

Part III:

PRACTICE

OF

THERAPY

CHAPTER NINE:

GROUPS

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Problem-solving groups are the backbone of our practice as Radical Psychiatrists. We do groups, not as an adjunct to “more serious” therapy, as many other therapists do, but as our major practice. That we organize our work around groups speaks to the heart of our theory.

Some of the reasons for our pro-group bias arise from qualities common to all group therapy:

1. Groups break *isolation*, and we see isolation as a major source of people's problems. Because we believe that the source of our problems is alienation (see Chapter 2), it makes simple sense to create supportive group environments as an antidote. Our theory says that awareness, contact and action are needed to counter alienation, and groups provide the potential for all three.
2. Group members have an easier time *identifying the sources of their oppression*. The drama of recognition is frequent: “ I know exactly

what you mean. I always thought I was the only one who had that problem.” People speak of loneliness, of frustration about work, of conflict with lovers or mates or parents or children, and seven others nod. It becomes harder and harder to believe that one’s problems are a result of one’s personal pathology. Common, and therefore social, sources of problems become clearer and clearer.

3. Group members benefit from *the healing power of numbers*. To reveal one’s secrets, to weep openly, to take a stand against one’s Internalized Oppression in the presence of eight others is a far more dramatic and healing experience than to do it with only one other person there.

4. Group members get *more feedback from more people*. Not only is the quantity of input helpful, but so also is its variety. Group members may have opinions which counter those of the leader; controversy can act as a check on the power of the therapist. Similarly, if a group member has a tendency to lock horns with the therapist, the intervention of other people can be a helpful check on competitiveness.

5. Groups help to *demystify the power of the therapist*. Both the diversity of opinions, and the healing power of numbers help to demonstrate that the therapist is only one among many. Healing that

occurs in individual therapy is easily attributable to the magical powers of the therapist. When effective work occurs in the group, the specific role of the group leader is easier to delineate.

6. Groups *mirror real life*; they are a place where people can do what they ordinarily do, learn where their problems lie, and practice ways to improve. They are a stage for dramatizing problems, and a laboratory for practicing change.

7. Groups are *cheaper* than individual therapy. That they cost less is a fact of theoretical significance. We believe that people are fifty-percent responsible for their own healing. The group leader provides a place to do it, protection and certain skills. But the group member provides knowledge of what her problems are, and the will and energy to solve them. To charge reasonable rates for therapy is to codify the shared nature of the work. If you pay me enormous fees, you must believe you need me very badly. If you need me so badly, what I have must be very special, very hard to come by, very rare. We don't think so. We think *you* have something special, although not at all rare: the power to change for the better. We have something important, but it is readily accessible, and only one part of what you need.

8. Finally, groups *counter the dyadic approach* to life which dominates our culture. We are trained to expect our most meaningful connections to occur in twosomes. We relate more intimately to mother in childhood than to any other adult. We seek boyfriends and girlfriends as teenagers. We couple as young adults. We go to a shrink and reveal our innermost thoughts to him and to nobody else. To construct intimacy with seven other people at one time is to challenge a thick set of beliefs implicit in the “ twosome” nature of so many of our relationships.

Other reasons why we do groups flow from the particular way in which we organize them. In general, problem-solving groups follow a cooperative model (see Chapter 4). Members make contracts to accomplish whatever goals they wish. Therapists do not diagnose: the person who comes to work on herself is the ultimate expert on what her true problems are. We encourage people to expect to solve real problems in measurable ways, so that results are clearly achieved. We assume that history is important in shaping both problems and an individual's responses to them. But understanding the past is only important insofar as it helps one to change the present. We'll return to all these characteristics of group work in more detail soon, but for now we want to point out the theoretical significance of the ways we work:

9. To organize groups around problem-solving implies the belief that the present matters more than the past. That position *challenges the Freudian view that character is formed in early childhood* (see Chapter 14). Individual therapy is often based on the idea that therapy consists of rectifying problems encountered in early childhood. Relationships are encouraged which mirror those between parents and children. The inequalities of power between a mostly silent therapist and a self-revealing client are precisely those sought to be replicated from the past. Cooperatively organized problem-solving groups, in contrast, encourage power relations of a very different sort (which I shall discuss more fully below), because what is important is not redoing the past but rather changing the present.

