Instructor’s Manual

for

RECOVERING FROM AN AFFAIR: 6 SESSIONS OF COUPLES THERAPY

with

RICHARD C. SCHWARTZ, PHD

Manual by
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Published by Psychotherapy.net
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Instructor’s Manual for Recovering from an Affair: 6 Sessions of Couples Therapy with Richard Schwartz, PhD

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RECOVERING FROM AN AFFAIR: 6 SESSIONS OF COUPLES THERAPY WITH RICHARD SCHWARTZ, PHD

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. FACILITATE DISCUSSION
Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the material presented. There are several Discussion Questions included in each session summary. These questions provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

2. 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.

3. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL
Assign readings from Related Websites, Videos, and Further Reading prior to or after viewing.

4. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in the Reaction Paper section.

5. CONDUCT A ROLE-PLAY
The Role-Play section guides you through an exercise you can assign to your students in the classroom or training session.

6. SELECT A SEGMENT IF TIME IS LIMITED
This video includes six actual couples therapy sessions; each session is followed by a discussion between Jon Carlson and Richard Schwartz, in which they debrief the session and introduce the next session. In addition, there is an introduction in which Schwartz gives an overview of both his approach and the work he will do with this particular couple.

On the bottom right-hand side of the screen, you will notice a colored oval with a number, such as 2-45. These indicate the session number and mark the time in each session. For example, 2-45 means you are 45 minutes into the second session. Here is the color key to each session, including the post-session debrief:
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- Yellow: Introduction and Session One;
- Teal: Session Two;
- Brown: Session Three;
- Blue: Session Four;
- Gray: Session Five;
- Teal (again): Session Six and Final Discussion.

If, due to time constraints, you are not able to show this video it in its entirety, you may want to review the General Summary of each session and select one or more of the six sessions to show and discuss.

Our recommendations in such cases are to show the part of the introduction in which Schwartz talks about the IFS approach and gives an overview of the case (1-2 through 1-7); all of Session One, in which Schwartz demonstrates establishing a safe context, introducing parts language, and goal-setting; the following segment of Session Two: 2-9 through 2-23, in which Schwartz demonstrates how to set up and facilitate a Self-to-Self conversation between the couple and how to work with different parts of each individual; and the following segment of Session Four: 4-7 through 4-12, in which Schwartz does intensive parts work with Renee.

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**

Please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients in this video who have courageously shared their personal lives with us.
Internal Family Systems Therapy*

The Internal Family Systems Model (IFS) has evolved over the past 20 years into a comprehensive approach that includes guidelines for working with individuals, couples, and families. The IFS Model represents a new synthesis of two already-existing paradigms: systems thinking and the multiplicity of the mind. It brings concepts and methods from the structural, strategic, narrative, and Bowenian schools of family therapy to the world of subpersonalities.

The IFS Model views a person as containing an ecology of relatively discrete minds, each of which has valuable qualities and each of which is designed to—and wants to—play a valuable role within. These parts are forced out of their valuable roles, however, by life experiences that can reorganize the system in unhealthy ways. A good analogy is an alcoholic family in which the children are forced into protective and stereotypic roles by the extreme dynamics of their family. While one finds similar sibling roles across alcoholic families (e.g., the scapegoat, mascot, lost child), one does not conclude that those roles represent the essence of those children. Instead, each child is unique and, once released from his or her role by intervention, can find interests and talents separate from the demands of the chaotic family. The same process seems to hold true for internal families—parts are forced into extreme roles by external circumstances and, once it seems safe, they gladly transform into valuable family members.

Managers, Firefighters, and Exiles

Schwartz identifies three different kinds of parts that are within every person: Exiled parts are created out of traumatic experiences and are parts we are afraid to look at and expose. Managers are parts that protect the Self from the exiled parts and keep them hidden. Firefighters put out strong emotions when the exiled parts get triggered, and help them stay contained.

The Self

One key aspect of the IFS Model that differentiates it from other models is the belief that, in addition to these parts, everyone is at his or her core a Self containing many crucial leadership qualities such as
perspective, confidence, compassion, and acceptance. Schwartz believes that everyone has this healthy and healing Self despite the fact that many people initially have very little access to it. When working with an individual, the goal of IFS is to differentiate this Self from the parts, thereby releasing its resources.

**The Self-Led Person**

According to Schwartz, the Self is not just a state of mind, but can also be an active healing presence inside and outside people. Once a person’s parts learn to trust that they don’t have to protect so much and can allow the Self to lead, some degree of Self is present for all his or her decisions and interactions. Instead of being overwhelmed by and blending with their emotions, Self-led people are able to hold their centers, knowing that it is just a part of them that is upset now and will eventually calm down. They become the “I” in the storm.

**IFS with Couples**

The IFS approach to couples therapy is a mode of treatment that aims to help couples develop a deeply satisfying relationship between many parts and two spacious Selves, letting the partner become an important—but not the only or primary—source of love.

The level of differentiation between partners in the couple is a barometer for the more opaque level of internal differentiation between parts and Self. Even though the external relational field is the therapist’s first point of contact with a couple, the IFS couples therapist first prioritizes the internal world of each individual. In IFS couples therapy, the first aim is to help parts differentiate from the Self in order to recognize and re-attach to the Self. This internal attachment work paves the couple’s relational road. The goal is a state of individuation and attachment, inside and out.

**The external mirrors the internal**

The painful polarizations that entrap a couple—the fears, the conflict, the adaptive but dysfunctional ways of coping, the rage and withdrawal—are also occurring internally between each client’s parts, causing pain and confusion, followed by feelings of loss, division, and rupture. While this synchrony between external and internal experience will, later in the therapy, begin to feel advantageous, it is
initially a source of deep pain. Work with parts through the Self is needed to launch internal differentiation. The experience of compassion for one’s own inner family brings empathic recognition and tolerance for the dilemmas of one’s partner. Protective parts that developed out of relational rupture earlier in life gradually grow less vigilant and more trusting. With a healthy dose of Self-love, partners develop more tolerance for other perspectives and loosen their grasp on the need to be right. Their hearts become less guarded. With an open heart, differences are not a threat to survival.

Once the individuals in a couple have more access to Self, transformation is natural. For example, being clear in saying yes and no becomes less threatening. Anger turns out to be a resource for change rather than a weapon. The courage to hear feedback without rigid protection grows, as does the skill of speaking truths with care and respect. The hope is that couples in this process are learning to accept what is and to be in connection without pushing, striving, and judging either themselves or each other. When requests for behavioral change come through Self rather than from a protective part, the delivery and tone can be so different that partners are better able to listen and more likely to feel willing to respond.

When relationship ruptures do occur, the internal connection to Self can foster the grace of low reactivity. With access to Self energy, there is the space and capacity to choose a response, even when one’s partner is not able to do the same. Being less vulnerable to shame, one is better able to stay connected and attuned internally as well as externally. And if one has been hurtful or misattuned, one can make the needed repair.

In short, the IFS couples therapist trusts that the client system has its own innate intelligence and capacity for healing. The power of differentiated attachment in an inner system is the accessible, inherent capacity for love and care that comes with Self energy. While the relationship between clients and therapist is fundamental to the healing process, it nevertheless follows that insight on the part of the therapist is not crucial—or even particularly useful—for healing.

The U-Turn to Re-Turn

IFS teaches therapists—and the therapists in turn invite couples—to embrace the U-turn and bring compassion to their own wounded inner
parts, actively healing the past and ending its tidal pull on the present so they can re-turn to their partners in the here and now. In addition, the unburdening of relational trauma invites partners to access their Self energy and their inherent ability to re-turn, connect, bond, and provide loving, attuned behaviors. In this process of differentiated attachment, one learns to be the constant source of love and care that one has always longed for. When partners are no longer called upon to meet all the needs of the other, they are free to notice the crucial roles they do play in loving and supporting each other. In this way, they learn to receive the care that is offered, while remaining present to themselves when that care is not available.

Many couples who seek help have difficulty staying open and curious as they speak to the therapist and to each other. They may have hyperaroused parts, or angry, defensive, or hypoaroused withdrawn and collapsed parts that make them inarticulate. If a couple chooses to remain together, the ability to have a loving, connected relationship with their parts while staying connected with their partner, even in moments of conflict, will be at the core of their work together. It is important for couples to understand that conflict is inevitable and that their process during difficult conversations is much more important than the content of their arguments.

Re-doing conflict in the office, learning to speak for (instead of from) parts, naming projections, and identifying polarizations are important steps in IFS couples work. There will always be internal protectors whose job is to prevent vulnerable young parts from flooding the system with unbearable emotion. It is therefore necessary, just as it is in individual IFS therapy, to attend to the extreme, toxic beliefs of the exiled parts. As couples therapy progresses and exiles surface, it is often necessary to do individual work with one partner or the other. However, many couples can create enough safety to do this work in the presence of their partner. Witnessing another’s deep healing work is a profound experience; it is a vicarious journey toward the Self. Schwartz calls it a radical U-turn. However, the goal is not to turn inward forever, but rather to re-turn to connection with more love and compassion.

