Instructor’s Manual for

ADLERIAN PARENT CONSULTATION

from the series

CHILD THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS

with

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with host Donald Keat, PhD

by

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Instructor’s Manual for Adlerian Parent Consultation with Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD

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# Instructor’s Manual for ADLERIAN PARENT CONSULTATION

with Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD

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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 four to six. Assign each group to role-play a parenting group session, using an Adlerian parent consultation approach. Each role-play shall consist of
one therapist and a group of three to five parents. The parents can be like those in the video or you can develop other scenarios. 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 Adlerian Parent Consultation.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one group of parents; the remaining participants can observe the role-play, 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 parenting group. Other observers, including the facilitator might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what does and does not work in treating families using the Adlerian parent consultation approach.

7. WATCH THE SERIES

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

*Key Aspects of the Adlerian Parent Consultation Model:* Adlerian parent consultation is based on the work of Alfred Adler who examined how children find their place, and how they belong in their social context. According to this approach, many of the behaviors and attitudes that children exhibit are learned at home. Problems can be said to reside more in the family or the parents than in the child, and the problems that typically bring children into therapy are merely symptoms of the larger family system. The way to change the child’s behavior is to look to the family for an intervention.

Combining aspects of education, consultation and psychotherapy, Adlerian parent consultation focuses on encouragement. Therapists help parents tailor their parenting strategies to the specific goals of
their child’s behavior, whether those goals be for attention, power, retaliation, or just to be left alone. The premise here is that when parents change their behavior, the child’s behavior will change in response.

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

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

8. PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

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

*A NOTE ON PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal life with us.
Group Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use a few or all of these discussion questions keyed to certain elements of the video or those issues most relevant to the viewers.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Problems in the Family**: What are your reactions to Carlson’s statement that if a child is behaving in a problematic way it is not the child’s problem per se, but a symptom of a problem in the parents or in the family? Does Carlson’s view seem like blaming the parents or is it a more balanced approach in your view?

2. **Discouraging Lifestyle**: What do you think about the notion of the discouraging lifestyle Carlson describes? Do the four goals of discouraged misbehavior he outlines – attention, power, retaliation and being left alone - capture the kinds of problems children and teens are typically brought into therapy for?

3. **Parents in the Picture**: Carlson states that it is helpful to give parents an explanation about what is going on with their child that puts them in the picture, so that they can actually influence what is happening. How do you see this technique as helpful or therapeutic? In what situations would you be more or less inclined to talk with parents in this way?

PARENT CONSULTATION SESSION

4. **Power Conflict**: Do you agree with Carlson’s assessment that Blake and Barbara are engaged in a power conflict? Is there anything about their conflict that seems out of the ordinary or complicated, or do you agree with Carlson that this parent-teen conflict is a normal part of family life? What do you see as the role of normalizing styles and conflicts like these?

5. **Money for Living**: What did you think about Carlson’s suggestion to Barbara about giving Blake living money and then charging him when she has to do his chores? Was his approach
to helping Barbara deal with this problem effective? How do you feel about the therapist providing solutions to the client as he did here? Do you see yourself working in this way?

6. **Discouragement:** Carlson suggests that following this brief parent consultation if Barbara follows his suggestions, he suspects that Blake’s life will be different and he won’t have to feel so discouraged. Does this make sense to you? In what ways do you think Blake’s life might be different as a result of this conversation, if at all?

**PARENTING GROUP SESSION**

7. **Running a Group:** Carlson lays out four important tasks of the parenting group therapist: Structure, link, universalize and summarize. How do you see these tasks affecting the therapeutic benefit of this group? What do you notice about Carlson’s style in fulfilling his identified role here? What ideas here would you be most interested in using in your work with parents?

8. **Specific Example:** What did you think about the way Carlson insisted that each parent give a specific, recent example of the problem? What do you see as the purpose of this intervention? How do you think it impacted the overall effectiveness of this group session?

9. **Knowing What’s Best:** It seems like a lot of the parents in this group know what they need to do to help their kids in the long run, but they struggle with the emotional pull to provide anything they can to make their children’s life easier and better right now. How can this issue be addressed with the Adlerian parent consultation model? In what ways do you see Carlson engaging with the parents around this struggle? If you were the therapist, how else might you have worked with this issue in the group?

10. **Helping Each Other:** Carlson indicates that an effective group is one where the members help one another. Would you say that this is an effective group in that way? How do you see the members helping each other? What do you observe about Carlson’s approach that may have helped or hindered this process?
DISCUSSION

11. **Direction:** How did you react to Carlson’s jumping in and putting forth his own suggestions? *Carlson states that because this is not an open-ended feelings group, this kind of consultation requires a lot of active direction from the therapist.* Does this work for you? What do you like about this aspect of the approach, and what does not sit well with you?

12. **The Therapeutic Relationship:** How would you characterize the therapeutic relationship between Carlson and Barbara, and between Carlson and the group in this video? Did Carlson form a working alliance with Barbara and the other parents?

13. **Carlson’s Style:** What was it about Carlson that allowed these mothers to feel comfortable enough to engage in the consultation? How did Carlson join with them?

14. **The Model:** What do you think about using this model with parents? Does it make sense to you? Do you see yourself using any parts of it in your work with parents?

15. **Personal Reaction:** If you are/were a parent, how would you feel about consulting with Carlson regarding your child? Do you feel an alliance could be made and that he would be effective with you? 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 Adlerian Parent Consultation? What stands out in how Carlson works?

2. **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.

3. **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 see or think in a new way?

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Carlson did? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

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

BOOKS


WEB RESOURCES
Jon Carlson’s Homepage

www.joncarlson.org

North American Society for Adlerian Psychology

www.alfredadler.org

Journal of Individual Psychology

www.utexas.edu/utpress/journals/jip.html
RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

*Adlerian Play Therapy*
  –Terry Kottman, PhD

*Family Secrets*
  –Evan Imber-Black, PhD

*Gestalt Therapy with Children*
  –Violet Oaklander, PhD

*Making Divorce Work*
  –Constance Ahrons, PhD

*Object Relations Child Therapy*
  –David Scharff, PhD

*Psychotherapy with Medically Ill Children*
  –Gerald Koocher, PhD

*The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach*
  –Monica McGoldrick, LCSW

*Tools and Techniques for Family Therapy*
  –John Edwards, PhD
PARENT CONSULTATION SESSION

1–16

**Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD:** Barbara, I’m glad that you’re willing to come in. And you have one son, Blake.

**Barbara:** Yes. Yes.

**Carlson:** And you have a specific concern or a specific issue where Blake’s a problem for you?

**Barbara:** I’ve noticed in the past six months—he just, he just turned 13 in November—so he’s a six-month 13 year old. And as of November 22, his birthday, things changed. He’s become a know-it-all. You know, you can’t tell him anything anymore.

1–17

Everything that I say, there’s confrontation: “But why? But why? But why?” “Well, you don’t know anything, Mom, because you’re from the ‘60s. You need to get with it because you’re not in the ‘90s anymore, and now we’re in the 2000. You just don’t know what’s happening in this world.” “Why am I doing this? You’re not paying me to do this.”

It’s just a confrontation every day.