10. Because we are interested in making real changes in the moment, we seek *not merely to reveal needs, but also to take care of them*. Most people, for instance, need more “strokes” (see Chapter 8) in their lives. Group is an ideal place to get them. If most of modern life is lived in an economy of stroke scarcity, group provides an economy of plenty. We believe that the experience of enough strokes to go around is enormously progressive; most people will not again tolerate starvation after having once eaten their fill.

11. What goes along with the economy of plenty is the notion of *group as a training school*. Groups are in large measure a schoolroom: We are not in the business of healing illness; what we seek instead is to teach people how to solve problems. People ideally leave empowered with skills to handle what confronts them in the real world. To practice with others is a crucial part of learning those skills.

12. Group leaders in a cooperative problem-solving group say what they are thinking. They demystify their thinking, and they give advice. *Group members learn to sort that advice*, to take what is useful and reject the rest, and to assess realistically the power of the therapist.

13. On the other side of the coin, group members have an *opportunity to practice helping others*. Not only do they become more skillful at solving problems, their own and other's, but they also get meaningful strokes in the process.

PRACTICE OF GROUPS

A problem-solving group meets once a week for two to two-and-a-half hours. It consists of seven or eight members, one or two group leaders, and sometimes a trainee (see Chapter 12). Groups are on-going; places in

them become available when someone finishes her work and leaves. New members are often unknown to the group leaders; we do not routinely screen people for group, although sometimes we will have met with them individually while they've waited for a place to become available, or worked on immediate crises. In general, though, we have found that randomly collected groups work well, as opposed to groups organized around a theme or a certain type of problem. We do offer some groups for women only, and some for all lesbians or gay men. When women and men meet together in mixed groups, we keep the numbers even.

Cooperation

Group members are asked to abide by the cooperative contract (see Chapter 4): *no secrets, no rescues, no power plays*. When a new member joins, we give her a written list of the unstated agreements (reproduced in Appendix 2). We also suggest that new people try group out for a month or more before deciding whether or not it is right for them. On the one hand, we encourage critical consumerism; if group is not helping, then something is wrong with it. On the other hand, we believe that experience is the best guide to how helpful it is likely to be. We do not ask for a formal commitment, however, trusting people to use their own best judgment.

Because we see group as an experience in cooperation, we ask the members to divide up the time available in a way that is equitable. That does not necessarily mean an equal division; sometimes some members need and want more or less time than others. The system for deciding who gets how much time is left to the group; most use a blackboard, signing up for the amount of time they would like, and then negotiating if they need to, to be able to end (more or less) promptly.

Some groups set aside time at the beginning to take care of held feelings and resentments (see Chapter 8), although doing so is up to the particular group and many do not. We often encourage people to stay after the end of group to give each other strokes.

Contracts

The first task of a new group member is to make a “contract,” our euphemism for a clear statement of goals. We use contracts for several reasons. First, we do not believe in diagnosis, trusting that each member is the best judge of what is wrong with her life and what she wants to change. That is not to say that group leaders and other members do not engage in active dialogue to settle on the contract. Sometimes, people need to talk through their

problems and hopes before they can articulate a good contract.

A second reason for using contracts is that they give the group participant a measure by which to judge whether the work is actually helping. If change is not palpable, then something is amiss with the group and should be corrected.

The very business of making a contract is an important act of power, because it helps to identify and to prioritize the work, implying optimism about the future. On her first night in group, Susan signs up for twenty minutes at the bottom of the list. She asks a few questions, makes a comment or two, but is mostly silent, getting acquainted while others work. When her turn comes, she tells us that she is thirty-two years old, lives alone, and is having trouble in a relationship with a man she's been seeing for five years.

“ I'm mean to him all the time. I don't know why, but there's nothing he says that doesn't make me mad. We don't sleep together anymore, because I'm not turned on. I think I have to work on my anger. It's too much.”

“ My contract should be to be less aggressive, selfish and mean.”

A good contract has several characteristics:

- ◆ It is a short, snappy sentence. To be helpful, the contract should appeal to the Child (in the sense that the word is used in Transactional Analysis to mean the feeling, intuitive, creative part of the psyche).
- ◆ It is a positive statement. It tells you where you're headed, not where you've come from, so that you can tell when you've gotten there.
- ◆ It suggests action to take that will help you to make changes.

