have you found helpful in balancing the attention on the children's issues versus the parents'?
10. **Externalizing:** What came up for you during the segment of the session when McLendon was engaging Jonathan about his sadness related to the loss of his grandmother? How did you respond to her offering him the stuffed puppy to represent the little boy inside of him? How about when she talked about Janice having a little girl inside of her as well? What did you think of McLendon's use of the dolls? Do you use any props with your clients? If not, are there other techniques you use for helping clients externalize and accept their pain?

- 11. Saying Goodbye:** In the commentary of the transcript, McLendon admitted that she was having trouble saying goodbye to Jonathan and Janice towards the end of the session. Did you sense this as you watched their interactions? What did she do or say that led you to this conclusion? What kinds of situations with clients have you been in where it has been hard to say goodbye or end the session? How have you handled this?

DISCUSSION

- 12. Therapist's Feelings:** After the session, McLendon stated that she "wasn't, in the moment, so free to have [her] feelings," but that she was very touched when she watched the session afterwards. What do you think she meant by not being free to have her feelings in the moment? How do you tend to deal with strong emotions that arise within you during sessions? Do you tend to hold your feelings back, or do you allow yourself to express them? For instance, have you ever cried in session because you were so touched by a client's pain? If you have openly expressed feelings, how has that felt for you, and how did your client(s) respond?
- 13. Self-Esteem Maintenance Tool Kit:** What did you think of the Self-Esteem Maintenance Tool Kit that McLendon discussed after the session? Was there anything she described in the kit that you particularly liked or disliked? Why?
- 14. Brave and Courageous:** After watching the video, do you agree with McLendon that this model of therapy is "for the brave and courageous and big-hearted souls"? Why or why not? If you are a student or new therapist, did you find this way of working do be threatening, as Diane Kjos hypothesized? If so, what about this way of working is threatening to you? McLendon stated that a lot of the training for therapists in this model is about getting comfortable with oneself and increasing one's awareness. Are there ways in which you have become more comfortable with yourself as a therapist? If so, how?
- 15. Overall thoughts:** What are your overall thoughts about the Satir method of family therapy? What aspects of this

approach can you see yourself incorporating into your work with families? Are there some components of this approach that seem incompatible with how you work with clients?

16. **Personal Reaction:** How would you feel about having McLendon as your family therapist? Do you think she could build a solid therapeutic alliance with you and help you achieve your goals? Why or why not?

Role Plays

After watching the video and reviewing *Satir Theory* in this manual, assign groups to role-play a family therapy session following McLendon's model. Organize participants into groups of three, consisting of one psychotherapist and two family members. If time permits, rotate so each person has a chance to play the role of therapist.

Rather than conducting a full session, invite therapists to try on the spirit of the Satir method as well as the specific technique of family mapping, as demonstrated in the video. Those who are role-playing clients can decide whether to play Janice and Jonathan or to come up with their own characters. To practice the spirit of this approach, therapists should focus on: centering themselves before the session; creating safety; making contact with each family member by connecting with what they want out of the session; making affirming and validating statements; and helping them externalize their feelings. If no props are available, encourage therapists to get creative with either making their own props or finding other ways to help clients externalize their feelings. Therapists should incorporate the family mapping technique into the session, focusing on the connections within the family. The point here is not to try to resolve the family's issues, but to use this role-play as an exercise in trying out some components of the Satir approach.

After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss their experiences. Invite the clients to talk about what it was like to role-play this family and how they felt about the therapist's interventions. Did they feel safe? Did they feel connected to the therapist? How did they react to the therapist's affirming and validating statements? Then, invite the therapists to talk about their experiences; how did it feel to conduct a family therapy session using Satir's approach? Finally, open up a general discussion of the strengths and the challenges in applying Satir's approach to working with families.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one family; the rest of the group can observe, acting

as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the family. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion on what participants learned about using McLendon's approach to Satir Family Therapy.

Session Transcript

Satir Family Therapy with Jean McLendon, LCSW, LMFT

McLendon: Okay, you just made a comment that I'm very interested in hearing more about. You said, I think, something like, "Jonathan this is the professional you were wanting to see."