*Adapted from Evolution of The Internal Family Systems Model by Dr. Richard Schwartz, PhD, and Couples & Marriage Counseling with Internal Family Systems Therapy, by Toni Herbine-Blank, MS, RN, CS-P.*
Summary with Discussion Questions

DOWNLOAD THE COMPLETE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Find the full, printable transcript of this video on our website at http://www.psychotherapy.net/schwartz-transcript

Username: instructor     Password: download

SESSION ONE

General Summary

In this initial session with Renee and Dennis, we learn about the crisis that brought them to therapy: Dennis had an affair and Renee found out about a month ago, through a phone call presumably from the woman with whom Dennis had the affair. We learn that Dennis is struggling with shame, guilt, and worthlessness, and that he still loves Renee. We learn that Renee feels devastated and angry, is partially blaming herself, and is confused about what to do.

Schwartz spends the session gathering information, helping each of them connect to their feelings, empathizing, introducing parts language, helping them identify their goals for therapy, and finding out about how they relate to each other.

Schwartz inquires into chronic issues in their relationship, and we learn that emotional intimacy has been a challenge for them. We find out that Renee was sexually abused as a child and that her tendency is to take responsibility for everything. We learn that both Dennis and Renee want to be more intimate with each other.

Throughout the session, Schwartz checks in with both partners in turn to see how they’re feeling. When each responds in various ways, Schwartz demonstrates his technique (which we’ll see repeated throughout the six sessions) of moving towards the experience and helping the individual explore, through somatic awareness, whatever has been triggered.

Towards the end of the session, Schwartz helps Dennis explore the part of him that had the affair, which triggers anger in Renee.
Detailed Summary

In the beginning of the session, we learn that Renee and Dennis have two boys aged 13 and 9, that they have been married for 16 years, that Renee is an artist and Dennis is “in business,” and that they are both currently in therapy on their own. Before gathering more history, Schwartz checks in with the couple about how they’re feeling being there.

Dennis responds that he is feeling excited and happy to be there, and Renee states that she is feeling nervous. Schwartz responds to Renee with an intervention that introduces the parts language right away:

*What’s that nervous part saying to you?*

We learn that Renee’s nervousness is connected to not having worked with Schwartz before and also to the crisis that she and Dennis are facing. In his attempt to establish a safe context, Schwartz says to the couple:

*I want you to feel as safe as possible in this context and as much in control of what we do as possible. If I ask a question and you don’t feel comfortable answering it, please just say you’d rather not.*

Next, Schwartz inquires into the crisis that Renee mentioned, and gives them the option of talking about it.

The couple agrees to share the details of the crisis, with Renee encouraging Dennis to do the telling. Dennis describes the affair he had in 1996, and Renee’s phone call a month ago from someone who told her that Dennis had an affair. He describes the aftermath this way:

*It’s been very tough for this last month, dealing with this situation. I never really shared what happened in the past before this phone call, and I’m in therapy now to try to figure that out and understand why I’ve done that. And it’s been tough…. I’ve had a hard time being honest with all of [Renee’s] questions because I feel so ashamed about what I’ve done. I still love her. I still care for her even though this happened… It’s been painful*
for me, and it’s been very, very hard on Renee. And I’m thankful that she still loves me. So we’re trying to work through this thing.

Schwartz helps Dennis identify his feelings of guilt, shame, and gratitude that Renee still seems to love him. Then he turns his attention to Renee, by asking her what it’s been like for her over the past month, since finding out about Dennis’s affair. She responds:

It’s very devastating. I have a lot of ambivalent feelings about… just about everything. One moment I’m really angry, and the next moment I’m really in love with him. I have a lot of trouble not beating up on myself for still being in love with Dennis.

After gathering more information, Schwartz returns to the part of Renee that always wanted her to be independent, and inquires into whether she has thought of leaving the marriage:

Did [this part] get to the point of making you want to leave?

She responds that she wouldn’t leave the kids, but has thought about making Dennis leave.

Schwartz then asks about how their relationship had been before Renee got the phone call. We learn that the couple wasn’t spending a lot of time together, as Dennis was starting a new business and working another job. Renee adds that during the time of the affair, Dennis was angry a lot and she felt cut off, and that their children would mention worrying that their parents were going to get divorced. Dennis is surprised to hear that the kids were worried back then, and shares that there were still a lot of “nice moments” where they did things together. We see that Dennis and Renee had different perspectives on how difficult that time period was, with Renee having experienced it as a lot more rocky than Dennis seemed to. The level of difficulty Renee experienced during that period is news to Dennis, and he’s surprised to hear her account, emphasizing the point that things weren’t terrible between them every day. When Schwartz tries to make a conclusion about that time period by saying, “But it wasn’t great,” Dennis responds, “I don’t think it was as bad as Renee is making it sound,” and Renee responds, “Isn’t that very convenient?”
Schwartz shifts the attention away from this conflict by gathering more history:

_How long was the duration of the affair?_

While a simple question on the surface, the way Dennis and Renee struggle with the answer reveals more of the tension between them. Dennis has difficulty remembering the dates and length of the time he was with the other woman, and Renee is angry about his lack of clarity. We learn that Dennis has not had any contact with the other woman since he asked her if she called his house, and that he plans to continue not having contact with her.

After empathizing with how difficult this situation is for both of them, Schwartz shifts into goal setting by saying:

*If there was something that we could do in these six sessions that would be helpful, is there something specific? Do you have some kind of vision of how you’d like it to go, how you’d like to change things with the two of you?*

Dennis says:

_I’m just looking for us to become closer than ever, and wanting Renee to know that I care for her and love her more than ever. That’s my main concern, for her to know that I really, genuinely care for her and want to be married, and this mistake I made is awful and I’m trying to understand why I did that, in therapy. And I want her trust, if I can ever get that back._

Renee says:

_The issue of trust is very large for me. And I guess separating out what reality is and what goes on in my head—that would be helpful, just to see what the reality [of what our relationship] is. I mean, if there is really a foundation for rebuilding it._

Next Schwartz asks about any chronic issues in the relationship. Renee shares that intimacy has been an issue for them, and reveals that she was sexually abused as a child. She describes her tendency to take responsibility for everything and says she’d like to learn not to do
that. Dennis says Renee has helped him learn how to be emotionally intimate and that this has been new for him.

Renee says that, over the last several weeks, Dennis has really “made an effort to look in my eyes and to touch me and to tell me things that I’ve always wanted to hear.”

Schwartz responds:

So there’s something about this [crisis] that maybe cracked him open a little bit. Does that sound right?

Both agree that it’s true. Schwartz notes that there is probably a part of Renee that doesn’t trust Dennis’s loving behavior, but that if he kept it up it would be a good thing, and that then this crisis would have been a blessing, in a way. Dennis responds, “I wouldn’t go that far,” and Renee says, “If you have to say it that way.” Schwartz clarifies what he meant:

Well, sometimes these things happen and they do crack people open in ways that, if you had just kind of trudged along in your ordinary life, never would have happened. It’s nice to take advantage of them, is part of what I’m saying—these opportunities, these openings.

Schwartz gets confirmation from Dennis that he is interested in maintaining this closeness and intimacy that he has demonstrated over the past several weeks. Then Schwartz summarizes what each person has expressed about what they want out of couples therapy. To Renee, he says:

So what I’m hearing is, in the time we have together, if there was something I could do for you to help you just get more of a sense of where you stand versus these warring parts about this issue, so you can make up your own mind about how much of Dennis’s change to trust and how much to let him back in, that would be helpful to you.

To Dennis, he says:

And maybe, from your point of view, if there was a way to keep your momentum going in the changes you’ve...already made this
RECOVERING FROM AN AFFAIR: SIX SESSIONS OF COUPLES THERAPY WITH RICHARD C. SCHWARTZ, PHD

past month...you’d be interested in that…. And it sounds like you’re also curious about why this thing happened to begin with, and you might be interested in our exploring that?

The couple agrees, and Schwartz checks in with each of them again about how they’re feeling in the moment. Dennis replies that he’s feeling pretty good, and Renee shares that she’s feeling hot and sweaty. Schwartz responds with interest in Renee’s experience and perspective, again using parts language:

Let’s just focus on that hot and sweaty part....Let’s get a little reading of what that’s about. What’s going on in there?

This leads to a rich exploration of Renee’s vulnerability and her feeling of responsibility for the affair (“If I’d done this or that or if I was different or 20 years younger.”) Schwartz highlights this critical part of her:

So there’s a part that’s beating you up about what you did to create this, saying that if you’d been a better wife, this wouldn’t have happened.

Schwartz inquires into the relational aspect of this self-criticism by asking Renee:

When you get down on yourself that way, how do you wind up acting toward Dennis?

Renee shares that then she feels angry and more in need of reassurance that Dennis does love her and is truly committed to staying with her. Schwartz clarifies one of her goals:

So if there was a way to help you with this part that blames you all the time...you’d like that a lot.

“That’d be tremendous,” Renee replies. Then Schwartz asks Dennis how it is for him when Renee gets angry at him. Dennis responds that he tells her he is sorry and tries to be there for her and ease her pain. Schwartz guides Dennis to explore his feelings of guilt and worthlessness, and asks about the part of him that made him have an affair.
Dennis shares what he knows about that part:

> Well, I know that that part of me was interested in just sex that was real quick and easy, with not much caring involved with this person. I didn’t really have a lot of feelings for her. I mean, I liked her as a person, but, after getting to know her, there were no real, deep feelings for this person. And she was ready for me, I think sexually, just to become close to me. She was ready to do whatever. That part of me that recognized that took over, and I think that the other good parts of me were in the background, kind of stuck down or whatever. I think that that part of me took over and pretty much let these things happen without me really stepping back and having my other parts say, ‘What are you doing here?’