Susan's proposed contract fails to meet a number of these standards. First of all, it contains a string of judgments about herself, reflecting not her Child's fondest desires, but rather her Pig's assessment of her faults. Second, it is negative, about what she should stop instead of what she wants to have happen. Third, it contains no helpful hints about what to do. Indeed, because it is cast in such accusatory terms, it suggests that Susan must “ simply” become a better person if anything is to change.

So, while we respect Susan's take on what she's experiencing as a problem — the level of anger she feels at

her boyfriend — we ask to look more deeply at what is actually going on.

Group leader: “ Give us an example of when you're angry.”

Susan: “ Well, last Friday, we were out on a date, eating at a restaurant that Bob especially likes...”

Group member: “ Do *you* like the restaurant?”

Susan: (Pauses) “ It's fine (in a half-hearted tone).”

Group member: “ You don't sound very enthusiastic.”

Susan: (Speaking slowly) “ It's OK with me, only we'd eaten there three weeks in a row and,” (picking up speed), “ I'm trying to diet and there's nothing there I can eat, but Bob's not very sympathetic about my dieting, although he hates it when I'm overweight.”

We explore the transactions between Bob and Susan (as Susan experiences them) some more. A picture emerges of two dynamics: Susan Rescues Bob often (see Chapter 7), and they are competitive with each other about

decisions and tastes (see Chapter 6). The group leader tells Susan what she's thinking, while other people in the group add their own perceptions and ideas. As the analysis emerges, a new statement of the contract can be articulated. Susan has a set of ideas that interfere with her ability to say what she wants. Moreover, she does not complain about minor grievances, waiting instead until she's built a massive case against Bob, and then she explodes. We suggest she needs to work, not on being less angry, but on being angry more quickly and saying it right away in a clear and direct fashion. The suggestion contains a number of values and opinions of ours: that honesty and openness are good, that Susan has sufficient power to be able to stick up for herself, and so on, and we state them openly.

Susan restates her contract:

“ I want to talk honestly about what I feel and want.”

The word “ contract” is a less-than-accurate description of what Susan has just negotiated with the group, because it is not binding in the ways usually associated with a contract; nobody will enforce it. Susan comes to group each week and talks about whatever is going on in her life that seems most pressing. If it turns out that her relationship with Bob is not on her mind very often, then she may need to

reformulate her contract to address what really troubles her. Contract-making is a matter of noting what is actually going on rather than limiting the terrain. Occasionally, people may not mention some problematic area of their lives because of shame or fear; a contract in those circumstances may be a helpful way of checking a tendency toward secrecy. But in general, the contract reflects a trust that people will work on what they need to work on.

Contracts are also used in another sense: to rule out behavior that is harmful. We use contracts against suicide, violence and substance abuse in particular. In these cases, the group member makes an actual promise to the group. “I will not kill myself.” “I will not drink alcohol for a year.”

No-Suicide Contracts

No-suicide contracts are an important part of our work, and a good example of this second sense in which we use contracts. We have a very straight-forward and simple approach to suicide. We believe that it is a choice, and that people can decide for life instead of death. To work on anything else while someone is considering suicide is useless. We see suicide as the ultimate line of attack of the Pig: “You deserve to die” (see Chapter 5). The notion of

suicide is a counterproductive escape-hatch; so long as it is an option, it is less likely that one will do the hard work of fighting for changes that make life worthwhile. The notion of suicide, therefore, is self-fulfilling: if you think, “ I can always kill myself,” you are far less likely to insist on happiness and do whatever is needed to achieve it, and therefore you are far more likely to wish to die.

On a more prosaic level, it is a waste of time to work with someone who is going to kill herself. Moreover, suicide is unfair to everyone touched by it. Group members and leaders alike would be marked by proximity to it for life. The group leader's conscience and reputation would be seriously damaged.

For all these reasons, we insist that people who are considering suicide rule it out. We ask for a contract that the person will not kill herself. We explore in detail the plan for suiciding, and ask the person to dispense of the means (to bring the pills or gun or whatever to group and leave them with the leader, or to flush the pills down the toilet or destroy the weapon).

In return for the decision to live, the group, and especially the group leader, pledge an extra measure of support. Often, we help to make the decision by saying why we want the person to live (including talking straight about the consequences to us if she doesn't). Once she has made the

contract, we construct the details of help: when she can call people (anytime of the day or night, in the case of the leader, if she is feeling suicidal); what she can ask for that will help to fight the suicide Pig; what special measures she may need to take in order to protect herself from fresh infusions of Pig — space from parents, changes of work, altering drinking or drug habits, etc.). In other words, we take a no-suicide contract very, very seriously, appreciating how powerful, what hard work it is to make one, and matching that energy with our own.