McLendon Commentary: *I am seeing them physically still and contained except for their eyes and mouths. I want to add energy to our context so I punctuate my words to Janice and Jonathan: ("I'm very interested in hearing") with the use of my body and actively lean forward with an open stance, hands moving, with the intent to show readiness, presence and an invitation to engagement. As I take up more space I hope it models more freedom and comfort for them.*

Janice: Uh-huh.

McLendon: So, I'm very interested to know what you wanted to have happen for you - and what you wanted to have happen for your mother. You had some ideas I'll bet?

McLendon Commentary: *I begin with Jonathan. I want to insure his participation and though I rarely ask someone to say what they want for another person, in this case I wanted to empower him quickly. My question indicated a respect for his perceptions and care for his mom.*

Jonathan: I just want – I just wanted, like, stop having so much anger inside and just stop being mean to other people.

McLendon: Wow, so the anger is on the inside...

McLendon Commentary: *I chose not to pursue the interpersonal behavioral comment "being mean to other people," but rather his internal experience. It is early and I want him to feel my interest in him...not his interactions with others. That can come later.*

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: And you can feel it in your body?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Where do you feel it in your body? How do you do anger inside? Do you feel it in your shoulders or your stomach or your thoughts?

Jonathan: When I look at somebody I just grit my teeth at them and I just want to go ahead and hit them for no reason.

McLendon Commentary: *By bringing Jonathan into more awareness of his body's experience of his anger gives him more information.*

McLendon: You grit your teeth, and you just want to hit them for no reason? That does sound like anger, doesn't it? Well, you know how I show anger, is I, um, take – oops, that's not red – I take a red pen and I kind of go like this. That doesn't look too much like red either, but just to show that's anger. That you're trying to figure out, and you're trying to cope with, and you're trying to understand. That takes a lot of courage to say, "I'm angry and I would like for it to be different." Don't you think?

McLendon Commentary: *I affirm Jonathan by enhancing his expressed hope. I elaborate: "you're trying to figure out, trying to cope with and trying to understand." I look to see if my thoughts are in alignment with him...he confirms with a visible nod. I validate him by agreeing with him "that does sound like anger."*

I have already begun a family map with the little information I have been given....basically Mother's name, son's name and two circles for Janice's parents...not knowing if her Mom and Dad are biological, married, etc. I have now delved into Jonathan's interior process and now I externalize it by showing his anger on the family map. This is another acknowledgement of the importance of his issue and hope.

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Do you know anybody else that's angry?

McLendon Commentary: *I want to move into more understanding of Jonathan's context. Is it a context of conflict, violence, anger or what? My particular interest is in his family.*

Jonathan: Well, my brother.

McLendon: Your brother. Well, I don't have your brother on this map. Let's see, you said you were 11, right?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Your brother is how old?

Jonathan: Sixteen.

McLendon: He's 16. And what's his name?

Jonathan: Chris.

McLendon: C-h-r-i-s?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: And how old is Chris?

Jonathan: Sixteen.

McLendon Commentary: Again, because I am visual, I place the youngest child closest to the parents' circle and the oldest farthest away...i.e. chronologically leaving the parental influence first.

McLendon: That's right, you just told me, didn't you? And so he's angry too. Are y'all angry about the same thing?

McLendon Commentary: I continue to empower and affirm Jonathan....indirectly acknowledging my mistake and showing my humanness. I had not attended well enough to hear or remember his brother's age.

Jonathan: Huh-uh.

McLendon: No, what's he angry about?

Jonathan: He's angry 'cause, he's force to come home – he's force to come home while his co-buddy didn't get to come home. And he's just mad because he's not getting to do what he wants to do.

McLendon: Come home is what he wants to do?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: So, wants to come home, and that means come home and live with you and Janice?

Janice: Yeah.

McLendon: Where is he now?

Jonathan: He's in California.

McLendon: Okay, come home from California. So, what's he doing in California?

Jonathan: He's living in, like, this home where he has a parole officer and everything. And he has to just keep doing what he's supposed to do and he'll be able to come home. But he's having problems doing that.

McLendon: He's having problems staying out of trouble?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: That's too bad. Did he get in trouble in California or he get in trouble here and...?