Schwartz inquires into whether the worthless part of Dennis has been familiar to him or if it just showed up in relation to the affair. Dennis responds that he has indeed felt worthless before this incident, but that this is the worst it’s ever been.

Schwartz then says:

> So you’re pretty angry at that part that got you involved with this woman.

Dennis responds, “Absolutely.”

As the end of the session draws near, Schwartz checks in with how Renee is feeling again, and she responds, “I think I’m trying to squelch how mad I am.” Humbly and compassionately, Schwartz responds:

> This maybe wasn’t the best thing to bring up in the last five minutes of the session. So this discussion about that part of Dennis triggered your angry part. Just take a second and listen to it for a second, and see what it wants you to say for it.

Renee shares that her body feels twisted, and Schwartz invites her to speak for that feeling:

> Could you just focus there and see what that part wants you to say for it? Maybe not have it take over, but just what it wants you to say for it, to Dennis.
Renee responds:

*Just how angry I am that you would seek pleasure with someone else and not seek it with me. Because I wanted pleasure, too. And I’m committed to you, and it offends me and it makes me really angry that you would seek it with someone else.*

He invites her to check in with her body again, and she reports that she feels less tight in that spot. Then he checks in one last time with Dennis, who has nothing to say. Schwartz concludes this first session by saying:

*Again, I really thank you for coming down, particularly in this big crisis time. And I am good at helping people do the kinds of things we talked about. I’ll think about these goals some more, and I’d like you to also.*

**SESSION ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Nervous:** What do you think of the way Schwartz introduced the language of parts early on in the first session, when Renee shared that she was feeling nervous? (“What’s that nervous part saying to you?”) Did you like the way Schwartz said he’s happy to do anything he can to help Renee with her nervousness? Why or why not? If you were working with a couple and one partner said in the beginning that they were feeling nervous, how might you respond?

2. **Options:** Schwartz made it clear up front that he wants the couple to feel as much in control of what they do as possible, and he often gave them options and various possibilities for how to proceed. What do you think of this aspect of his approach? Do you tend to emphasize choice and options with your clients, or with some clients or choices more than others? Why or why not?

3. **Judgments:** How did you react when you listened to Dennis talk about his affair? Did you have any judgments about him? Similarly, did you have any judgments about how Renee reacted to his affair? If so, what were your judgments, and how would
you work with those judgments if you were their therapist?

4. First session focus: What do you think of the way Schwartz shifted between fact gathering, deeper emotional work, and goal setting in this first session? In your initial session with a couple, which of these areas do you tend to focus on most? Why?

5. A blessing?: What came up for you when Schwartz proposed that their crisis has the potential to have been a blessing? Is this how you see it? What do you think are some dangers of shining a positive, optimistic light on an affair?

6. Anger at the end: What do you think of the way Schwartz responded to Renee’s anger at the end of the session? What came up for you when the session was coming to a close and she brought up strong emotions? How do you think you would have responded? Do you think it was a mistake for Schwartz to invite Dennis to talk about the part of him that had the affair in the last five minutes of the session?

7. Voice: What do you think of Schwartz’s tone and pace when he talked? Do you agree with Carlson who described it as “soothing, slow, and comfortable,” or did you find it boring? Do you think his tone and pace helped this couple feel safe? Do you have a different voice when you are in the therapist role than in your everyday life?

8. Direction of dialogue: What do you think of how Schwartz ran most of the dialogue through him in the first session? Would you have encouraged the couple to talk directly to each other more? Why or why not? Is observing a couple’s interactional dynamics generally a way you assess them in the initial session, or is your style more like Schwartz’s?

9. Individual work: What do you think of Schwartz’s approach of doing individual work with each member of the couple in the couple’s session? Is this how you approach couples therapy, or do you tend to refer clients to individual therapy for that
kind of individual depth work? What do you think are the pluses and minuses of doing individual work and couple work at the same time?

SESSION TWO: TWO WEEKS LATER

General Summary

In the second session, we learn right away that Renee and Dennis had a bad week, and that the first session triggered Renee’s angry part. Schwartz senses that they have come in very defensive, so he asks them about it upfront. Renee reveals that she has been questioning why she is in couples therapy, since she is supposed to be working on taking care of herself. Schwartz encourages her to stay, while also giving her the option of leaving.

Once Renee agrees to stay for the session, Schwartz gives them some options for how to proceed: 1) they talk to each other, while he plays “parts detector” and “blows the whistle” when parts “pop up,” or 2) he works with one of them individually, while the other witnesses or leaves the room. They decide on option one, and Renee chooses to talk to Dennis about her anger. With Schwartz’s encouragement to speak for her anger rather than from it, and with his guidance to focus on the feeling in her body, she tells Dennis about her anger at him over the affair, saying at one point, “I hate you for doing that.” Schwartz invites Dennis to respond, and helps him get in touch with the feelings in his body. Dennis struggles to understand Schwartz’s approach, calling it “screwy,” yet is still able to access shame and his fear of losing Renee. Schwartz helps the couple talk to each other in this way, switching back and forth between the two, asking them to “read their bodies” to see how they’re doing. At one point, Schwartz asks Renee’s angry part to “step back” so Renee can be present for Dennis while he talks about his fear. Dennis discovers that he is afraid of being overwhelmed by his fear.

Through this dialogue, we learn about another issue in the couple’s relationship, which Renee calls Dennis’s “money issues.” While Renee believes it is very important to address this issue, given that their marriage almost dissolved a few years ago because of it, Dennis says there are other issues that are more important to work on.
Towards the end of the session, Schwartz checks in again with Renee’s ambivalence about continuing with the couples therapy, and she responds that she feels better about it now and wants to continue. Dennis reveals that Schwartz’s approach of looking at their different parts is difficult for him to understand, and Schwartz explains to him that it is a way of focusing on his emotions one at a time so that he’s not so overwhelmed and confused.

Detailed Summary

Schwartz sets the stage for the second session by sharing his goals with Carlson:

My goals going into the second session would be, after we’ve got some of their parts on the table now, to begin perhaps having them talk to each other and my playing “parts detector”: as I see these parts pop up when they talk to each other, getting them to stop the action and listen to what these parts want them to say, and then to speak for—rather than from—their parts.

The second session begins with Schwartz asking the couple about the tension between them that he noticed when they arrived. He also asks how the last session was for them and how things have been since then.

Dennis starts, and we learn almost immediately that Renee has been very angry. She says:

I am angry about the way I was treated through the whole year that he had the affair. I am angry about the responsibility that he handed me, about money, and I am angry at myself for taking it.

Renee says she is questioning the purpose of her being in couples therapy if she is supposed to be focusing on herself. Schwartz openly shares his opinion about that:

I think it’s important to work with yourself, but it’s also important to work with your relationship. And there is a way to work with your relationship, here, if you are interested in that.

He then turns the focus to what she wants out of couples therapy by asking, “What would you like to see happen here?” When
Renee responds that she doesn’t know, and that she is experiencing a tremendous amount of rage, Schwartz lets her know that he understands and that she doesn’t have to continue in couples therapy if she doesn’t want to. He stresses that she does not have to be there if it does not feel right for her. Renee decides to stay for the session, but appreciates that she has the option of discontinuing if she wants to.

Schwartz lays out some options for how to spend the session, and shares that this is part of his empowering approach:

*This is my style—to keep asking what you’d like and give you options, and then have you choose and help me know what is good for you.*

He describes option one this way:

*One would be to have the two of you talk to each other, but you would give me permission to blow the whistle when I saw different parts of you getting in the way and ask for those parts to step back, and try to keep it safe conversation where you are both leading with what we call your Self. That would be to talk about some of the issues that you are having, or some of the conflict that is in the room now.*

He describes option two this way:

*Another option would be for me to do some work with parts of you that you talked about while you witnessed, or not. If either of you feel uncomfortable doing this work in the presence of the other, it is always possible to ask the other person to leave.*

Renee chooses option one, and Dennis goes along with this. Schwartz takes care to make sure he has permission from both of them to “blow the whistle” when he sees “parts popping up,” and also that Renee’s angry part is in agreement with option one.

When they agree to talk about Renee’s feelings in the moment, Schwartz gives some instructions to Dennis:

*And Dennis, what I would like from you while Renee is doing this is [to] hold your own parts back for a while and put yourself in her shoes as best you can.*
Renee begins talking about her anger, and Schwartz asks her where she feels the anger in her body. He helps her focus her attention on the anger:

Just check with that angry part now. See where you feel it in your body. Just focus right here. Just see if there’s anything more it wants you to say while you’re speaking for it. Speak for it… just the gist of what it wants you to say.

After she speaks for her angry part, including saying to Dennis, “I hate you for doing that,” Schwartz emphasizes that it is a part of her that hates Dennis. He then returns her attention to her body:

Focus right in here and see how it feels now. It feels the same or different?

Schwartz checks in with Dennis to see how he is doing, first letting Renee know he is going to shift his attention. Then he invites Dennis to respond to Renee:

I want you to go ahead and respond to Renee, whatever way feels right.

Dennis responds:

Well, I can understand why there’s so much anger and hate, and there’s just not much I can say. I’m sorry, and I know I was wrong, and I have to accept what you’re doing and try to get through it.

Then Schwartz invites Dennis to “read” his body:

Let me have you read your body for a second and see what you find in your body right now.