**Carlson:** So these teens have been terrible so far.
Barbara: So far. So far. So far.

Carlson: Yeah, can you give a specific example, maybe in the last couple of days, where he was...

Barbara: Just last night. Last night, we were, I asked him to do his chore, which was doing the dishes. He should do the dishes and take the garbage out every day, and every day I have to say, “Are you going to do the dishes now? You know, you’ve had your free time.”

“Okay, Mom, after the next commercial.”

“Okay, the commercial’s over. Let’s get in here now.”

Carlson: How about last night? How did it go?

Barbara: Last night was a big confrontation: “All of my—

Carlson: Okay. What did, what did he do? What did—

Barbara: “All of my friends get money when they do their chores.

1–18

They receive allowance. You don’t give me anything for doing this. I don’t feel like doing this now. Why do I have to do this?”

Carlson: Can you get to the point where it became the problem for you, when you’d had enough?

Barbara: Word for word. If I say, “I don’t want to hear this anymore. This is your chore. When you show me that you are responsible enough to do this—”

Carlson: What about last night? When did you get to that point where you’d— What did he do that kind of pushed you over the edge?

Barbara: I think the word, “darn.” You know, just, just the defiance.

Carlson: Can you, can you kind of replay that? Like if you had a camera, what he said and then what you did, then what he did?

Barbara: I said, “Blake, it’s time for you to come in here and do these dishes.”

“Darn! I’m sick of this. You know, I always have to do this work, and I don’t get paid for this.”
Carlson: Okay, then what did you say after that?

Barbara: And then I said— Well, I had to get right in his face and say—

Carlson: Do it the real way. Just pretend I’m him.

1–19

Barbara: Oh. I said, “Excuse me? Excuse me? Did you say that word again? I told you to stop saying that word.”

Carlson: And how did you feel when you heard that and when you said that? Right now?

Barbara: When I said it right now or last night?

Carlson: No, yeah, last night. Yeah.

Barbara: When I said it, when I said it, I was very—

Carlson: “Excuse me!”

Barbara: I was very upset with… “Darn” to me is a curse word, okay.

Carlson: Sure.

Barbara: And I have told him to stop saying it.

Carlson: All right. And then what did you say?

Barbara: And then, I think what really got me was the fact that every time you say, “do your chores,” there is opposition: “Why? Why now?”

Carlson: Okay, so when you said it that time, he said, “Darn,” and you said, “Excuse me? Did I hear that word?”… then what did he say?

Barbara: Then it was like, “Why do I have to do this?”

Carlson: Okay, so he kept it going.

Barbara: Yes. “Why do I have to do this?”

Carlson: Okay.

Barbara: “You’re not paying me.”

Carlson: Can we get to another example of, maybe, earlier or a
little bit later where the same thing happened where, you know, you told him to do something and then he did something and then you responded.

1–20

Barbara: It’s time to go to bed.
Carlson: Okay. Last night.

Barbara: It sounded— No, not last night, but you know, within the past week.
Carlson: The night before, maybe. Okay.

Barbara: “It’s time to go to bed.”
“Well, I’m on vacation. This is Spring Break. I shouldn’t have to go to bed now.”
“But I said, ‘it’s time to go to bed.’”

Carlson: And when you, how did you feel when you said that, “I said it’s time to go to bed”?

Barbara: “Because I am the mother. You’re supposed to do what I said do.”

Carlson: And how did you feel when you said that to him?
Barbara: Demanding, but trying to get my point across.

Carlson: Okay. And then what did he do?
Barbara: Opposition.

Carlson: Okay.


Carlson: So it sounds like you ask him to do something and ... and then he kind of refuses.

Barbara: Right.

Carlson: And then you get angry, and then he continues the argument.

Barbara: And then I continue—
Carlson: And then you continue.

Barbara: —and then I continue and then I finally say, “Stop. Don’t open your mouth again.”

Carlson: Have you got any idea what’s going on between you and Blake?

Barbara: I think, in the long run, I think it’s good because he’s showing his independence.

Carlson: So part of it is that he’s being independent, trying to get away from you.

Barbara: He’s, he’s trying to be independent. He’s also considered the man of the house because it’s, you know, it’s a divorce situation, so he thinks he’s the man of the house. He’s also under peer pressure where he’s saying that his friends get away with certain things, and his friends are allowed to receive certain amounts of money per month for doing chores. So that peer pressure is there.

He also thinks that he’s older now: “I’m a teenager now. I know more than you do.” Or, “It’s a different day, Mom.”

Carlson: Okay, so you’ve got, sounds like a whole bunch of ideas about what might be going on between you and him.

Barbara: It’s very frustrating, but yet, I know that he is trying his best to be independent now and have a say so. In fact, just the other, a couple nights ago, I wanted to order pizza. He says, “Let me do it, Mom.”

I said, “Oh, okay.”

He says, “I need to know how to do these things.”

Carlson: It almost sounds like he wants to run this house.

Barbara: Yes.

Carlson: Yes.

Barbara: Yes.

Carlson: So could it be that there’s really a power conflict between you and Blake about who’s going to run the house?
Barbara: Yes.

Carlson: Have you ever been in power conflicts before?

Barbara: With my parents, yes.

Carlson: So this is a little déjà-vu but from the other side of the fence, huh?

Barbara: Yes. Yes.

Carlson: Have you ever been in power conflicts as an adult where you’ve been successfully getting out of them? You know? Working with them?

Barbara: I would say so, yes.

Carlson: Can, do you know how you did it? Do you remember what, what you did to… Because in power conflicts, you’re not supposed to fight or argue. But you’re not supposed to give in, either.

Barbara: I usually compromise. I usually fight and then compromise.

Carlson: Can you think of something that you’ve wanted to do with Blake that you haven’t done yet where you wouldn’t fight or you wouldn’t give in?

Barbara: There are, usually after conflicts like this, I try to talk it out and say, “Okay, why did you feel this way?” Or, “why did you talk to me that way?” And sometimes he will apologize. And then I’ll say things like, “Well, Blake, you know, I know that you’re a teenager now. I know you want more responsibilities, but you also have to show me that you are responsible. You have to show me that you will come in and do your chores before I ask you.”

Carlson: So it sounds like you’re really thinking that there needs to be two things that need to be done. One is to eliminate his talking back.

Barbara: Yes.

Carlson: And then two is to give him more responsibility because he’s getting older.

Barbara: Yes. Yes.
Carlson: And that, that sounds like that’s perfect.

Barbara: And where’s the desire? He, he thinks if he’s paid an allowance, then he will do it. But I told him last night, “We never received an allowance. If you live in this household, there are chores.”

Carlson: So what would happen if you, kind of like you said, gave into him and gave him an allowance and call it a living allowance so that he can learn how to manage money? And then, you know, like, say you gave him—I’m just saying—$10 a week. But then you wouldn’t give him lunch money, and he’d need to get his lunch money out of that, and maybe he’d need to get his movie money or his soda money. And then if he didn’t, ran out of money, then, oh well.

Barbara: I can do that.

Carlson: And that would be giving him some responsibility as long as, you know, you let him know what it was for. But I’m wondering what would happen if you were to also say to him is, “You can either take out the trash—” You know, his job. Is that what it was? You said he should take the trash…

Barbara: His chores. He takes the trash out.