***McLendon Commentary:** My response regarding Chris serves to share empathy with Jonathan about his brother.*

Jonathan: Well, some here and some in California.

McLendon: Oh, okay. You and your brother pretty close?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Do you miss him?

***McLendon Commentary:** I am sensing by Jonathan's facial expressions and responsiveness to my questions that Chris's absence and his anger problems have emotional significance for him. My question invites him to express his feeling.*

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: How long has he been away?

Jonathan: I don't know, I don't remember.

McLendon: That long? Since you were how high?

Jonathan: Probably since I was about 10.

***McLendon Commentary:** I am struck that it seemed so very long ago and in reality he thinks it was perhaps only a year. I could ask Janice, but at this point Jonathan's perceptions are more important than*

knowing the fact.

McLendon: So, about a year? You know why I do this, like California, uh, 1 year, uh, that you, uh, when I put it on a piece of paper it sticks in my head a little better. I don't know if that makes any sense to you but it just kind of goes into the computer in a different kind of way if I, kind of, put it up there. And then you get to see what I'm doing, too, where I'm going in my head.

McLendon Commentary: *Explaining my process helps them partner with me. I am not doing treatment on them but with them. We are in this together.*

McLendon: So, Chris is angry, he wants to come home, he's gotten into trouble. And you're angry; do you know what you're angry about?

McLendon Commentary: *With the question, "do you know what you are angry about?" I am leaning closer to Jonathan and looking with my voice and eyes with as much kindness as I can.*

Jonathan: Not really.

McLendon: So, that would help you if you could understand what you're angry about.

McLendon Commentary: *I have a resting place with Jonathan. I want Janice to participate both for herself and as Mom.*

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: That makes sense to me. Thank you, I want to hear what your mother would like to have happen too.

McLendon Commentary: *I thank him for his contribution to the work. He, his thoughts and feelings, are important.*

Janice: What?

McLendon: For you, Janice, what would you like to have happen?

Janice: I would like for Jonathan to know what he's angry about. I would like to know what it is.

McLendon: So, there are these big question marks around anger, huh?

McLendon Commentary: *Placing a question mark on the map conveys*

to Janice that she is important and is being heard.

Janice: Like the role, if any, that I play in it, and how to be a better parent. That's what I came for.

McLendon: So, how to help Jonathan with his feelings. How are you doing with yours?

***McLendon Commentary:** This is a pivotal question--the feelings of everyone in the therapy room are important. Moms are people too. Giving everyone the most invitation to speak of their experience, feelings or thoughts, whether current or past, establishes a context that is safe and unfolding*

Janice: Um, much, it's better.

McLendon: Uh-huh. Were you angry too?

Janice: Well, sometime, years ago.

McLendon: What was yours about?

Janice: Mine was about the divorce, the separation, the results of that.

McLendon: So, let's see, there's...this is Jonathan's father we're talking about. Um, this is the way I make a divorce, okay. And his name?

***McLendon Commentary:** As I put more information on the map, I begin to understand the terrain of their lives.*

Janice: John.

McLendon: And where does John live?

Janice: California.

McLendon: Oh, he's in California. And how long have y'all been divorced?

Janice: For as long as Jonathan has been here; so, 11 years.

McLendon: Okay, 11 years. So, do you know your father?

***McLendon Commentary:** I ask an emotionally laden question and one that I believe will have relevance to understanding Jonathan's anger.*

Jonathan: Not really.

McLendon: Have you ever seen him?

Jonathan: Not that I could remember.

McLendon: So, as far as you know you've never met him. Do you have any pictures of him?

Jonathan: Yeah.

McLendon: What's he look like?

Jonathan: I don't remember.

McLendon: So, you don't have pictures that are in your back pocket or in your bedroom? Well, you have had two big losses; thinking about your brother not being with you and not having your father. That seems pretty big to me. So, this relationship that, Janice, you and John had was not an easy one?

***McLendon Commentary:** When I tell Jonathan that he has had two big losses, I speak from my mind to his heart.*

Janice: No.

McLendon: And do you have any contact with John at this point?

Janice: None.

***McLendon Commentary:** I note but do nothing with my observations that Jonathan looks away when Janice begins to talk about his father.*

McLendon: And what about with Chris?