Dennis responds by saying he doesn’t think he knows how and that it sounds “screwy.” Schwartz responds by asking the part of Dennis that thinks it’s screwy to “step back for a second,” and then asks, “Can you read your body now?” Dennis finds fear, and with Schwartz’s guidance, locates the fear in his body. Schwartz asks, “Is it okay if we focus on that fear a little bit?” He then asks focusing questions similar to those he asked Renee. This exploration uncovers Dennis’s fear of losing Renee. Schwartz invites Dennis to tell Renee about this fear.
Then Dennis becomes aware of shame, and Schwartz invites Dennis to “see if the shame is able to let you speak for it at all. Just see if there’s anything it’s willing to let you say.” After Dennis speaks about his shame, Schwartz switches back to Renee, inviting her to respond to what Dennis said.

We learn that Renee’s angry part really wants Dennis to be accountable, and to take responsibility for his own issues, particularly “the money issue.” Schwartz reflects this and then invites Dennis to respond. When Dennis tells her that she is right and that he takes responsibility for his “money issue,” Renee expresses anger and mistrust, stating that she hasn’t seen Dennis focus on figuring out his money issues, but only apologizes for them. We learn that from Renee’s perspective, Dennis doesn’t trust Renee with money and tries to control her spending.

To find out where Dennis stands with this issue, Schwartz asks him directly:

*Is there still a part of you around money that, even though you don’t say it as much, still feels like you need to control Renee’s spending?*

When Dennis responds in the negative, Renee accuses him of lying, and shares more of her anger. She tells Dennis that she doesn’t believe he has resolved his money issues, and that she thinks he has put “a lid on it” because he is afraid of losing her. Dennis responds that he thinks there are other issues to work on in the relationship other than the money issue. Renee then shares that their marriage almost dissolved a few years ago over this issue.

Schwartz invites Dennis to do some more individual parts work. He says to Renee:

*And if you could ask that angry part to really step back for a few minutes, and really just try to be present for Dennis while he does this.*

Schwartz guides Dennis back to the fear he identified earlier in the session. He asks Dennis about his relationship to the fear:

*Can you tell me how you feel toward that fear in your heart? Do*
you like it? Do you hate it? Are you afraid of it? Do you want to get rid of it? Do you love it? What do you feel toward it?

This leads to an exploration in which Dennis discovers that he is afraid of the fear because he is scared it will overwhelm him. Schwartz then asks:

*If it were possible to get close to it without it overwhelming you and get to know it enough for it to unload some of the fear it carries, would you be interested in that?*

When Dennis says yes, Schwartz tells him he’s good at helping people do that, and then says, “Take a second now and find the part of you that’s afraid of the fear.” Dennis has some difficulty understanding Schwartz’s instructions and locating the part of himself that is afraid of the fear. He states that he is confused. Schwartz responds:

*I would just like you to consider whether you’d be interested in going toward that fear and maybe toward the shame in the future with us, if I could guarantee that we could do it in such a way that it wouldn’t overwhelm you. In doing that, we could unload a lot of that stuff that drives you—or it has in the past—to do these extreme things like be controlling about money, be interested in affairs, things like that.*

Schwartz asks Dennis to think about whether he feels safe enough to do this exploration with Renee present, and asks Renee to think about whether she would want to witness it and if she’d be able to be empathic towards him during the work. He encourages them to make the decision based on “whatever would feel safer.”

Towards the end of the session, Schwartz returns to what Renee brought up at the beginning of the session about perhaps not wanting to continue in couples therapy. Renee responds that she feels better about it now, that she likes working with the parts. Then Schwartz checks in again with Dennis, who states he is feeling sad because it is hard to look at his past and present actions.

Schwartz asks if either Dennis or Renee has anything else they want to say before they stop, and Dennis says, “What you’re talking to me about seems kind of hard to absorb, looking at different parts and
stuff. It’s just very confusing to me, what you are asking me to do.”
Schwartz tries to explain it:

_Your emotions can talk to you and tell you things that you didn’t know about them, and your thoughts as well. It’s a way of being able to focus on them one at a time so that you’re not having all this bombardment inside that makes you so confused, and to really hear about what one part of you feels or thinks. People find that to be useful, especially when they can hear the story of how whatever this part is got to be the way it is, what happened in the past that made it so afraid or so ashamed. Once people can witness that, then their feelings start to change and they don’t carry all this stuff so much. They don’t have to run away from it all the time._

Dennis seems to understand it a little more, but still has doubts about how to do the work. Schwartz offers to lead him through it and to answer any other questions he has about it, tells them they did “good work,” and says goodbye.

**SESSION TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Anger:** Anger and rage are common in couples work, particularly when one partner has had an affair. How did you react to Renee’s anger? What do you think of how Schwartz worked with her anger? How do you think you might have worked differently with it? Talk about a client you worked with who was very angry, and some of the ways you worked with it.

2. **Ambivalence:** How did you react when Renee said in the beginning of the session that she wasn’t sure why she was there, and that she was considering leaving therapy? What do you make of her ambivalence showing up at this time? What do you think happened in this session that led her to decide to continue? What do you think of how Schwartz handled this? How do you think you would have responded? Have you ever had a member of couple leave or threaten to leave? How was that experience for you, and how did you handle it?

3. **Parts detector:** Can you see yourself playing “parts detector”
or referee like Schwartz did in this session? What did you like and dislike about the way Schwartz intervened when different parts got in the way of Dennis and Renee connecting with each other? What do you think of Schwartz’s instruction to have different parts, such as Renee’s anger, step back? Do you think this was effective? What are other ways you help couples connect with one another when there are strong emotions such as anger and fear?

4. **Body:** What do you think of the way Schwartz asked Renee and Dennis to locate their feelings in their bodies? What is your understanding of why this technique could be effective? Given that Renee seemed more familiar and comfortable with this approach than Dennis did, how might you have worked with Dennis differently? Do you tend to bring your clients’ attention to their bodies? If so, how and why?

5. **For, not from:** What do you think of Schwartz’s approach of having each person identify a part and speak for that part? Why do you think he makes the distinction between speaking for the part rather than from it?

6. **Confusion:** Would you consider Dennis’s confusion to be “resistance”? What do you think of how Schwartz worked with Dennis’s confusion? If you have worked with clients who have a hard time understanding your approach, how have you handled this? Do you think if Schwartz had explained his approach upfront, Dennis would not have been so confused?

7. **I’m good at this:** What do you think of Schwartz repeating the statement, “I’m good at helping people with this”? Do you think that is an effective way to instill hope in a couple? Can you see yourself using that line? Why or why not? What are other ways you offer couples or individual clients hope when they are in crisis?
SESSION THREE: TWO WEEKS LATER

General Summary

In the beginning of the third session, which marks the midway point of this couple’s work with Schwartz, Renee reports that she has been feeling more grief than anger this week, connected to both the affair and her childhood sexual abuse.

Dennis does a lot of work with the fearful part of him. He expresses his fear of making mistakes in his relationship with Renee, and his fear of her angry reaction when he does. With Schwartz’s help, he expresses vulnerability to Renee about how hurtful it is when she “hammers” him when he makes a mistake in general, and in particular how crushed he felt when she rejected his holiday card because it was “too late.”

We learn about a significant part of Dennis, which he calls the “minimizer,” and that when he minimizes his mistakes rather than admitting them, this triggers Renee’s anger. Renee tells Dennis that she won’t feel the need to hammer him if he acknowledges that her feelings are hurt and that he is sorry, and that without that acknowledgment, she feels the need to shout louder (i.e., she gets angrier and hammers him even more). Schwartz describes the vicious cycle they get into: Renee’s angry part triggers Dennis’s fear, which leads him to protect himself by minimizing what happened and defending himself, which further triggers Renee’s rage.

Schwartz shares his opinion about why the affair happened, by saying that self-protection leads to isolation, which leads to searching for connection in places that feel safer. He suggests that by letting Renee in, Dennis will get the connection he is longing for, and then he won’t have “these desperately screaming parts that need somebody else.”

Hearing this triggers Renee’s anger, and she shares how hard it is for her to hear that Dennis was looking elsewhere for connection when she was right there. She also expresses how hard it is to take in Schwartz’s comment that Dennis’s affair being revealed could be looked at as an opportunity for growth in their relationship. As the session is winding
down, Schwartz asks Renee’s angry part to step back and take in Dennis’s desire to understand himself and connect with her. Renee states that she feels better.

**Detailed Summary**

Schwartz sets up Session Three to Carlson this way:

> Again, the goal is to promote more Self-connection—talking Self-to-Self, rather than from these parts. My eye will be on getting Dennis to open up a little more, be more vulnerable. That’s really what this angry part of Renee is looking for.

Dennis and Renee begin by reporting that they have had some ups and downs in the past two weeks, and have been spending more time together. Renee reports that Dennis has been taking more responsibility and been more involved at home.

Dennis shares about the part of himself that he calls the “minimizer,” through recounting canceling his individual therapy appointment even though he and Renee are in crisis. Renee reports that she has been feeling more grief than anger this week, connected to both her marriage and her childhood sexual abuse. Schwartz comments that it sounds like the betrayal of Dennis’s affair brought back memories of the betrayal she experienced as a child. Renee goes on to say that this past week, she and Dennis were with their friends and family for the first time since the affair was disclosed, and the tension she felt in the situation. She says poignantly, “I have private grief, but I have a public face. And those are hard to reconcile for me.”