Helping people who are suicidal depends very dramatically on the existence of the group. One leader cannot supply as much real support as people need. Moreover, the impact of a room full of people wishing life on someone is immeasurable. Finally, if the person will not make the contract, she is told she may not be in group. The no-suicide contract is one of the very few transactions which is non-negotiable in group. To continue to work with someone who is actively considering death is to collude with her Pig, and we clearly and firmly refuse to do so.

Substance Abuse

We use contracts to help people working on alcohol and other substance abuse. The first step is to figure out whether or not substances really are a problem. In the late

'80s, alcoholism and drug addiction have come under intense social scrutiny. The media is full of material about them. Nancy Reagan urges youngsters to "Just Say No!" The work of Alcoholics Anonymous, especially their Twelve-Step Program, is applied to all sorts of problems, from addictions to relationships, from family dynamics to sex. Questions of power and justice (why young people are attracted to drugs, how we have come to tolerate the exclusion of so many people from any hope of lawful well-being, why people rising on the occupational ladder turn to stimulants as a means of handling job-pressures, and on and on) are translated into conceptions of addiction: people as addicts, organizations as addicts, indeed the society as a whole as an addict. Moral overtones attach to individual responsibilities: addiction, clearly, is wrong, a moral failing.

We have traditionally taken a more fine-grained approach, making a distinction between substance use and abuse. We first ask a series of questions to decide whether there is actually a problem:

- ◆ Are you experiencing physical problems related to your use of substances? Are you hung over in the morning? Do you not remember what you did last night? Are you suffering from throat or sinus problems, or having chronic colds? The questions are many and detailed.

- ◆ Does your use of substances interfere with your relationships with people? Do you fight with those close to you when you've been drinking? Are substances a bone of contention between you? Are you jeopardizing work against your best judgment?

- ◆ Is your usage out of your control? In other words, do you use alcohol or drugs when you've decided not to?

Sometimes the answers are ambiguous, and we might ask people to moderate their usage as an experiment. They may try to drink only one drink a night for a week, for instance. It is much easier to eliminate a substance for a week, holding on tight and counting the minutes, than it is to use it regularly and moderately.

As it becomes clear that there are problems with the way a person uses substances, and precisely what those problems are, we ask that she make a contract of complete abstinence for a year. We examine in detail the problems generated by the contract. When is no-usage a hardship and what help do you need? Is it the lonely evenings, or socializing with co-workers, or hanging out at the neighborhood bar with friends? We help people make concrete strategies for dealing with the hard times.

Included is the agreement to call people, fellow group members, friends, and especially the group leader, whenever help is needed. We counsel people about nutrition, exercise and health in general. We work on the Pig that is encountered as the contract proceeds. In other words, making a contract guarantees lots of support.

We choose a time period that is long enough to baffle simple willpower. To eliminate usage for so long means coming to terms with other problems that are associated with the abuse. Some of those problems may have been obscured by the substance abuse. If a couple is fighting all the time about drinking, for example, it may be very difficult to unearth the real differences between them so that they can be adequately assessed and attended to. If someone can only be angry when drunk, then it is only once alcohol is ruled out that he can truly work on reclaiming his power to feel, and with it his power to change that which makes him angry.

Marijuana, the mainstream hysteria against which we opposed all through the '60s and '70s, has proven itself in the '80s to be often a problem. It softens the edges of rational thinking, sometimes at the exact time that people are trying to work on taking power in the world. Samuel gets stoned every morning, and then tries to work on organizing his life, finding new and better work, making a plan for his old age, and so on. The dope and the agenda

work against each other. Young people often find themselves trapped in a double-bind: they smoke dope to rebel against a joyless society, but in the process they remain stoned and silent in the face of the society which seeks to make them joyless. Act of political defiance that it once was, marijuana use has a way of undercutting its own statement and leaving its users voiceless and unprotected.