Janice: Frequent.

McLendon: Okay. So, Chris would have been about 5 or 6 when y'all divorced?

Janice: Right.

McLendon: So, we'll show that – 5-6 years old. And did Chris live with you...?

Janice: And his dad.

McLendon: And his dad, and then when you were divorced?

Janice: He lived with me.

McLendon: With you. And he visited with his father – his father moved to California?

Janice: We lived in another state, his father lived in the same t-town with us for approximately until Christmas 10, 5 or 6 years after the divorce. And then he moved to California for the last 5 years.

McLendon: So, how did you deal with – let’s put your anger up here. You’re saying you’re not so angry anymore so we’ll just put a little bit. How did you deal with yours?

McLendon Commentary: *As I find out more about Janice, Jonathan is gaining useful information in understanding what happened in his early life. As I acknowledge Janice’s anger, I hope her words help Jonathan accept his humanness and that he does not have to stay stuck in his anger.*

The map is now showing a connection among Mom and sons with their anger. Showing her anger as “just a little bit” is done with humor. Janice and I get to share big smiles further warming our shared context.

Janice: I just grew out of it.

McLendon: Time?

Janice: And, um, I just...time. Let it go.

McLendon: So, you left this relationship – your time in this relationship left you with some wounds?

McLendon Commentary: *Again, I want to connect at the most human level I can...and that is at the level of our vulnerability. That she left this relationship with emotional wear and tear can be assumed. We don’t get married to divorce, we get married hoping and thinking it will be forever. The break up of a family, no matter its necessity, is a grief filled experience.*

Janice: Yes.

McLendon: Who stood by you, who supported you?

McLendon Commentary: *I continue to learn more about her life. When there is healing, I assume there has been support.*

Janice: My mom.

McLendon: And your mother’s name is what?

Janice: It was Lorraine.

McLendon: Lorraine, how do you spell that?

Janice: L-O-R-R-I-N-E

McLendon: When did Lorraine die?

Janice: June, 1996.

McLendon: Not very long ago. Were you close to your grandmother?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: You're pretty special to her? Let's see, if we were going to show a real special line, what do you think about Purple? And we'll show a nice, big line between you and Lorraine. Okay, how does that look to you? Does that look like that makes sense?

McLendon Commentary: *I want to add and punctuate the love I believed was present for Jonathan. Until now, the content has been one of loss. I hope that the love I believe he is feeling from his Mom and the love that he received from his grandmother will be positive anchors for his self-esteem.*

Jonathan: Yeah.

McLendon: So, you lost somebody very important to you; and to you too. Did y'all live close together? Did you get to see her?

McLendon Commentary: *I emphasize the connection they have with each other in noting that they both lost someone very important. They are not alone.*

Janice: Different state, the same state where we came from where Christopher and Jonathan grew up, basically, and were born and the marriage took place. So, far in distance geographically, but very close – we had daily contact. All the holidays we were there, mother's day, any other excuse to be there we were there, or she was here.

McLendon: What happened to her?

Janice: She had cancer. So, the last nine months of her life she lived with us.

McLendon: Oh, really? You took care of her?

McLendon Commentary: *I show I think this is not a little thing...*

caring for one's dying Mother and Grandmother.

Janice: I did, Jonathan too.

McLendon: So, you were a young, doctor, huh? What kind of cancer did she have?

McLendon Commentary: *When I speak of Jonathan as a “young doctor,” I am suggesting to his right brain that his positive aspirations are possible.*

Janice: She had – originally she had breast cancer that metastasized to her liver. That’s what she went out with, liver, bone, blood, it got pretty bad.

McLendon: Was she at home when she died?

Janice: Yes, she was in our home; in my bed.

McLendon Commentary: *I pause, not to rush to words that might distract Janice from her emotions.*

McLendon: This is obviously a tremendous, hard, hurt for you. She stood by you when you were having a hard time. And you were there for her.

McLendon Commentary: *I give words to underscore and appreciate both the loss and the mutuality of support. By doing so, I offer Janice to acknowledge two different and strong feelings: loss and love. I feel like I want to offer her something. At that moment all I could give was Kleenex. My gift said I see your sadness and I am sorry.*

Janice: Thank you.