Dennis and Renee agree to work on talking to each other from their Selves. Renee expresses her interest in hearing more about Dennis’s fear and his “fear of fear” that he explored in their last session. Dennis responds by expressing confusion about where to start and what to say, and Schwartz responds:

> It seems like this confusion comes in a lot of the time when you try to think about your feelings. It might be easier if we did a little work with that confused part first so that you have a better sense of what’s in here, and then you could communicate it better.
Rather than just jumping in to explore any of Dennis’s parts, Schwartz goes slowly and identifies the parts that might be protecting Dennis from self-exploration. He invites Dennis to start with the part of him that feels this approach is hard to accept:

*Ask that part of you what it’s afraid of happening if we continue with this. See what it says.*

After this part of Dennis says it is okay with stepping aside and not interfering with the process, Schwartz invites Dennis to focus on the part of him that makes him confused. When Dennis finds that part, Schwartz says, “Ask it the same question. See if it’s willing to step back also.” After this part says okay, Dennis chooses to focus on the fear, and locates it in his heart, by thinking about his fear of losing Renee. Schwartz asks Dennis how he feels toward the fear, and Dennis replies that he still feels scared of the fear. With Schwartz’s help, Dennis gets in touch with his fear of the fear taking over and of not being able to function.

Schwartz then invites Dennis to focus exclusively on the fear, and then says:

*And in your mind—and I know there’s a part of you that’s going to say this sounds goofy or something—but just ask the fear not to overwhelm you so that we can get close to it without being in it.*

Soon the confused part steps back in, and Schwartz says, “See if that part will step back, the confused part again. See if they’ll trust us a little further with this.” At this point, Dennis says that he feels more ready to look at the fear. Schwartz invites Dennis to ask the fear what it is afraid of, and we learn about Dennis’s fear of making too many mistakes in his relationship with Renee, and of Renee’s reaction to his mistakes. Schwartz offers a subtle interpretation of the purpose of the fear when he says, “It’s a part that tries its best to keep you from making mistakes.”

Next Schwartz has Dennis talk to Renee, by saying:

*Now that you’re in there a little bit, how would it be if you talked to Renee about what you’re learning? And, Renee, you kind of*
listen and respond. And I’ll play coach, so that if I see parts of you jumping in, I’ll blow the whistle and see if I can get them to step back.

Dennis then says to Renee:

I sometimes am fearful of making mistakes when I’m not satisfying your needs. And, although I want to, I sometimes make mistakes. And I know that it’s too late sometimes, once I’ve made a mistake, to change it. So I’m scared of that sometimes.

Schwartz encourages Dennis to tell Renee what it’s like for him when he has made a mistake and Renee lets him know, and Dennis tells Renee that it hurts him when she “hammers” him. Schwartz supports Dennis in telling Renee more about his hurt, and Dennis reveals that he felt crushed when Renee rejected his Sweetest Day card because it was “too late.”

Renee responds that she feels more open to hearing him talk about making mistakes when he talks about it this way, compared to how he normally minimizes her feelings. This leads to an interesting exploration of how Dennis’s minimizing tendencies trigger Renee’s anger. Renee says to Dennis:

If I tell you that my feelings are hurt, if you acknowledge them and say, ‘I’m really sorry I hurt your feelings,’ then I don’t have a need to hammer you and go on and on and on. I can hear that you acknowledge my feelings, that they’re hurt, and that you made a mistake. And then I feel like I can go on. But the minimizer for you comes out. Then it’s like you didn’t hear me, so I’m going to say it louder.

Schwartz follows that up by highlighting the cycle the couple gets into:

And then you get in a vicious circle because you see that part of Renee coming out and getting more frantic and more angry. So you protect yourself more by minimizing more and defending yourself. Does that sound right?

Dennis recognizes that the minimizer has been a big part of him for his whole life. Renee then tells Dennis that she felt crushed when Dennis didn’t acknowledge her on Sweetest Day, and he responds such
that Renee feels understood. She then compliments Dennis and lets him know how important it is to her to know what he’s feeling and to hear about the things that scare him. Dennis agrees to keep working on it.

Schwartz connects the minimizer with the way Dennis responded after the affair was disclosed by saying, “It sounds like that minimizer was working overtime when the affair first came out.” After some confusion, Dennis and Renee both agree that this is true.

Schwartz asks Dennis if he would be okay with Renee pointing out—in a kind way—when she sees Dennis’s minimizer part. Dennis agrees, stressing the importance of her doing it in a kind way.

Renee expresses her delight and appreciation with the work Dennis did by saying:

That makes me really excited. Like, gosh, there really is something in there. And I thought there was all along. So I know it’s been difficult for you, but it really does make a difference to me.

Schwartz offers Dennis more understanding about how hard it is to face his vulnerable feelings and that, for men in this culture, it is like “swimming upstream.” Then he says:

And if you can do that, you’ll feel more connected to Renee in general. And you won’t have nearly the same impulse to have some affair or something like that.

Dennis doesn’t understand how the two are connected, and Schwartz tries to explain it by sharing his perspective on why men have affairs:

My experience is these parts that are interested in affairs…are usually trying to get somebody to take care of other parts of you that feel lonely or cut off or isolated…and want some kind of connection and intimacy. And, if we, as men, walk around with all this protection around, we don’t get much of that, especially if we’re afraid of parts of our partners….If you’re getting more connection because you’re not so protective and you let Renee in, then you won’t have these little desperately screaming parts that need somebody else.
Renee shares that she finds it frustrating that that’s how it played out. Schwartz responds:

> And it’s really too bad that it worked, and it was really hurtful to you. But it also presented an opportunity to crack Dennis open so that you can have that possibility. I mean, the fact that it was found out presented that opportunity....So ultimately, there’s a chance for this to really be a good thing—not that what he did was good, but the consequences for your relationship could be good depending on how things go.

Renee responds that it makes sense but that it’s really painful, and that it makes her angry. Schwartz then asks her if she thinks he appreciates how painful it was for her, and Renee responds, “I don’t know. Maybe not. I don’t know. There’s part of me that’s just screaming that this isn’t fair.” Schwartz then validates Renee by saying:

> No question about it, Renee. And I’m not trying to justify what Dennis did. I really want you to hear that. I’m not trying to excuse it or minimize it or justify. And there were other ways to do it. Absolutely.

Renee then expresses her pain directly to Dennis:

> I feel ripped open. And it’s hard for me to hear that you were lonely and looking for someone else when here I am. I’ve been trying, turning somersaults, doing all sorts of things that never worked. And yet, you went to somebody else. So now I have all my skin peeled off and my body parts are strewn all over the place, and yet I’m asked to look at this as an opportunity for our relationship. It’s really hard.

Dennis responds in a way that at first feels empty to Renee. He says:

> Yeah. I’m sorry for your pain. I’m sure it’s hard. That’s why we’re here. That’s why I’m trying to connect with you and learn more about myself and be able to understand feelings and parts of myself so that we can grow together and be close, be connected.

Schwartz then suggests that what he said about Dennis’s loneliness being a factor in the affair is what triggered Renee’s angry/protective part to return. He then says,
And I apologize for triggering it. But could you ask it, just for a second, to step back? Is it willing to step back and let you be here again?

Renee agrees, and then Schwartz invites Dennis to repeat what he said to Renee, and Dennis says:

Well, that’s why I’m here and trying to understand myself and get to know my parts better and be there for you and us. And I want to make a difference and I want to connect with you.

Renee states that she feels better. Schwartz ends the session by telling them they did good work.

SESSION THREE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Fear:** What are your thoughts about how Schwartz worked with Dennis’ fear? What do you think about thinking of the fear as an entity, and asking him how he felt about the fear, how close he was to it, what the fear wanted to tell him, etc.? What are some other ways you might have helped Dennis express his fear to Renee?

2. **Self-disclosure:** Regarding being vulnerable, Schwartz said that “most men, myself included, get trained to be that way, and it is really swimming upstream to try to change that.” What do you think was the purpose of this self-disclosure? How frequently do you use self-disclosure in your work with clients? What types of self-disclosure do you engage in, and what principles guide your decisions to disclose or be transparent?

3. **Explanation for affair:** What did you think about Schwartz’s explanation for the affair—that the parts that are open or interested in having an affair are taking care of the parts that are lonely or want intimacy? Does this seem helpful? Does breaking it into parts feel like it takes away any responsibility for the decision to have an affair? If you were the other partner, how would this sound to you?

4. **Optimism:** Schwartz said that the consequences of the affair coming out created an opportunity for them to develop more
intimacy. Renee responded that this was frustrating and made her angry. How did you feel about Schwartz introducing a note of optimism about their situation? How important is it for a couples therapist to express hope for the couple? If you have done couples therapy, how open are you in expressing hope and encouragement for the couple (when you feel it is warranted)? How about expressing discouragement or warnings when they are not engaging with each other in the therapy in a way that is productive?

5. Therapist’s parts: Rather than naming it “countertransference,” Schwartz talks in the discussion with Carlson about one of his parts being triggered by Renee’s anger. He also said that the more he was able to be present for her anger and create a safe space, the less angry and frustrated she would likely be. Do you agree with him? What are some other ways of understanding her anger and frustration? Do you tend to take this kind of responsibility when your clients are angry or frustrated? Do you “fess up” if you believe you made a mistake with your client?