Carlson: … and then the dishes?

Barbara: And to do the dishes every day. Two things.

Carlson: So what would happen if you were to say to him is, “Either you do these things or I will, and if I do, I charge… because it’s overtime for me.”

Barbara: That’s a good one.

Carlson: So at the end of the week when you gave him—I’m just saying $10. You may have to dicker with that one way or the other. When you give him the $10, you’d also give him the bill for $3 for taking the garbage out. And he’d say, “That’s not fair.”

Barbara: That’s a good one.

Carlson: And you’d say, “I know. I shouldn’t have to work overtime. But somebody’s got to take the garbage out, and you didn’t.”
Could you picture yourself doing something like that with Blake?

**Barbara:** Yes. Yes. I would try anything right now.

**Carlson:** Would you do anything? You know, I mean, there’s a big difference between “trying” and “doing,” because when we try something, we do it some of the time. And when we do it, it’s like if I say, you know, “I’ll try to stop by the store tonight.” Or if I say, “I’m stopping by the store tonight. I’m going to do it.” The commitment is firmer. Could you make a firm commitment with him to…

**Barbara:** Okay, now I’m, I’m saying I will do it and see if it works. That’s what I mean by “try.”

**Carlson:** Okay. And how long will you do it for? How long will you give it before it works?

**Barbara:** A couple months.

**Carlson:** Okay. That sounds great. And you might have to, to move the money a little bit. In other words, you might have to, say, start with $10 and then you may have to go down to $5 or up to $15 but it shouldn’t really cost you any more money because you really give him money for those things anyway, so it’s sort of a way where you don’t fight but you give him that responsibility.

**Barbara:** Okay. I like that.

**Carlson:** Good luck.

**Barbara:** Thank you.

**Carlson:** It sounds like you know just what to do, and you’ll be successful with it because you have with other things.

**Barbara:** Yes. Yes.

**Carlson:** Good. Thanks, Barbara.

**Barbara:** Thank you.

**PARENTING GROUP SESSION**

2–6

**Carlson:** I’m glad everyone came here this evening for our parenting
group. This is a group in which each one of the members has brought a problem that they want to work on, so it’s a work group. And no one’s going to get a free ride tonight. Everyone’s got something that they want help with and that they’re going to give help to one another.

I find that it works best if everyone talks and helps out. So we don’t want anybody in our group to clam up tonight. On the other hand, we don’t want anybody to do all the talking, either. So you’ve got to kind of find some kind of a balance between not talking too much or not talking too little.

It’s probably going to be hard to stick to the point, I think. You know, if we start talking about kids, we can go any which way.

2–7

So I’m going to kind of be the patrolman here and try to keep us on track.

I think we, is it okay that, if we agree that what we talk about here should stay here? That we don’t want to, you know, it makes sense to me, too. It kind of gives us some security about what we can feel free to talk about. Not that we’re going to be talking about our deepest or darkest secrets, but it’s, you know, nice to know that what we talk about will stay here.

Why not start with, let’s get everybody’s name and then the ages of your kids and then the one person you want to work on tonight. So can you start?

Barbara: I’m Barbara Howard, and my son is Blake, and he’s 13.

Carlson: Okay, so we have Barb and we’ve got Blake who’s 13. Okay.

Linda: My name is Linda Tyskell. My daughter’s name is Sarah and she’s 12.

Carlson: Okay. So Sarah is 12. Okay, so she and Blake are about, you know, just almost the same age.

Linda: She’ll be 13 the end of July, so it’s pretty close.
Carlson: Pretty darn close. Okay. So pretty close there.

Yvette: My name is Yvette. My children are Alyssa and Clint, and their names, and their—Clint’s 13; Alyssa’s 15. And I’m here to talk about Clint tonight.

Carlson: So Alyssa’s 15. Clint is…

Yvette: 13.

Carlson: 13. Okay, we’ve got this 13 thing going with all of you just about, here. Okay. So we’ve got some connections here, and you wanted to talk about Clint. Okay.

Gail: My name is Gail Cross, and I’m here to talk about my son, Christopher, who is 12 years old.

Carlson: Okay. Well, we’ve got a connection here, almost 13, all right. Is Christopher your only child?

Gail: No, I have a daughter, Crystal who is 11.

Carlson: Okay, so. But we’re going to talk about Christopher. So both of you guys have a boy and a girl. Okay. You’ve got a girl and a boy. All right. And now we get to you.

Kim: Yeah. And I’ve got all your kids. My name’s Kim. I have six children.

I have a 16-year-old daughter, Marina; a 14-year-old son, Ben; and an 11–year-old son, David; nine-year-old daughter, Shayla; eight-year-old son, Steven; and a four-year-old daughter, Kyla.

Carlson: Okay, and who did you want to talk about?

Kim: I’ll talk about Marina, I think. Yeah, the 16-year-old.

Carlson: So Marina, the 16 year old. Okay, and so that’s probably closest to Yvette’s 15 year old in terms of looking at this. So we’ve got some real connections here. If we add up the ages of the parenting experience that we’ve got here, we’ve got almost 50 years
of experience here, you know, in this group, so you really ought to be able to help one another with some of these problems.

What I’d like you, like to have us do, though—and everybody’s going to get a chance—who wants to go first and talk about a specific problem that you’re having with your son or daughter?

2–10

I think we have, yeah, we have some daughters involved here. We have two daughters and two sons we’re going to, three sons we’re going to talk about. So who wants to go first?

**Gail:** I’ll go first.

**Carlson:** Okay. Gail.

**Gail:** Well, basically, I’m having trouble with my son Christopher in the area of his organizational skills, basically. I’ve bought organizers for his room in every capacity: for the closets, the shoe organizers, and yet clothes and shoes and books never manage to go to the places I designate for him.

**Carlson:** Anybody else have any organizational kind of problems with your sons or daughters in…

**Kim:** I’m thinking I should switch and talk about my son because we have the same problem with that.

**Barbara:** Constantly

**Carlson:** Okay, so you’re not alone. Can you think of a specific example of where this became a problem for you with Christopher, that maybe you brought it to his attention or he brought it to yours?

2–11

**Gail:** I would say basically within, I’d say maybe that as he’s entered that age of teenager, he’s at that point where, you know, I want him to start building these good skills so that they’ll carry over. And it’s no matter what time I go into his room, there’s never a period where even if I help him to organize and put things in place and designate, it’s still whenever time goes by a day or two, then things just really
become in disarray. Clothes on the floor…

**Carlson:** Can you pick a day, like where this happened that, maybe in the last couple of days where you’ve had this disarray that you…

**Gail:** Okay, today is Wednesday.

**Carlson:** Today is Wednesday, yeah.

**Gail:** So Monday. It’s generally like a two-day stand, basically.

**Carlson:** So what did you do on Monday when this was a problem for you?

**Gail:** Okay, I would usually walk into his room…

**Carlson:** Okay, what did you do this Monday?

**Gail:** How would I do it?

2–12

**Carlson:** Yeah, what did you do this Monday? Did you walk in or did you come charging in?

**Gail:** I would say, I probably came charging in and just to say, “Christopher, you know I asked you to be sure that you, you know, picked up your clothes.” I don’t know what it is. It’s the center of his room, and it’s just always the clothes in the center, you know. Nothing else, you know, around. I guess that’s his way of organizing. It will be a mound of things in the center.