McLendon: You’re welcome. What’s it like for you to see your mother crying because her heart is so full about her relationship with her mother?

McLendon Commentary: *I turn now to Jonathan. How family members deal with each other’s pain can be a way to understanding their ways of coping.*

Jonathan: It makes me want to cry but I know I’ve got to get over it.

McLendon Commentary: *I begin to hypothesize that they have shared ways of coping: “just get over it,” and time will help you let it go.*

McLendon: I don't follow you, you have to get over it? I don't get that.

Jonathan: I can't go my whole life thinking that my grandma is going to come back.

McLendon: Right. Because she won't come back, but you must have wonderful memories to bring her back with? And you have a big, kind of, hole in your heart not to have her.

***McLendon Commentary:** I pause momentarily to honor and affirm Jonathan's factual thinking and then I speak to his right brain ,i.e. you can bring her back with your wonderful memories...I know that positive memories can be a basis for creating new positive memories. When one is filled with grief and anger it is easy to forget the power of the positives of ones past. It hadn't been that long ago, really.*

McLendon: Again, I'm just thinking about the losses for you: your Granny, your brother, in different ways, and your father. That's a lot, Jonathan! That's a lot to have to handle for a little boy.

***McLendon Commentary:** I move close enough to Jonathan to feel his pain, to see it on his face and body. I validate his struggle and challenge. I am teaching him about the universality of emotions. Losing family members are not insignificant events for any of us.*

McLendon: Well, you know how I feel about your tears? They just seem so healthy and so wholesome and so real. And I'm glad that you can have your tears; and I hope it's okay for you to have your tears too. Because, you know, sometimes underneath a lot of anger is a hurt. Like a hole in your heart. Does that make sense to you? It seems like it does.

***McLendon Commentary:** Though Jonathan, unlike Janice, does not tear, I teach them that tears are human, healthy, real and can bring us to wholeness.*

McLendon: It's like there's a little, little boy inside about, I don't know, maybe about this little, and he's gotten hurt. And he's inside of you and what I hear is that you're trying to get him to be big boy, tough. You know, get on with your life, you know. Um, get past those tears. But this little guy still sits inside of you, like the little girl that's inside of you that lost her mother. That's real. Is it okay with you if I talk

about you as having a little girl inside of you?

McLendon Commentary: *I externalize Jonathan's pain by putting a little stuffed puppy in my lap and referencing the puppy as the little boy inside who knows his hurts. I normalize carrying pain inside and offer the idea that Janice also has a little girl inside who knows and feels her hurts.*

Janice: Yeah, it's okay.

McLendon Commentary: *Asking permission continues to build our partnership.*

McLendon: How does that fit for you? Does that make any sense to you?

Janice: Uh, yes?

McLendon: Who is with you now to help you with the pain of losing your mom? Maybe some other residual of not having things work out with John? Your worries about Jonathan and Chris?

Janice: There's no one that is with me like my mom was. When she was alive she was like the center of my life. You know, even though I had my kids and everything. So, I really never developed close ties with any other person. The only person I can think of now I am closest to is her older sister has been, I've been like her favorite niece since I was born. When I was born my mom...she asked my mom let me have her. So, we developed a relationship over the years and over the distance of the 2 states and now that I'm here, you know, we're closer, i-in geographically, you know, we've developed a stronger relationship based on what was already there.

McLendon Commentary: *I failed to add Janice's aunt to the map.*

McLendon: Wonderful! So, you share the grief.

Janice: Yes.

McLendon: Papa?

Janice: He's in the other state.

McLendon: How's he doing?

Janice: We don't have much contact with Papa. He was a bit estranged

from Granny at the time of the death.

McLendon: Had that happened a good while? So, they weren't divorced but they were kind of separated a bit?

Janice: They were living in the same house, but separate lives. So, that's why mom had to, you know, I took care of her at the end of her life because he said, "I guess you're going to go with Janice because you're so ill." And the doctor told him what she needed and he said, "I guess you're going to go with Janice." So...!

McLendon: He didn't do it? Wow. Well, this is quite a story. This is quite a story that is all around you. So, you really knew Granny, Jonathan, but I guess did you know Papa well?