SESSION FOUR

General Summary

Session Four begins with Renee confronting Schwartz, letting him know that she felt that he was being patronizing to her in the last session. We learn after the session that this caught Schwartz by surprise, and that he was able to stay present by breathing and staying curious. He shares with Carlson that this is an illustration of the backlash that happens when the therapist is not conscious and his or her parts take over. Schwartz apologizes to Renee several times and lets her know that he did not intend to hurt her, and expresses appreciation to her for letting him know. He returns to this rupture in their relationship several times throughout the session, and Renee states that she feels okay and that she trusts his sincerity.

After some individual inner work with Renee’s stomach pain, the bulk of the session is spent on the topic of how to tell the kids about what is
going on in Dennis and Renee’s marriage. Both parents are concerned about hurting the kids by telling them, and Renee is also very concerned about the negative effects keeping it a secret could have on them, particularly since there were significant secrets withheld in her family of origin.

Schwartz guides Renee and Dennis in talking about their dilemma of how to talk to the kids, refraining from giving his own opinion. He helps them identify the parts of themselves that are getting in the way of having a constructive dialogue, and supports Renee in practicing what she might say to the kids. Time is up before they come to resolution about this dilemma, and Schwartz praises them for hanging in there with a touchy topic.

**Detailed Summary**

Schwartz sets up Session Four to Carlson this way:

>We ended with a part of me being there and kind of blowing [Renee] off, even though it seemed like she came back around at the end. You get a good chance to see the fallout that happens when you’re not conscious of your own parts. That’s how we start Session Four.

Renee begins the session saying she has a list of things she wants to talk about, and the first thing is her reaction to how Schwartz spoke to her in their last session. “I feel that you were kind of sounding patronizing to me,” she tells Schwartz. Schwartz responds by saying, “I’m sorry that whatever I said made you feel that way, but I’d like to hear what it was.” Renee explains that when Schwartz asked her last time if she thought he understood her pain, she experienced his question as condescending. When Schwartz tries to find out more, Renee has no more to say, and Schwartz apologizes again, letting her know that he didn’t intend to make her feel that way.

Renee thanks Schwartz for his apology and then outlines the topics she wants to address in this session: how to talk to their children about what they’re going through; the money issue; and next steps after therapy with Schwartz ends. Dennis doesn’t add any items to the agenda. Before jumping into the items on Renee’s list, Schwartz
checks in with them to see how they’re feeling in their relationship and how the last two weeks have been. Renee says that her stomach is really hurting in the moment, and that the money issue has been hard for her, and Schwartz asks if she wants to start with that. When she responds that it’s very important to her that they also address how to talk to their kids, Schwartz suggests that they start with that. But first, he invites her attention to her stomach:

Before we do that, why don’t we just see what your stomach is trying to tell you? Would that be okay?

Renee agrees, and before proceeding, Schwartz checks in with her again about the exchange they had at the beginning of the session:

Before we do that, let me just see if we’re clean with the exchange we had earlier with your feeling condescended by me.

Renee responds that she does feel okay, and that she trusts his sincerity. Next, Schwartz guides Renee through the sensations in her stomach. Here is a sampling of some of his instructions:

Then let’s go ahead and see what we can find about this in your stomach. Are you ready?

• Go ahead and focus down in there.
• Do you have a sense of it?
• How do you feel toward that part of your stomach?
• Is it possible to get the impatience to step back for a second?
• Do you know what this part is in your stomach?

Renee connects the discomfort in her stomach with a conversation she recently had with Dennis’s sister. Making this connection brings more tenderness, as opposed to impatience, to Renee’s relationship to the pain in her stomach. Schwartz then asks:

From that place of tenderness, why don’t you just see what it wants you to know about itself?

When Renee responds that it’s terrified, Schwartz asks the following series of questions:

• Would it be okay if we tried to help it with its terror?
• Is there a way you could show it that you feel tender toward it, that you care about it?
• Somehow, inside there, just convey to it that you feel caring toward it and tell me how it reacts.
• Could we just stay with it for a while? Just showing the caring for a little while more?
• See how close you can get to it without being overwhelmed by it.
• Could you just hold it for a while in a loving way until it seems to really start to trust that you care about it?

This process seems to help Renee relax, and Schwartz closes this segment of the session by encouraging Renee to hold this part of her throughout the rest of the session and to commit to returning to it sometime.

Renee says that her stomach feels better, and Dennis reports that he is feeling sad and remorseful about the affair and how he hasn’t been there for Renee recently. He agrees to move on to discussing the topic of telling the kids.

Schwartz then invites the two of them to start talking, first getting permission to “blow the whistle” when he see parts “popping up.” Renee starts by sharing her concerns about how the kids are reacting to what’s happening in their marriage, as well as her dislike of keeping secrets. She states that she is feeling torn about telling them because she doesn’t want them to be hurt, on the one hand, but believes they’ve already been hurt, on the other. She says, “I don’t really know what to say or how to say it. I don’t know what’s too much information and what’s too little.”

Dennis responds that he doesn’t think telling the kids what happened is a good idea, but that he does think it’s a good idea to let them know that they are working on their marriage, and also to let them know that there has been a problem. Like Renee, he doesn’t know how to tell them.

Schwartz helps clarify their concerns, and then invites them to talk about how they think telling their kids more details would hurt
them. Dennis says he thinks the kids would be crushed to hear that their Dad had a relationship with another woman. Renee says she thinks they already seem pretty crushed, and explains her concern about keeping secrets. She explains that both her family of origin and Dennis’s have a long history of keeping secrets that “got played out anyway,” and she wonders whether, by telling her sons the truth, they’ll be less likely to have affairs when they are older.

Schwartz steps in by noting that both Dennis and Renee seem to have parts that are concerned with each of them looking bad, and asks them to go inside and ask those parts to step back so they can figure this dilemma out.

Dennis states that he doesn’t have a problem talking to their kids, but that he doesn’t know where to start. Renee tries out what she might say to them, and Schwartz invites Dennis to role-play telling the kids about his affair. Dennis is unable to do this, so Schwartz asks Renee to practice taking the lead in telling them, and invites Dennis to notice how he feels hearing her say it. After Renee said what she would say, Schwartz checks in with both of them to see how they’re feeling. Dennis expresses his concern again about hurting the kids. He asks Schwartz, “Can it hurt the kids?” and instead of answering his questions as an authority figure, Schwartz responds in a more empowering way: “Well, that’s what you guys are figuring out. You know these kids. I’ve never met them.” Dennis and Renee continue to talk through their concerns about whether the kids are too young, how they might react, and whether the information would be too hurtful or not.

After the conversation, Dennis still feels nervous but is open to the possibility of telling the kids, and Renee is leaning towards telling them but is still a little worried about how it might affect them.

Towards the end, Schwartz does more repair work with Renee by saying:

*I’m also glad you told me how you felt about what I’d said, because I never would intentionally hurt you, but I could do it by accident. I’m glad to have the opportunity to let you know it wasn’t intentional.*
Before closing, Schwartz asks both of Dennis and Renee if they have any last words before stopping, giving Renee the opportunity to mention her concern about the direction they’ll take after their sixth session with Schwartz. Schwartz lets her know he’ll think about it and talk more about it next time. He then asks if the money issue is still upsetting her, and when she says yes, he suggests they discuss that next time as well.

**SESSION FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Confrontation:** What do you think of how Schwartz responded to Renee’s confrontation at the beginning of the session? Do you agree that he seemed condescending or patronizing in the third session? How successful do you think Schwartz was in remaining nondefensive when Renee brought up her concerns? Would you have liked to have seen him acknowledge his part more in the interaction she referred to, rather than just apologizing and letting her know it wasn’t intentional? How have you responded when clients confront you like this? If you were Renee, what kind of response would have been ideal for you to receive from Schwartz?

2. **Opinion:** Why do you think Schwartz refrained from sharing his opinion about whether or not Renee and Dennis should tell their kids about the affair? What do you think of his decision to stay out of it? Did you find yourself having an opinion about this? Do you think you would have shared your opinion? Why or why not? In what circumstances can you see yourself really wanting to give your opinion, and how would you determine whether to share this or stay out of it? How have you responded when clients push you for your “expert” opinion?

3. **Assessment:** How do you think the therapy is going so far? Are you feeling, like Schwartz, confident that the outcome of their work together will be positive? What would you do at this point to improve the work? What concerns do you have about Dennis and Renee’s relationship that you would like to see addressed in the final two sessions?
SESSION FIVE

General Summary

Renee and Dennis report that they have been doing well since the last session in terms of feeling close and communicating better. Schwartz helps them focus on how they created that good week, and Renee concludes that when Dennis can acknowledge her pain, then she feels pretty open to him.

Schwartz facilitates Dennis in a role-play, an opportunity for him to experiment with what it would be like to tell their sons about the affair. Renee and Schwartz agree that he did a very good job. Schwartz lets the couple know that he trusts them to find the right time to tell their kids.

Then Renee and Dennis revisit the details of the affair, initiated by Renee’s desire to know more about what Dennis was thinking and feeling leading up to the affair. Working through some sadness that comes up for Renee as she listens to Dennis, Schwartz helps Renee access what she calls a “vale of tears,” as she gets in touch with how alone and afraid she had felt during that time.

Schwartz offers hope and direction for how to prevent Dennis from having another affair, including continuing to work on being present when Renee is upset and talking about his own feelings. Renee realizes that she would be less worried about Dennis having another affair if he were taking good care of himself and finding balance in his life.

Schwartz ends by warning the couple that after the recent closeness that they have experienced, it is common for their protective parts to be on the lookout for any threats. He encourages them to be on the lookout for their protective parts, and reassures them that if conflict arises and they feel like they’re back where they started, it just feels that way for a temporary period.