**Carlson:** Just a pile, yeah…So how did you say that to him? Can you kind of let us… If we were all there watching this, what would we have seen when you came charging in and you said…

**Gail:** Okay. He’s probably…

**Carlson:** The pile’s there. He leaves you a pile.

**Gail:** Okay. All right.

**Carlson:** And you said…

**Gail:** I said, “Christopher, I notice you still haven’t organized your clothes. Are you going to take them down to the laundry or are you organizing them to put them, you know, into the drawers?” Basically.
And his response would be, “Well, I’m going to get to it. I’m just, I put everything there.”

2–13

So I’m kind of thinking that he’s expecting for me to kind of pick them up because they never seem to, you know, go anywhere.

**Carlson:** So, so he, you go in and you ask him when he’s going to do it, and he says, “I’m going to get around to it,” and he never gets around to it?

**Gail:** Right. Right. Exactly. Unless I offer some incentive or there’s something attached to it.

**Carlson:** What, what does an incentive mean?

**Gail:** I would say or suspend a privilege. In the instance of, maybe you won’t watch, you know, your favorite wrestling episode. That’s my, my constant, you know, pawn.

**Carlson:** So in other words, you say, “No wrestling until the piles moved.”

**Gail:** Right. And that’s on Thursday night given, so by Thursday, it’s a possibility, it’s going to, it’s going to happen.

**Carlson:** So is that the solution that the house is always, the room is always picked up by Thursday?

**Gail:** Not, not generally. Not generally. Sometimes he’ll wait for me to do it, pending I guess, maybe he tries to read me to see if I’m going to come in, if I’m in that much of a need, if I’m going to have guests, do I want it cleaned up at that particular moment.

2–14

**Carlson:** So if we look at this, you asking when he’s going to do it, then he says, “in a little while,” then he doesn’t do it.

**Gail:** Right.

**Carlson:** Anybody, anybody got any idea what’s going on between Christopher and Gail in this situation?
**Yvette:** My kids just say, “Well, it’s my room. Why should I have to clean it if I don’t, if it’s okay with me?”

**Carlson:** Okay, so…

**Barbara:** It’s power, power struggle.

**Carlson:** You think it’s power. “You can’t make me do it.”

**Barbara:** And usually, well, you know, I’m listening to you, but when I was a child, I remember my mom got to a point where she let me design my own room the way I wanted it, and that helped.

**Carlson:** Oh, I see. So what you did is you gave him responsibility…

**Barbara:** She said, she, she organized him, and she told him where things should be. And what my mom did was strip the whole room. She let me pick the colors for the wall. I redesigned my whole room.

**2–15**

I had each room a different color—I mean, each wall a different color. Picked my own bedspread, organized my drawers the way I wanted them, and it helped because it was my room.

**Carlson:** So in a power conflict, sometimes we hear that you give kids more responsibility, because usually they’re pretty, they’re pretty high-powered people. I mean, they can get into these battles with us and kind of make us powerless. And your mom did that with you, and how did it work?

**Barbara:** It helped.

**Gail:** I imagine. Yeah.

**Barbara:** I wasn’t, I mean I, you know…

**Carlson:** Not a neatnik, but it was better.

**Barbara:** And then I remember years later after I moved, I would keep my place the way she used to ask me to keep her place. And she said, “I’m glad I stayed on you because now I can see it pays off.” Once they move from your house and organize their house, then all your organizational skills that you taught them pays off in their own home. But when they’re in your house, they’re not going to… It’s your
house. Your place.

2–16

Carlson: So it sounds like one idea might be to give him responsibility for decorating his own room and changing it. Any other ideas?

Gail: Right. That’s a good idea.

Kim: I know with… We have that growing pile in the middle of the floor, too, that tends to just accumulate overnight and what I think that Ben, his motivation is, if I get tired of seeing it long enough, I’ll do it. And I tend to, I think I can deal with it pretty well until my husband starts ranting and raving and then sometimes I’ll go in and do it for him just to keep the peace, which I know isn’t teaching him anything. Other times, I’ll charge him.

Carlson: What do you mean “charge him?”

Kim: Well, I’ll tell him, you know, “This room is really disgusting. It costs $5, and I cleaned it,” and since he babysits for me, it comes right off the top, so there’s no bickering about it.

2–17

Carlson: Oh, so you exchange labor. And, okay. That’s a possibility. He has a younger sister in your family. Anybody else have something that they’ve done with keeping the rooms clean?

Yvette: They just, my kids’ rooms stay junky most of the time. They can’t go out. If they like, if they have a thing every Friday, they go to the movies with their friends, and they know the rule is if it’s not clean when it’s time to go to the movie, you don’t go. Period.

Carlson: So they can keep it however they want during the week, but by Friday it has to be clean?

Yvette: Right, but they know about, see if they want to go, if they want to go to the movie like at 6:00 on a Friday, they don’t get home from school until like 4:00, so they have a very small time span. So throughout the week, I may remind them, “You know, Friday and
Saturday, if you want to go to the movies or wherever, you don’t go.”

2–18
So, and they kind of, you know, they kind of know that’s the routine now. And I just really stick to it, you know, don’t, “I don’t want to hear, don’t… You knew all week that you were wanting to go to the movies Friday, so if it’s not clean, you don’t go on Friday.” Usually by Monday, it’s a mess again, but they…

Carlson: But there’s Friday coming so it doesn’t get so far out of hand that the Health Department has, comes in and shuts it down or anything.

Yvette: Yeah. Right. Right. It can get pretty… In that week, they can really do a job on a room but, but they know Friday, that’s it.

Carlson: And what do they do? Keep the door shut if it’s not?

Yvette: No, I see it.

Carlson: Anything.

Yvette: You know, I see the mess, you know. I just say, you know, “Well, Friday’s coming up.”

Carlson: Well, you’ve guys have got a lot of ideas. Anything you’ve heard, Gail, that might work?

Gail: Yeah, you know, I think with Christopher it does sound like a power struggle because I can see that, you know, in other areas also, so maybe it is possibly that I’m imposing, you know, my organizational skills as borders, you know, my lifestyle and things, and thinking that I don’t like to see a messy place.

2–19
But I like the idea where if I can probably put it back in his court and let him decide, well, where would you like this? Or let him pick out the type of organizational pieces because they do have kid organizers and I’m buying, maybe, adult organizers.

Carlson: So rather than going like this with him pounding, you can kind of go with him a little bit.
Barbara: Even with Tommy, with Tommy, when we were growing up, my mother was the same way. Everything had to be done Friday night or Saturday morning, and then we could have the rest of the weekend. And then I also know that there are families that pick Saturday morning at 9:00, the whole family has to stop whatever they’re doing and clean the house.

The only problem with that, again, is power. The parents are saying, “You have to do this at 9:00 on Saturday morning.” If a child’s not feeling right, feeling good or... So he can pick his own timing to clean his room. Every Thursday night, every Monday night, or... And then he has made that, the time.

2–20
That’s his time to clean his room, and you’re not telling him when to do it.