***McLendon Commentary:** I express to Jonathan that the context of his life is filled with people who have left or are not available.*

Jonathan: Sort of.

McLendon: So, what color line would we put between you and Papa?

Jonathan: Green.

McLendon: That one marker is just really going to be pale. You want to do it? You make it like you think...let me get this out of your way though. Okay, thank you. They're very different, aren't they? The connection you had with Papa. When will you see him again, you think?

***McLendon Commentary:** Jonathan is fully involved, engaged and participating in the visual narrative of his and his mother's life. His look is pensive...suggesting he is working hard to understand the ramifications of the picture that is unfolding on the paper. As he draws the relationship with his Grandfather he takes ownership at a different level of his story. He owns his relationship with his grand dad.*

Jonathan: Probably Christmas.

McLendon: So, you all travel?

Janice: With Chris coming home he wants to see, you know, his relatives, his cousins.

McLendon: So, Chris is going to be home for Christmas?

Janice: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Wonderful.

Janice: So, we're going to go there so he can see, you know, the cousins that he grew up with. And, um, probably see Papa during that time.

McLendon: Well, you must be pretty excited about that. How about you?

Janice: Yes, very much so.

***McLendon Commentary:** With both of them acknowledging looking forward to Christmas, I decide it is a fitting time to begin closure. In closing, I hope to synthesize the events of the session into an authentic and human representation of what Jonathan is dealing with so he can use these new tools to help him move forward.*

McLendon: Well, I want to give you a picture that I have about your challenge. Do you know the word challenge? Like if something's a challenge it's like, um, if you had to climb a-a big hill and you had a lot of weight on you? That would be like a challenge. And that's kind of what I think you have. This is the picture I have; I'm needing my Oh, here it is right here. This is like, little one inside of you, okay? And this is like his heart; and his heart is sad. But he's not supposed to be sad. He's supposed to be...tough? What were you going to say?

Jonathan: Happy.

McLendon: He's supposed to be happy, yeah. So, he's supposed to smile but he's got a heart that's hurting. But, what do you think that would be like for this little one?

Jonathan: Hard?

***McLendon Commentary:** I am pleased that Jonathan is expressing compassion and empathy for himself via the puppy as his little one inside.*

McLendon: It would be very hard, it would be very hard.

***McLendon Commentary:** I validate his self understanding.*

McLendon: So, this is my idea is that you have to take the little one and you have to let this little one know that you're going to be there

with him and that it is okay to be sad; when you're unhappy and when you feel lonely, when you miss your brother, when you wonder where your dad is, when you think about your Grandmother. I'll bet you saw her suffer. And when you think about how special she was. Seems like, to me, that we need to find a way for this little one inside of you to not have to pretend; because I think when you have to pretend it probably makes you angry. Probably makes you real angry, to have to pretend something that's not true for you. What do you think about that? What do you think would have to happen for you to have more freedom to just be with your heart? What do you think would help?

McLendon Commentary: *I give Jonathan physical comfort when I kindly touch "puppy." In this tender moment, as I was beginning to leave, to touch Jonathan directly would have been thoughtless and insensitive. When I ask Jonathan what would help him, I am both challenging and affirming him as the owner of his life*

Jonathan: I don't really know.

McLendon: What do you know about Jonathan? What do you think would help him?

McLendon Commentary: *I pass the question to Janice, empowering her in her role as wise Mother.*

Janice: Um, just be allowed to be and feel what he's feeling, and express it, be able to express it. He didn't know what it was and those things are there but I guess he'll have a better understanding of what it is and feel freer to express what's going on. And, I guess it's my job to get him the help to get through it.

McLendon Commentary: *Janice responds with understanding and continued commitment to get Jonathan the help he needs. Jonathan has been very involved in the exploration of the terrain of his life with the family mapping. Now, as he physically and protectively holds puppy and puppy's wounded heart as representations of the little hurt boy inside of him, he is integrating the transformational idea that his anger is connected to his wounds and his wounds are understandable. He owns his feelings. They are human and acceptable. He is not bad to feel angry.*

McLendon: Are there any men? I mean, would Papa be able to help

Jonathan?