Detailed Summary

Schwartz sets up Session Five to Carlson by saying:

A lot depends on how they come in, what direction we’re going to go. Given this last one, it’s hard to make predictions. My thinking is, we’ve got this session, and the last session would usually be a
kind of summary and wrap-up. So this is the last session in which we’ll get to do much solid work. In the fourth session, you also got to see me do a little individual work with Renee while Dennis observed. I would like to, if possible, focus back on Dennis, probably.

As usual, Schwartz begins the session by asking the couple how they’ve been doing and if they have any reactions to the last session. Dennis reports—and Renee agrees—that they have been doing well, feeling close, and communicating better. Renee accounts for this by saying,

*I think it is because we shared on both sides. I know that when Dennis can acknowledge pain for me, what this has caused, then I’m pretty open to being open.*

After discussing what allowed each of them to be more open to each other—including Renee trusting Dennis more and Dennis being able to acknowledge, rather than minimize, Renee’s pain—Schwartz asks them if they want to revisit the topic of talking with their kids. Dennis expresses some concern about how and when to tell them about the affair. Schwartz invites Dennis to try to role-play telling them, as Renee did in the prior session. Dennis gives it a shot, and he and Renee both feel good about what he said and the way he said it. Renee offers a couple of suggestions, and the couple is ready to move on.

Renee asks about next steps, and Schwartz encourages them to continue with couples therapy and to keep working on the parts they have identified.

When Dennis responds with more concern about telling the kids, particularly when to tell them, Schwartz responds:

*I like the way you worked on it together, so I feel like I can trust you to find the right time. I think you know your kids. You’re both obviously very invested parents and you have good instincts, so I am going to trust those instincts about that.*

Renee then expresses how important it is to her to have information about the affair and to understand more about her own and Dennis’s parts in what happened. Schwartz supports them in having a conversation about this.
In their discussion, Renee expresses her desire to know what Dennis was thinking and feeling during the time leading up to the affair. Dennis says he remembers things being very busy during that time and that it hit him “like a ton of bricks” when the other woman was attracted to him. He says that besides Renee, he had never had someone be that interested in him, and since they were disconnected at the time, he “just let things happen: “one thing led to another, and I just don’t know why I couldn’t say no.” He shares that he was still in love with Renee at the time, and that he felt bad for the other woman. He then starts criticizing himself and sharing how ashamed he feels that he wasn’t “smart enough to look ahead.”

Schwartz then checks in to see how Renee is reacting, and she shares that she feels hurt when Dennis says that he didn’t have anybody that attracted to him, and that she feels sad that they weren’t able to stay more connected. Schwartz asks Renee if she wants to “work with that sadness,” and Renee agrees, and they proceed with the process that they’ve engaged in in previous sessions, in which Schwartz asks Renee to locate the sadness in her body and to get a good sense of it by focusing on it. This attention to the sadness reveals what Renee calls a “vale of tears,” as she recalls how alone and afraid she was feeling at the time leading up to Dennis’s affair. She tells Dennis that he is a solid base for her, and that when she doesn’t feel his support, she feels like her world falls apart.

After some more discussion, Schwartz offers some hope and direction for how to prevent Dennis from having another affair:

*It sounds like also, then, if you can maintain this shift where you’re no longer minimizing and you’re much better able to be present when Renee’s upset, and you’re not so afraid of her anger that you won’t really talk about your feelings...it sounds like you’re more in touch with your feelings. That would go a long way to prevent something like that happening again, it sounds like.*

Schwartz then invites Renee and Dennis to “take a little reading inside” to see how their bodies are feeling as they talk about this. He asks Renee to check in with her sad part, and Dennis with his
ashamed part. Schwartz says, “See if there’s anything more that needs to be said from inside your bodies.” Renee gets in touch with her fear that Dennis will have an affair again. Schwartz asks Renee to focus on that fear and to ask it what it might take for her to not worry so much about Dennis having another affair. She responds that she would feel more reassured if Dennis would be finding balance in his life, taking care of himself, and also taking care of her and their kids.

Renee also shares her appreciation for Dennis increased openness to her fears and vulnerability, and notes that his attention to those parts of her has allowed her angry part to step aside. She tells him how helpful it was that he gave her some of the details of the affair, because it made her feel less separate from him.

Schwartz checks in with Renee again about their interaction at the beginning of Session Four, in which she told Schwartz that she thought he was being condescending towards her. She confirms that they are “clean” now.

Schwartz ends by giving Renee and Dennis a warning:

> It’s also important for me to say that sometimes, after it’s been really bad and maybe you get a little bit closer, you get a little hope, there are these protective parts that are going to look for any false moves on the other person’s part. They might jump in to try and protect you. Sometimes when you get close like that and you get your hopes up, the next little spat sends you reeling back almost to where you started. I’m not saying it’s going to happen. I just want to prepare you, to warn you, that that potential is there, and just to keep an eye on that. And if it did happen, you aren’t back where you started. It just feels that way for a temporary period.

Then he notes his confidence in their ability to prevent this from happening:

> But on the other hand, I get this sense you’re over a couple of the humps—particularly these minimizer parts, the confused part. If you can stay present in the way you have been, I think it will go a long way to preventing something like that.
Renee comments that Dennis’s availability to her has been a very welcome change, and Schwartz commends them on “making good use of this crisis.”

**SESSION FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Why good?:** What do you think of Schwartz helping Renee and Denis understand what contributed to them having a good week? Do you think it was a valuable use of their limited time together? Why or why not? Do you think you focus sufficiently on client’s strengths and successes as well as their areas for growth?

2. **Role-play:** Did you think it was helpful to have Dennis role-play talking to their children? Have you used role-plays with your clients? If so, what has been your experience of doing this? Is it different for clients than just “talking about” an issue?

3. **Prevention:** Do you share Renee’s concern that Dennis might have another affair? What do you think of Schwartz’s perspective that if Dennis stops minimizing and is able to continue being present when Renee is upset, and if he can talk about his feelings without fearing her anger too much, then another affair could be prevented? Are there other factors you think may have contributed to Dennis having an affair? How might you address these with the couple?

4. **Warning:** What do you think of Schwartz’s warning to Dennis and Renee at the end of the session? Do you think it is a good idea to warn couples who are doing well that their protective parts might return now that they’ve gotten closer? Have you seen this pattern in couples you have worked with or in your own relationships?
SESSION SIX

General Summary

In this final session with Renee and Dennis, which takes place about five weeks after their fourth session, Schwartz helps the couple review the work they have done and address their current concerns. While they have had some ups and downs over the past five weeks, Renee reports that Dennis’s ability to listen has improved and they have had some good conversations.

We learn about a part of Renee that she calls Cruella (from the villainous character in 101 Dalmations), and that this part of her is a fierce protector and full of rage. Dennis shares how hard it is for him to relate to this part of Renee who is aggressive towards him. Schwartz helps the couple to understand that this part of Renee is likely to relax if she can work tenderly with the vulnerable parts of her that Cruella is trying to protect. He reminds Dennis that Cruella is only a part of Renee, not who she really is.

Schwartz praises the couple for the hard work they have done, and recommends that they continue in couples therapy. He encourages Dennis to continue looking at his family-of-origin issues, so that he can be more present with Renee when she is angry and hurting. He encourages Renee to continue working with the parts of her that were so hurt by the affair and also in her childhood.

Detailed Summary

Schwartz sets up the final session to Carlson this way:

*I’m thinking about ways to consolidate, to summarize, to go back over what we’ve done. There’s a long stretch between this session and the last session. I think it’s five weeks. A lot could happen. There might be a lot that we need to talk about. This is kind of a follow-up, in a way. I’m just trying to be open to the way they come in, but also try not to get into anything too heavy because we won’t have a chance to deal with it.*

It has been about five weeks since Schwartz last saw Renee and Dennis. Schwartz begins this final session by laying out what he’d like to
address, including reviewing the meetings they’ve had together and seeing what they’ve gotten out of it, “what feels good or not so good about it,” and also to check in about how they’re doing now.

Dennis comments that the sessions have been helpful for him, including learning how to communicate better and understand his parts. Renee brings up her concerns about their sessions being recorded and her feeling of being exposed. She also shares how the parts work has been helpful for her.

Renee talks about a part of herself that she discovered, which she calls Cruella, as in the cartoon character Cruella De Ville. We learn that this part of her is a fierce protector, and came out powerfully during the time since the last session, when she believed that Dennis was minimizing the pain their sons were experiencing. We learn that Dennis’s tendency to minimize and deny reminds her of her family of origin. Schwartz states that many people who have been abused have this fierce protector part. He describes this part this way:

*Just total rage. And it’s determined to never let anything like that ever happen again. It’s going to do whatever it takes.*

They also discuss the likelihood that, when Renee works with the vulnerable parts that Cruella is trying to protect, then Cruella will be able to relax. They explore the “good” parts of Cruella, such as her tremendous amount of energy that allows Renee to get things done.

Schwartz helps Dennis and Renee identify what Dennis could do when Renee is overtaken by Cruella, and we learn that Dennis has a hard time coping with this part of Renee, because Cruella “kicks the shit” out of him. Schwartz suggests to Dennis that he try to remember that Cruella is just a part of Renee—“it’s not who she really totally is.”