Gail: Right. On my schedule. Yeah, that makes sense.

Carlson: Who else wants to go next?

Linda: Well, I guess I’m the only one who hasn’t spoken. We had just recently moved into a new apartment, so this is new to us. She’s 12 and this is the first time she’s ever had her own room... in her life. So what I told her was, “Okay, this is your room. This is the first time you’ve been able to have a space of your own. You basically can do what you want with it as long as you don’t destroy anything. You don’t put holes in the walls, you don’t break anything, you don’t ruin the carpeting, you don’t ruin the furniture. If you have clothes on the floor, these are your clothes. You have to figure out what’s dirty, what’s clean, what you want to wear or whatever.”

And she has a TV in there, and sometimes she likes me to come in and watch shows with her, and I look in there, I said, “Sarah, I don’t want to go in this room. It’s a mess. I don’t know what I’m stepping on.” So it gets to the point where she kind of looks around, and she goes, “Yeah, you know,” she’s thinking to herself, “I don’t like to live like this either.”
So then she does her own thing. And it may take a little while, but it will get done.

Carlson: So you have a rule that it’s her room, she can keep it like she wants...

Linda: As long as she doesn’t destroy anything. “This is, these are your possessions. These are your clothes.”

Carlson: But you won’t enter.

Linda: “You bought most of them. You treat them as you wish, but I will not replace anything that you destroy.” And after awhile, she just gets to the point where, “Gee, you know, I really don’t want to live like this, you know,” so.

I said, “If you want me to come in and enjoy something with you and I don’t want to come in here, then do something about it.”

Carlson: It sounds like this is quite a popular topic. Some people have had varying degrees of success and can identify with it.

Who has another problem to talk about?

Yvette: Now my problem is something I’m not that comfortable talking about because a lot of people don’t struggle with, you know, that I know of, that struggle with this. But my kids—we’ll talk about Clint specifically.

They’re not very successful academically. They’re really good kids, you know. Kind, compassionate, likeable. But Clint always says, “I can’t do it. I can’t do the work.”

“Well, why don’t you have your—“

You know, making excuses, and then like having like the other kids, like some of the kids in the classroom, “Listen, I’ll help you take your homework assignment down.” You know, using other people like to help them with it. You know, just doing their, really, what’s their responsibility to some extent.
And my struggle is trying to find that point of capability or, in that, or, you know, whether they actually are inadequate or capable of doing these things or if it’s just their personality. Because he just says, “Hey, I can’t do it. What do you want me to say? If I can’t do the work, I just can’t do it.”

2–23

Carlson: Okay, well, who, who else has had kids who’ve like made excuses for things that they probably can do or really try to get out of things that they can do and aren’t really using their ability?

Gail: I want to just say—

Carlson: I know I can raise my hand.

Gail: Yeah. Most definitely. Basically, I would say that my daughter had, was struggling with, you know, her reading skills and such and saying that she couldn’t do it, and I think the best thing for kids especially as they get older, is kind of like the modeling with the parents, to kind of sit down. I know a lot of times parents don’t have the time to devote to doing studies, but with the kids. I mean, we were just at the library this weekend, and they really got excited. I hadn’t taken them to the library, we hadn’t gone together since they were little because as they tend to get older we forget those same little things.

And I mean they’re all “Oh, I want this book!” You know, it just really excited me to see them get excited and go to the videotapes and the CDs.

2–24

So it was kind of like being a lifelong learner for me and having the kids see that, you know, I’m still excited and interested, and we go and get interested together in it. Then that kind of builds their confidence and lets them know that this is something like Michael Jordan’s practice. The more you practice, no matter what it is, you can’t, you know, miss your target as long as you persevere in it. So gradually, she started to build her confidence, and then she did that.
Now I’m like, her grades have like, really, you know, increased, and it’s keeping that encouragement. “Oh, this is really good.” And she just… Now, I never hear it.

**Yvette:** Well, we do that on every day. This is a every day, every day thing.

**Gail:** Every day.

**Carlson:** Can you give us an example of that, of where this becomes a problem for you where Clint makes an excuse or tries to get out of things with you.

**Yvette:** Well, it becomes a problem…

**Carlson:** Like something in the last couple of days that he did.

**Yvette:** Okay. At their school, if you don’t turn in an assignment, you get an academic demerit.

**2–25**

And at one point he had like 19 for not turning in assignments. And you know, report cards just came out and his report card was not very good. And I, you know, this has been a long time battle. You say, “Well, why didn’t you hand the assignments in.” We go through this. We, I’ve even, I go to the school every day at 3:30 just to ask the teacher, you know, okay, “What is he missing? What don’t he have?” And it still, it really didn’t work out. At that point…

**Carlson:** So where does it get to be a problem for you with him? I mean, something…

**Yvette:** Because I, I don’t want to see him fail. You know, I don’t want to see him fail, and I can see the, in his face, you know, in his heart, I can see how unhappy he is about not succeeding.

**Carlson:** And so he doesn’t do his homework or turn it in. And then he gets…

**Yvette:** Well, he claims that, “I couldn’t do it,” or, “I did my best.”
2–26

Carlson: Okay, but then he gets a demerit.

Yvette: Right.

Carlson: And then he gets 19 demerits and then the school will give him 20 demerits, and then pretty soon it will be 25 demerits. So it sounds like that doesn’t work.

Yvette: No, the demerits. Okay, okay. Then what I would do, what I did, that the last report card, I took away everything. Everything, you know, no TV, no radio, no phone calls, nothing. And it did help some. It did help some.

Carlson: So the take away might help, but the, that did get his attention a little bit more.

Yvette: It got his attention a little bit.

Barbara: What grade are we talking about?

Yvette: He’s in seventh grade.

Carlson: He’s in seventh.

Barbara: Okay. My son is in seventh grade. I, I understand exactly what you’re saying. We’ve been through that. Does the teacher think that he’s capable?

Yvette: The, well, the teacher does think he can, but his science teacher says that he does struggle. He can see a struggle in his memory, trying to, you know, retain the information that he read.

2–27

Anything that, in the subjects that you have to read and retain information, those are the subjects he has the hardest time in. But he does say that just if he would put more effort into his work that, just get assignments in, that will at least bring the grade up to a passing grade. If he put more effort.

Carlson: Some sweat equity.

Yvette: Yeah, and then, and then, he, they’re so lethargic. They’re
very lethargic, just laid back. You know, it’s like, he just can’t do it, didn’t do it.

**Barbara:** They don’t care. They don’t care at this age, I don’t think.

**Carlson:** So it seems to me that what you’re saying is that you can’t make him do his schoolwork.

**Yvette:** Right. I can’t—

**Carlson:** And so, and he’s kind of telling you, “You can’t make me do the work.”

**Yvette:** Yeah. Well, it makes me feel very inadequate as a parent because I thought I haven’t did what I should have done, and you know, maybe when he was 4 or 5, you know.

**Carlson:** Anyone else felt inadequate as a parent? Okay.

2–28

You’re a member of a good club here. So it sounds like what he’s saying to her is that, “You can’t make me do it.” I’m wondering if this couldn’t be kind of a power struggle that we just talked about but maybe a passive one. And the more she pushes, the less he does. The more demerits that he gets.