McLendon Commentary: *I begin to feel the weight of the challenge for both of them. Since I firmly believe that everything is easier with support, I am searching for more support, particularly male support.*

Janice: No.

McLendon: Would Chris?

Janice: No. We have a family friend that Jonathan has confided in. Mr. J.

McLendon: Okay, let's put Mr. J here. Mister J. So, what kind of color or line would you put to Mr. J?

Jonathan: Red.

McLendon: Red, okay. Want to do the line? I didn't know the heart had a sound!

Jonathan: There.

McLendon Commentary: *Jonathan shows his positive heartfelt feelings for Mr. J on the map, the red line being much stronger than the anger lines I placed around Jonathan in the beginning of the session.*

McLendon: Okay, thank you. So, do you get to see Mr. J?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

McLendon: Would he understand how much loss you have suffered?

Jonathan: Uh-huh.

Janice: He was there, he knew Granny. He was there during that time for us, he knows Chris, he knows our situation. He knows Papa.

McLendon: Wonderful.

Janice: So, he is our – Jonathan's – closest male friend that he trusts.

McLendon: Wonderful.

McLendon Commentary: *I let my pleasure be known about Mr. J's being in Jonathan's life and in so doing share my positive feelings about Jonathan having the support he needs.*

Janice: Just super busy.

McLendon: Yeah, but you know, a little understanding from a man can go a long way for Jonathan; because, you know, you have a similar job here. This could be your little girl.

Janice: Mommy has a little girl inside of her.

McLendon Commentary: *Again, I want to stress that it is human to have pain, challenges and difficult feelings. Jonathan is not crazy when he grits his teeth and wants to hit someone for no good reason. He is wounded and needs help with his healing.*

McLendon: So, you have this little girl and she has a heart that has to be taken care of. And, of course, um, me too. I have a little girl inside of me too, and, you know, she has hurts and disappointments and stuff that I have to deal with. I'm just thinking, when you, Janice, you seem to do such a wonderful job of being able to be where your heart is. And that's, uh, so wonderful for you to see and I suspect at times it may feel a little overwhelming. M-may, as you said, make you feel like maybe you want to cry too; and maybe that would be okay. And if there is a man, like Mr. J, who's in your life and who could say, "Yeah, you know, Janice has sadness, she lost her mother. And Jonathan has sadness because he doesn't get to see his brother, he lost his Grandmother." It sounds like not much is there for you and your father at all, is that right? So, that must be a tremendous loss for you.

McLendon Commentary: *As I acknowledge Janice's "little girl" and hand her a stuffed black doll, I return support and empathy for her as a woman and as Jonathan's mother. I deepen my message about humanness and the wounding we all know about when I, too, hold a little stuffed doll. I do this to show that the feelings I have are more easily understood when I allow myself to think about having a part inside of me that is vulnerable like a little girl.*

McLendon: So, I suspect if you don't figure out how to love that little one and just have – have a good, open heart to yourself – that you probably are going to clench your jaws, and find your muscles tight, and have to express it some way. I suspect that's what's happened with Chris. And he hasn't been able to take care of that heart inside of him, and so with his hurts and his wounds, and his pain, and his disappointments; I suspect it's just come out.

Janice: Chris was really affected by the divorce. He was, you know, the center of attention for five years before he came, you know, Jonathan. And then he just – he blamed me for it. And then he’s angry because his dad was not there for what he needed, you know, emotionally and even physically.

McLendon: Really?

Janice: Yeah. Unsupportive so that’s a never-ending cycle.

McLendon: Well, I’m sorry I don’t get to meet Chris. But I do kind of feel like he’s here a little bit – and Granny and Papa.

So, Jonathan, what do you think about the time we’ve spent here tonight? Do you think...?

Jonathan: It helped.

***McLendon Commentary:** It is obvious that Jonathan and I have made contact...he knows he has been seen, heard and literally touched via puppy. This always helps.*

McLendon: I’m so glad. I’m so glad to know that you and your mother knew how to communicate about this so that you could get help. How did that come about?

***McLendon Commentary:** I make my delight in hearing Jonathan say the session helped him get clear. I am so glad.*

Janice: He told me about two weeks ago, he said, “Mom, I have some anger, I need to talk to a counselor.” I said, “Do they have counselors at your school?” He said, “No.” And I said, “Okay.” And then he mentioned it again a couple of days later, “Mom, what about the counselor?” And that’s when I, um, began to search out some resources and I heard about this opportunity.