Renee reports that she and Dennis were able to have some connecting conversations over the weekend, and that Dennis’s ability to listen has improved. Dennis shares that he’s been recognizing more about his upbringing and family-of-origin experiences, particularly how he pushed things aside and didn’t realize how bad things had been. Schwartz responds with encouragement and suggests he continue to do the work of “cleaning out” issues from his childhood. He also
suggests that Dennis work on the part of him that feels terrorized by Renee’s Cruella part, so that he can be more present with her when she is triggered.

Regarding Renee’s work, Schwartz says:

*As she does more and more work on these parts that were so hurt, not just by the affair but also by what happened to her in her childhood, this Cruella part can relax more. And it may not totally change to just the “up” energy, but it won’t take over as long, and it won’t take over as fiercely. Over time, as you do that work, it may be around a lot because you’re getting close to the parts that were hurt, so it gets triggered real easily. Sometimes the closer you get to those exiled parts, those parts that have all the pain, the more reactive it is for a period of time. But you do get to a point where it just really relaxes a lot.*

Schwartz tells the couple that he thinks they have made some significant steps but that it’s going to be a “long haul.” This triggers Renee’s fear that Dennis is frustrated by how long the healing process is taking. She asks him if he’s up for the long haul. Schwartz praises Dennis:

*Very honestly, I’ve been quite impressed at how you’ve hung in there this far because of the parts that tend to dominate you, and how open you’ve been to looking at them and getting them to step back. And we still see them coming back in every so often, but I really want to give you a lot of praise for that and just hope that you hang in there even though it’s so against your socialization.*

Renee tells Dennis that when she hears him say that it’s hard for him to hang in there, she goes to a place inside herself of believing that she’s not worth the effort. She says, “It’s like I’m not worth you working through this. It’s just so much work that it’s like I don’t count.” Schwartz steps in to help Renee see that it’s not a reflection of her worth. He points out that Dennis’s difficulty with this work is due to his upbringing, and has nothing to do with whether or not she’s worth the prize of trying. He then suggests that when this sensitive part of her gets triggered, which is understandable, that she offer that
part some comfort. He praises Renee for the hard work she is doing, while normalizing the roller-coaster aspect of it:

*I have tremendous admiration for the courage it takes to do that kind of work, too. Really. You’re having to face things that you just would never want to look at again or experience again, and that takes tremendous courage. And it’s also very emotional. It’s a very, very upsetting kind of work to do. So it helps to know when you’re getting closer to vulnerable things, so you know that there’s going to be kind of a roller coaster for a while.*

The session ends with expressions of gratitude and goodbyes.

**SESSION SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Closure:** What do you think of how Schwartz conducted this final session with Renee and Dennis? What might you have done differently to bring a sense of closure to their work together? Do you think he achieved his goal of being open but not getting into anything too heavy? Would you say this was a successful treatment? Why or why not?

2. **Exposed:** What do you think of how Schwartz responded to Renee’s concerns about their sessions being recorded? Do you think he eased her anxiety about this? How might you have handled this differently?

3. **Long haul:** How did you respond when Schwartz told the couple that it’s going to be a “long haul”? Do you think this was a good idea, or might it have left them discouraged? Do you agree with Schwartz that they have a lot more work to do? What would you like to see happen if they continued to work with Schwartz? How do you determine when couples are done with therapy?

**GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **Countertransference:** Do you have any strong negative or positive feelings towards either Dennis or Renee? Do these feel countertransference? Do you distinguish between countertransference versus other feelings towards clients? If you
were working with them, how do you think you would handle these feelings?

2. Affair: After watching these sessions, do you feel more confident in your ability to work with a couple dealing with the crisis of an affair? If so, what have you learned that you feel you could incorporate into your work? What do you think you would do differently from Schwartz to address this issue? What biases of yours might be an obstacle to working effectively with a couple in this kind of crisis?

3. The Self: What do you think about Schwartz’s idea of the Self, and how Schwartz tried to get Renee and Dennis to talk from their Selves? What is your understanding of Schwartz’s concept of the Self? How do you think this concept may have contributed to the healing between Renee and Dennis?

4. The approach: What are your overall thoughts about Schwartz’s approach to couples therapy? What aspects of his approach can you see yourself incorporating into your work? Are there some components of his approach that seem incompatible with how you work? What in particular would you do differently from Schwartz?

5. Personal reaction: How would you feel about having Schwartz as your therapist? Do you think he could build a solid therapeutic alliance with you? Would he be effective with you? Why or why not?
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Recovering from an Affair: 6 Sessions of Couples Therapy with Richard Schwartz, PhD

- **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 to 4 pages double-spaced. Be concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief 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 Schwartz’s Internal Family Systems approach to couples therapy? What stands out to you about how Schwartz works in general and with a couple recovering from an affair in particular?

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 from Schwartz in the sessions 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 sessions and discussions? Other comments, thoughts, or feelings?
Role-Plays

After watching the video and reviewing the “Internal Family Systems Therapy” summary of approach in this manual, organize participants into groups of three, so one person plays the therapist and two people play a couple client. Assign each group to role-play a couples therapy session using Schwartz’s Internal Family Systems approach. The clients should play a committed couple dealing with the effects of an affair. They may resemble the clients in the video, a current or previous real-life couple client, a couple they know personally, or a fictional couple. If time permits, rotate roles so each participant has the opportunity to play the therapist.

Have therapists practice Schwartz’s style of giving the couple options to choose from, by offering the couple two options for the session:

• Option one is for the couple to talk to each other about any of the issues they are having, with their permission to step in when you, as the therapist, notice different parts getting in the way of a Self-to-Self conversation.

• Option two is for the therapist to do some intensive work with one partner’s parts while the other partner witnesses.

As was seen in the video, option one can end up incorporating option two—that is, if a part of one person is unwilling to “step back,” then the therapist should work with that person’s part while the other person witnesses. Once that part has been understood and spoken for, check back with the other person to see how he or she is feeling.

To facilitate the process of working with various parts, therapists can try out some of Schwartz’s interventions demonstrated in the video, such as: asking clients to “read” their bodies and see what they notice; asking where they feel the parts in their bodies; asking the part what it wants to say and speaking for it; focusing on the spot in the body again and asking how it feels now after the part expressed itself; asking whether there is more this part wants to say; asking the other partner to respond to what was said; asking parts to “step back” if they seem to be getting in the way of one partner being present with the other.
Therapists should focus on creating a safe space for the couple, either trying out a slow pace and calm voice like Schwartz or doing whatever they think will convey a soothing and solid presence.

Following the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss the exercise. First, have the couple clients share their experiences: What was it like to play a couple recovering from an affair? Did they feel safe with the therapist? Did they get a sense of what it’s like to speak for a part? Did they have an experience of speaking from their Selves? How was it to turn their attention to their bodies? What did they like and dislike about the therapists’ styles and interventions? Then ask the therapists to talk about what the sessions were like for them: How did it feel to help clients identify and speak for their parts? How was it to “blow the whistle” when parts were getting in the way of couples having Self-to-Self conversations? What was challenging about this way of working? What seemed easier or more natural? Finally, open up a general discussion about what participants learned about using an Internal Family Systems approach to working with a couple recovering from an affair.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and two people playing a couple recovering from an affair. The entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. At different points in the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the couple. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what participants found useful and/or challenging about Schwartz’s approach.
Related Websites, Videos, and Further Reading

WEB RESOURCES
The Center for Self Leadership
www.selfleadership.org
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
www.aamft.org

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET
Internal Family Systems Therapy with Richard Schwartz
Emotionally Focused Therapy in Action with Sue Johnson
Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy with Sue Johnson
Irreconcilable Differences: A Solution-Focused Approach to Marital Therapy
with Insoo Kim Berg
Imago Couples Therapy with Pat Love
Behavioral Couples Therapy with Richard Stuart
The Angry Couple: Conflict-Focused Treatment with Susan Heitler
Couples Therapy: An Introduction with Ellen Bader and Dan Wile

RECOMMENDED READINGS


Schwartz, R. C. (2008). You are the one you’ve been waiting for: Bringing courageous love to intimate relationships. Oak Park, IL: Trailhead Publications.
Video Credits

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Jill Denise Duba, Project Coordinator, for her hard work, dedication, and creativity in carrying out this project.
Renee and Dennis, whose courage and generosity in sharing their personal stories made this series possible.
Cece Sykes for her assistance with this project.
Addison Woodward, Chair of the Division of Psychology and Counseling
Diane Alexander, Dean of the College of Education
for their support, participation and encouragement.
Judy Fifer, Editor, for her support of this project.
Stephen G. Smith and David Sachetti, for their support and marketing expertise.

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Jacob & Zerka Moreno
John Norcross
Violet Oaklander
Erving Polster
Arnold Lazarus  
Peter Levine  
Rollo May  
…..and more  

**Therapeutic Issues**

Addiction  
Anger Management  
Alcoholism  
ADD/ADHD  
Anxiety  
Beginning Therapists  
Child Abuse  
Culture & Diversity  
Death & Dying  
Depression  
Dissociation  
Divorce  
Domestic Violence  

Grief/Loss  
Happiness  
Infertility  
Intellectualizing  
Law & Ethics  
Medical Illness  
Parenting  
PTSD  
Relationships  
Sexuality  
Suicidality  
Trauma  
Weight Management  

**Population**

Adolescents  
African-American  
Children  
Couples  
Families  
GLBT  
Inpatient Clients  

Men  
Military/Veterans  
Parents  
Prisoners  
Step Families  
Therapeutic Communities  
Women