**Yvette:** But where do you find that line of he really can’t do it, too?

**Barbara:** What about tutoring?

**Kim:** Or testing?

**Yvette:** Okay, he has never been tested.

**Carlson:** So that might be a good place to start to find out his ability level.

**Barbara:** Really. To see if there really is a problem or if it’s just a seventh grade personality of a seventh grade boy. You should test him or have him tutored or…

**Carlson:** That was something—

**Yvette:** It’s just like with their papers, like when they do their homework, however sloppy it is, they really just do not care.
Barbara: Oh, my son just balls his up, he balls it up to turn it in. And the teachers accept it.

Carlson: See, I’m wondering what would happen if, when you went to school each day, and you found out what his assignments were that were missing, if you just said, “Well, we’ll go home when they’re done.”

2–29

Yvette: “We’ll go home when they’re done”?

Carlson: Right. You find out at the end of the day what assignments weren’t done, and then you say, “We’ll go home when they’re done,” and then you just sit down, get a magazine, and wait until they’re done. And then the next day you show up, and I’m wondering what would happen after a few weeks, if he wouldn’t get the idea that you have to do your assignments every day. You can’t just get out of it with a demerit.

Yvette: Right.

Carlson: While you’re doing the testing that Kim talked about. Would you be willing to work on a strategy like that? Where you don’t fight with him about his inability to do homework, but you don’t give in, either.

Yvette: Yeah, I would be willing to do anything I can at this point.

Carlson: Okay. Let’s see if you’d be willing to do that, and then also follow up this idea of the testing.

Linda: The testing’s very good, because my daughter went through that in fifth and sixth grade.

Carlson: So that was helpful.

Linda: And they found out what her strengths and their weaknesses were.

2–30

And they gave her special help with the weaknesses, and then made her feel better about her strengths. And she even had a couple of
special classes, but it just turned her around. It really helped a lot, because she didn’t think, “Well, I’m so much stupider than everybody else in the class.”

**Yvette:** Yeah, he calls himself stupid all the time.

**Linda:** Yes, and that’s very bad for her self-esteem. And when she got extra help with the kids who were a lot like her, she felt more, not struggling so much, and it really helped her a lot. And it might help your kid, too.

**Carlson:** Yeah, I think the idea, the belief is that you expect her to do her assignments, stupid or not, that you know she can. You don’t fall for these…these…

**Yvette:** Excuses.

**Carlson:** [Inaudible] that she [inaudible].

Okay. Who wants to go next? Who’s got another issue that we can work on? I’m trying to watch our clock and make sure that everybody gets a chance.

**Linda:** I kind of have a problem with my daughter with disrespect. My mom lives with us—

**Carlson:** There’s some head nodding here. Yeah, disrespect is another theme we have.

2–31

**Linda:** My mom’s staying with us for awhile now because she was ill for awhile and then she was going to go visit relatives in different states and stuff, and I told her to stay with us. And it’s like a combination disrespect/power thing altogether but she talks back to my mom a lot, and I just feel the fury building up in me, and I don’t know how to handle it all the time. And I don’t like when she talks back to me or… Then she gets mad. She slams doors. We go back and forth.

**Carlson:** Can you give us an example where that happened in the last couple of days where she talked back either to you or your mom and then what you did?
Linda: Lots of times it’s in the morning when I try to get her up.

Carlson: How about this morning?

Linda: This morning, she just kept putting it off and putting it off, you know, and…

Carlson: That’s what she did, but did you do?

Linda: I told her, I kept telling her the time. It’s such-and-such a time; it’s such-and-such a time. And I said, “You know, I’m not going to call the school and make an excuse like my car didn’t start or whatever,” because I used to do that a couple of times because I didn’t want her to be in trouble all the time. I said, “This is your responsibility. You have to get up.”

2–32

Carlson: Oh, I see.

Linda: And then she would tell me, “Why don’t you just shut up and leave me alone?” And then I just stand there, like… I don’t, because I can’t, I can’t handle people telling me to shut up. I just, it’s just one of my pet peeves.

Carlson: Anybody else ever have your kids say something like that to you that you didn’t think was appropriate?

Gail: Oh, absolutely.

Linda: And it doesn’t happen a lot, but it happens more than I like.

Gail: Definitely.

Carlson: Okay, so… Okay. Then this is an example where you disrespect her, and then she disrespects you?

Linda: I try not to, I don’t raise my voice. I don’t call her names or anything like that.

Carlson: Oh, no. Could it be that the disrespect comes from the fact that you don’t believe that she’s able to get up in the morning even though she’s 12 years old?

Linda: Mm-hmm. But there’s the fact that…
Carlson: And so therefore you keep reminding her and have convinced her that you don’t believe she’s able?

Linda: This is an ongoing problem, though.

Carlson: Now what would happen if you were to say to her something like this.

2–33

If you were to say, “I know you can get up, and I’ve got you this alarm clock, and from now on, you’re on your own. And I have confidence in you.” And then walk away.

Linda: We’ve discussed the alarm clock thing, yeah.

Carlson: Would you be willing not to discuss it, though, and just let it fall where it might?

Linda: Mm-hmm.

Carlson: What happens if kids are late to school at your school?

Linda: When they’re chronically late, they either get lunch detention or after-school detention and I prefer the after-school detention because she tends to like to eat lunch by herself, so.

Carlson: Okay, but that’s between you and the school. And so—

Linda: Right.

Carlson: I mean not—between the school and her. It doesn’t involve you.

Linda: Yeah. If she wants to do something after school, I will usually ground her. Take it away.

Carlson: But that, yeah, well, that’s not your doing. Because see, that’s between her and the school. I wouldn’t ground her. I would... Yeah, that’s double punishment.

Linda: Yeah. Okay.

Carlson: That’s like having to stand twice for the same crime. If she goes late to school, that’s between her and the school then.
And my guess is that if you get out of it, she’ll get in it. If you’d be willing to do that.

Linda: Oh, sure. Take any kind of suggestions, sure. And then, that’s not really so much the problem as, like I said, is the disrespect. I don’t like the talking back, but then I talk to other parents. They go, “Well,” they’re like, “you haven’t seen anything yet.” But why should we have to do that?

Carlson: My guess is that she’ll stop talking back to you when you stop talking disrespectfully to her, when you start treating her like she’s able. And she may very well start to respond that way. In other words, don’t say things and remind kids about things that they can do for themselves.

Linda: All right.

Carlson: And I don’t know if you could think about that.

So we have two people left, depending on who wants to go.

Kim: Well, I’ll go ahead and go.

My situation isn’t so much an ongoing problem as something that I see happening in the future.

Marina just got a car and is very excited about her new car. But at the same time, you know, I made the stipulation to her that, you know, once you get this car, you’re responsible for the insurance and the gas. And you know, her thing is, “Well, I can’t work because I have soccer.”

And I said, “Well, it sounds like you have some decisions to make.” And she, you know, I, we reminded her of certain places where they’re, you know, hiring and things.

But she’s like, “Well, I can’t go Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday because of soccer and then on Saturdays I play, and then every Sunday—every other Sunday—I go visit my dad, so who would hire
me?”
And up to this point, she has, I mean, I haven’t paid anything. And I’m committed not to pay anything towards the car or the gas, but I can see her savings and her checking account dwindling. And I’ve told her that this car, if she can’t pay for it, it’s sitting outside.