McLendon: You are a very wise young one. You know, when you have that ability to know what you’re feeling it gives you choice about what to do. If you didn’t know that you were feeling angry and you just went around punching, all you do is get into trouble. But, to be able to know it and to ask for help is just so impressive. You must be very proud of him.

***McLendon Commentary:** To know one needs help and to request it is*

an act of courage and maturity. I applaud Jonathan while emphasizing awareness opening the possibility for choice. He listens.

Janice: I am.

McLendon: I would love for Chris to know about what you were able to do. I think that would be wonderful. I don't know if he knows how to do that, do you know?

Jonathan: Not really.

McLendon: Don't know if he does or not...or you don't think he does know how to know what he's feeling and ask for help?

Jonathan: Well, he probably does a little bit, but probably not more than a little bit.

McLendon: Just a little bit?

Janice: He's in counseling.

McLendon: Great.

Janice: It took him a little while to accept it, but part of the coming home had to do with he had to go to counseling.

McLendon: Good I am glad. So, how has it been for you for us to spend this time together here?

Janice: Great. It helped a great deal to put things into perspective and to – I thought I had stopped crying about Granny already, but obviously I haven't. But it's important to know so that you can, you know, try to get some results; very helpful, very enlightening.

McLendon: It has been a real, um, honor for me to step in to your – your life and your world for just this little bit of time. I won't forget you, Jonathan, and I won't forget you either, Janice.

Janice: I thank you for taking the time.

McLendon: I thank you for listening to your son with such attentiveness. You are a very good mother.

Janice: I try to be.

McLendon: And I'm imagining you learned a lot from Granny about how to be a mother?

Janice: Yeah, oh yeah.

McLendon: And you're going to have to figure out a very creative way to learn about how to be a daddy; because maybe you'll learn from Mr. J? Because John's not there for you so it's going to be a little tougher for you than for you as parent, if you have children. But you are off to such an incredible start as a young boy. Really.

McLendon Commentary: *I am having trouble saying goodbye. Suggesting that Jonathan will be a daddy and will have more difficulty than Janice has had being a mother is irrelevant. I salvage this mistake by coming back and saying "if you are going to have children" and telling Jonathan that no matter, he is off to an incredible start as a young boy.*

McLendon: So, I would like to say goodbye to you and goodnight to you and can I shake your hand and tell you you are very special.

McLendon Commentary: *Asking to shake someone's hand after sharing such an intimate meeting further deepens the mutuality and reciprocity that was experienced.*

Jonathan: Thank you.

McLendon: You are a very special woman. I hope your holidays are wonderful.

Janice: Thank you, same to you.

McLendon Commentary: *I believed that indeed she did hope that my holidays are wonderful.*

McLendon: And I'll take these little ones. They have become more special because they've been here with you two. Yours has a heart sound, did you notice? You know what? Maybe you should take this home with you? What do you think? What do you think, do you think it would help you to remember about your heart and about your losses and about how it's okay to feel sad when you're sad? You don't have to cover it up with being tough and angry? What do you think?

McLendon Commentary: *Though Jonathan did not get excited about my gift of the heart, some months later in a therapy session he was asked how it was that he was able to cope with so much. His answer was that he has a little squeaky heart at home. When asked how does that*

work, seeing a tape of the session, he shrugs his shoulders and says, “I don’t know, it just does.” We should be careful to not underestimate the power of the symbolic for conveying truth.

Jonathan: Yes. Thank you.

McLendon: You’re very welcome.

McLendon Commentary: *Though not seen on this video, the final minutes of our shared time on the small square therapy stage were atypical. I leaned back in my chair only to find myself falling off the stage. Janice was close enough that she quickly threw out her hand. I caught it and she pulled me back into balance. Somehow, for me, that moment spoke to the depth of our partnership in the therapy session. We helped each other by staying respectfully present to our shared process. We felt the power of a nurturing triad. And I felt Janice’s strength and support of me. It was all good. It was sad to say goodbye.*

Video Credits

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