2–36
I’m not paying it. But I can see that coming in the future.

Carlson: So has anyone else had a problem where you’ve set rules for your kids and then won’t let them suffer the consequences of the decisions they make? It sounds like a few of you are agreeing on that one, huh?

Barbara: It’s hard to let go because we already know where they’re going. They don’t know, but we already know where they’re going, so it’s hard to let go.

Carlson: Yeah. And everyone’s interested in this, because they’ve all got kids who are pre-car, coming up here.

Kim: It’s not fun.

Carlson: And so what you’re saying is that you were wondering if you had the courage to really follow through on this and to say, “I guess you’ve decided not to drive”?

Kim: Right. I mean, I know I can do it because I follow through on other things but I know, I also know how manipulative she can be.

2–37
So I guess maybe I have to prepare myself for that when she’s like, “But you don’t understand. You know, I really need this. I really need to go there.” Because I’ve already found her like hitting her brothers and sisters up. You know, she’ll take them for an ice cream, but it’s going to cost them $5, or somebody else found $20 and they’re going to give it to the sister for gas. And it’s like, oh, no, no, no, no.

Carlson: So that’s not okay for her to be a cab driver and charge fares?
Kim: If they’re appropriate. I don’t think, you know, just around the corner to McDonald’s for $5 is quite appropriate.

Carlson: Well, it depends. It depends. Sometimes I’ll pay $5 for that and sometimes I’ll bet one of your kids would and other times they wouldn’t.

Kim: Well, maybe. Maybe. I just… She tends to…

Carlson: It sounds like she’s working her problem out pretty well.

Kim: She’s very creative. I have to…

Carlson: I mean, with soccer and all of these other activities, it sounds like maybe she really doesn’t have time for what we would call an official “real” job.

Kim: Yeah.

Barbara: How old is she?

Kim: Sixteen.

Carlson: Twenty-two.

2–38

Kim: Yeah. Going on 22.

Barbara: And how many years does she have to work? You know what I’m saying? At 16, would you rather see her having fun and playing soccer or working to pay off a car?

Carlson: Oh, so you’re wondering whether she can really do all of it?

Barbara: No, I’m wondering if as a parent, we should help them out until they’re 18 and old enough to really work a job because they’re going to work the rest of their lives, and let her play now at 16. Because she’s going to be working at 18, 20, 40, 50.

Kim: Yeah. But she took on this responsibility. There was a car she could have used that the insurance was paid for, but she wanted her own. And I told her along with this adult decision comes adult responsibilities.

Carlson: So she could really park this car and drive the other one
still?

Kim: Yeah. Different situation.

Carlson: This is tough. This is whether or not you have a backbone, huh?

Kim: Yeah.

Carlson: You’re going to stand up for this.

2–39

Kim: I guess time will tell.

Carlson: Well, it sounds like you know what you need to do on this one. It’s just whether or not you’re going to do it.

Kim: Yeah.

Carlson: How about you, Barbara? Have you got one?

Barbara: I have a know-it-all son.

Carlson: Anybody else have know-it-all children?

Everybody: Oh, yes.

Barbara: Just know it all…Last night we were, you know, he was working on an assignment and I said, “Read me the…” He had to watch a Spanish show for 30 minutes and then just write three or four sentences about what he saw in that 30 minutes. So I said, “Okay. Well, read it to me.” And he read it, and it didn’t make sense. I mean, it did not, the English did not… The way he re-worded it or what have you, it did not make sense. It was not a complete sentence. I don’t think there was a verb or anything.

And he says, “Mom, you don’t know Spanish. This will, this is fine. The teacher is only going to look at this and give me five points. What difference does it make?”

2–40

So I said, “Well, Blake, if you say da-da-da-da-da, that would make sense to the whole world. But the way you have it worded, the guy next door would not know what you’re talking about, and all you
have to do is add one word.” Which was one word, “remember.” “Remember.”

And then after this whole 15 minutes of, “No. I’m leaving it. The teacher’s not going to even look at it. I’m leaving it. I’m leaving it. It’s fine. It’s fine.”

And I finally said, “Just try it. Just say it.” And he put the word “remember” in the middle of the sentence, and he could finally see that, “Oh, I see what you’re saying. Oh, okay. Okay.”

But why do I have to go through 15 minutes of “yes,” “no,” “yes,” “no,” “yes.” And I could have left it alone and said, “Okay. Well, take it to school and get your 80 percent instead of 100 percent.”

Carlson: So what you’re saying is that you seem to get your point across with your son but there’s a price to pay each time that it happens, and you’re getting pretty tired?

2–41

Barbara: Yes. My peace is gone.

Carlson: Has anybody got any idea of what might be happening with Barb and Blake?

Kim: It sounds like another power struggle.

Carlson: “You can’t make me.” And then when you finally do make him, then he says, “Someday, if I keep practicing, I’ll be as powerful as Mom.” You know, he sees the value of power.

Barbara: You know, I keep saying…

Carlson: That you model it for him by choosing to continue to argue rather than just walking away.

Barbara: I could walk away and let him…

Carlson: I wonder what would happen if you were to do that. And see, part of the problem that I see us doing with our teenagers, is we say something and then we kind of wait there and we go, “Come on. Come on.” You know, as opposed to saying something and then walking away.
2–42
I wonder what would happen if you got used to the practice of saying things once, and then walking away. You may have to go to the bathroom, and you may have to lock the door, and you may have to turn the radio up or fortify yourself a little bit because I bet he’ll come after you. Because it’s kind of hard to have a power conflict with yourself.

Could you disengage like that, do you think? Could you see how you could…

**Barbara:** We care so much. You know, we care about the “A” instead of the “C.” That’s the bottom line. I want to see you make the “A” instead of the “C.” So we sit there and fight for that “A” and they really don’t care as long as they get their five points or turn the assignment in, they don’t care if the sentence is backwards or forwards.

**Carlson:** But that’s…

**Barbara:** So it’s a fight for us to help them make that “A.”

**Carlson:** For me. To help me.

**Yvette:** I think one of the mistakes I made with my kids—because they all seem to have some of the same characteristics…

2–43
…is that I have done throughout their childhood years, their early years, I have done so much for them that they’re almost incapable of doing things for themselves now. And they may think they can’t.

**Carlson:** They may believe they can’t, yeah.

**Yvette:** They may believe they can’t because I, my son, I can, he loves oatmeal. Oatmeal is one of the simplest things to cook. He will insist, “I can’t do it. I tried. I tried it.”

I said, “You have to keep trying until you get it just the way you like it.”

So he’ll just say, “I just won’t eat the oatmeal.”
And what would I do? I go and make him the oatmeal like he likes it. And even though in my subconscious, in my heart, I should say, “You have to stop doing this. You have seen the mistakes you made, and you’ve seen the outcome of this,” and yet my heart won’t let me stop doing things that I know that’s not healthy for my kids as far as, you know, becoming independent adults. And I think that’s, is really, sometimes, because this is a constant battle with me.

2–44
I think about this, it’s on my mind 24 hours a day. I go to sleep with it, wake up with it. But I can’t let go, and I don’t know why I can’t let go. You know, just to say, you know, when they hurt, I hurt more. And that’s, that’s where, I’m the one. It’s not really my child’s problem. Sometimes I think it’s really me, not them.

**Carlson:** So there are some things that you do with a good heart that are harmful.

**Yvette:** Definitely. Oh, yeah. Definitely.

**Carlson:** And now you’re trying to figure out a way to …

**Yvette:** To correct it.

**Carlson:** … disengage yourself and send a different message.

**Yvette:** Disengage or correct it.

**Carlson:** Are you going to go to college with Blake? Oh…just thought of it.

**Barbara:** No, and that’s exactly what she was saying.

**Carlson:** It sounds like he, and it sounds like he’s got this figured out. It sounds like he can figure out what he needs to do for five points. And my guess is, is that there are some teachers that let you turn in crap and get five points and then there are some other teachers that you really have to do it right.

**Barbara:** Right.
Carlson: And I bet he can distinguish between those two.

Barbara: And I keep saying, how many of us remember seventh grade? You know, I keep saying that in my mind. Why am I making a big issues out of this?

Carlson: So you two guys share the same thing, that you both realize that you’re kind of out of line doing the things that you’re doing.

Anybody have that, where you’ve been able to figure out a way to get yourself unhooked from this?

Kim: Well, I had it… I think my son was about seventh grade, maybe sixth, seventh grade and had always been, you know, A’s and B’s student and suddenly just plummeted. And at first it was like, okay, it’s junior high. He’s adjusting. And you know, and this was the first time I’ve ever had, you know, like any, you know, academic problems with, you know, any of the kids so, you know, I really wanted to give him the extra time and attention. And I found I would, you know, I spoke with the teachers and then I would literally spend close to three hours going through, sitting down with him and going through this, and then I found, his grades didn’t improve.

He would just sit there and act more helpless, “Oh, I can’t do this. I don’t know why you’re doing this.” And he would even sit there and say, “Well, you just don’t understand. I’m not as smart as you. I take after Dad.”

And I’m like, “You know what? If you can think of that one, you’re smart.” You know? I’m not buying it.

And then, and then eventually… I mean, then I had my other kids who were doing very well in school sitting there complaining, saying, “You know, it’s not fair you’re giving him all the attention because, you know, he’s doing bad. Maybe if I do bad, you’ll give me more attention.”

So finally, I turned around. I said, “You know what, Ben. This is
your problem, not mine. This is something that you’ve got to figure out on your own. I’m there if you really need my help, but I’ve tried everything I’ve tried, and it didn’t help anyway.” And so I left it alone. He has brought his grades back up, and he’s doing fine.

Barbara: I think it’s seventh grade, I think it’s that.

Yvette: You know, my kid’s been doing this for awhile so it’s not the same thing.

Carlson: But it’s also, but I think what I heard you saying is that there’s a fundamental rule of parenting and that’s you don’t do things for children or for teenagers that they can do for themselves.

2–47

And if you’re doing things for them that they can do for themselves, you know, whether it’s their homework or whether it’s cleaning their rooms or reminding them, you’re doing them a disservice because you, they won’t do it for themselves.

Our time is just about up and before we finish, though, I’d be interested in hearing from each of you what you’ve learned and what you’d be willing to do different, what you can take away from here, if you’re going to do differently this week. Getting your kids to watch out, because here you come. You know, it’s not how your kids are going to be different but how are you going to be different? So what did you learn and what are you going to do differently?

Kim: I’ve learned, for one, that I’m not alone. That everybody’s situations are very similar, and I think just that kind of gives me the confidence and courage to go forward.

2–48

And you know, maybe, I think sometimes I need to draw a harder line and just kind of make my kids more responsible for their decisions no matter what the outcome is.

Carlson: So with Marina, she is going to be walking soon?

Kim: Well, if she tends to manipulate her brothers and sisters, maybe
not. But eventually, probably she will, yeah.

**Carlson:** Okay. Good. How about you, Gail?

**Gail:** I’ve pretty much learned that we do have similar things that we share in common, and I have gotten a lot of good ideas basically that I’m going to institute when I get home. And I was just thinking that it kind of reminds me of what my mother had said previously: “Sometimes it’s taking a hands-off approach.” That’s her method. She said a lot of times she had to just, rather than push, when it came to a point, I can remember now just listening to you guys, that it’s not more so sometimes what you do do as what you don’t do.

**2–49**

And just taking the hands off and just letting things just progress naturally might let, let the kid, you know, think about it and then he might just fall into position. So it’s very helpful.

**Carlson:** Yeah, not do things well. Okay.

**Gail:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**Yvette:** Well, my son has a big research paper coming up, due at the end of the semester. You know, have to have over 100 note cards and all that. I keep asking him, “When are you going to get started? Have you started? Have you got your topic?” Blah, blah, blah. So what I think I’m going to do, I know me. I’m not going to say it’s all in your ballpark. That’s not my personality. But what I am going to do, I’m going to encourage him and say, “I know you can do this alone. I, you know, and if you need my help, I’m here for you, but as of this point, I’m not going to mention it again. I’m going to let…You know it’s due. You know what you have to do, so if you come to me saying you need help with a specific, I will help you, but I’m not going to do this research paper for you.”

**2–50**

**Carlson:** Okay. That sounds good. So you’re going to be… Would you be willing to say to him, “I have confidence in you,” each day?

**Yvette:** Well, if he, if I see progress, because I can’t say, yeah, “I have
confidence that you are going to…”

**Carlson:** Yeah, but just have confidence in him anyway. You don’t have to see progress.

**Yvette:** Well, if you have a note card done, and it’s the, you know, next week, I can’t say, you know, “I—”

**Carlson:** “I have confidence in you. I’m not sure when you’re going to do it, but I believe you’re going to do it. I have confidence in you.”

**Yvette:** Okay. Just still say whether he’s done it or not, still say, “I have confidence in you.”

**Carlson:** Don’t—“I have confidence in you.”

**Yvette:** Okay.

**Carlson:** “I’m not sure when.”

**Yvette:** I’ll do that. I’ll do that.

**Carlson:** Good. Okay.

**Kim:** Because you can still have confidence in your child without having confidence in the project. You can still believe in your child.

**Carlson:** And once he knows you believe in him, maybe he’ll believe in his own ability. Yeah. Good idea. Yeah.

**Linda:** I guess I need to stop standing at the door with a whip every morning and cracking it and say, “It’s this time. It’s this time. It’s this time.” And she’s responsible for everything else, I guess she can be responsible for this, too.

2–51

She can pick out her own alarm clock, whatever she wants and then, and then the consequences are hers whether she’s late or on time, I guess.

**Carlson:** Good. Okay, so you’ve learned that Sarah’s responsible and she’s able to get up in the morning.

**Linda:** Mm-hmm.
Carlson: Great. Okay.

Barbara: Say it once. I’ll try that, really. Just say it once and leave it alone and find my peace again.

Carlson: Use an economy of words, yes. Good.

Barbara: Right.

Carlson: Hey, good ideas. Good luck. I wish you lots of luck.

All: Thank you.

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