One of the most controversial of our stances about substances has been the contention that some people, having completed a year's contract and worked hard on themselves and their lives, can return to drinking or usage in a way that is not a problem. Over the years, as we've seen more and more people through this process, we have indeed watched many people do just that. Often, the process of learning how to use without abuse is far from automatic; people must experiment, with group and community support, over a long period of time in order to find their own way. Group members have invented methods of making contracts for limited usage: Susan contracts with her group to drink no more than twice a week, always when with other people, and no more than two drinks at a time. If it proves to be more work than she wants to do to stay on this contract, she may alter it, or go back to abstinence. But she has the choice and may sometimes choose to handle substances one way, sometimes another.

Some few people do seem to have strong and inalterable reactions to certain substances. Steven moves very quickly from one drink to drunkenness. Suzanne has a body-response to cocaine, craving it in large amounts once she's had a little; to control it is far more work than she chooses to do given the rewards of using it. For people with such responses, it makes perfect sense to declare themselves non-users for life.

For many years, we found ourselves in a contentious dialogue with Alcoholics Anonymous. Sorrowfully, the controversy has had a tendency to become caricatured, casting us as opponents and vice versa. AA offers a number of very rare and important resources to people. They build their program on an understanding of the value of community support. Meetings are available virtually any time of day and night. The self-help character of AA protects people from professionalism, and offers empowerment from peers. It is a cross-class, cross-gender, cross-race, cross-generation organization. For people who are struggling hard to change habits of substance abuse, AA meetings can often be an invaluable resource.

Many of us, however, continue to be critical of the way in which the spiritual is integrated into Twelve-Step work. We, too, have sought to address the "spiritual," in the sense that we have questioned the well-springs of our

commitment to the social good, and have understood that it springs from our values and from a strong sense of oneness with others. But, to seek the sources of strength from a “higher power” seems to us to be problematic. Even if that higher power is seen to reside inside the individual, it is a conception with troubling political implications.

The topics of spirituality and politics, of acceptance and rebellion, of transcendence and engagement, deserve lengthy discussion. It is a dialogue we hope to pursue, not in a spirit of argument, but rather among friends with a shared goal: the improvement and empowerment of all of our lives.

Working in Group

Making the contract, then, is the first piece of group “work.” From there on, people use group in a variety of ways. Problem-solving groups rely primarily on a form of “cognitive therapy.” That means that we use ideas and words as major tools in the work. We do not, however, exclude other more emotive approaches from the room. Indeed, sometimes people need simply to cry in a nurturing presence, to rage, to mourn and so on. In general, we are open to the work taking us wherever it seems useful to go, within a few parameters.

We do not permit people to abuse each other. The group leader has two main functions: to provide protection and permission. Protection means assuring that each member is safe to talk about whatever she needs. Fear of being trashed by someone else in the room would clearly erode that safety. On the other hand, permission includes, among other things, encouragement to give honest feedback, to say what one is feeling and thinking about fellow group members and their work. It is for this reason that we have developed techniques for saying critical things in ways that are safe, especially *held feelings* and *paranoias* (see Chapter 8). Group members are urged to use these forms for their own protection and that of others.

One form of working is to deal with transactions in the room. Group, as I have said, is a laboratory for practicing new ways to handle problems that occur outside of group. For Susan, for example, to give held feelings in group, to negotiate for the time she needs for herself, to get feedback on the ways in which she Rescues during other people's time, are all invaluable opportunities for learning.

A second form of work is to problem-solve about events outside the room. Susan reports on a conversation with Bob, and gets help from the group to understand why she ended up mad. She may need to rage at Bob before she can move into the analytic mode needed to do that analysis. She may need to fight her Pig, which tells her the

problem is all her fault, that she is crazy and mean. Eventually, she needs ideas about how to change her behavior. We do not hesitate to give people advice in group, trusting that they will sort good advice from bad. It is very consistent with our theory and values to tell people straight-forwardly what we think they should do. “Think” is an important word in that sentence; advice is always couched in terms of the therapist's opinion or beliefs, and the therapist is always open to discussion and to the very real possibility that she could be mistaken.

Some ways of working are:

- ◆ Reporting
- ◆ Dumping feelings
- ◆ Getting strokes and nurturing
- ◆ Analyzing problems
- ◆ Making new strategies
- ◆ Getting advice
- ◆ Transactions with other group members
- ◆ Fighting Pig (see Chapter 5)

In general, new people in group tend to work on the most pressing, external problems in their lives: work, relationships, substances, etc. Over time, as they take care of many of those problems, they learn more and more about themselves in relationship to the world: how their particular Pigs work, what are effective strategies in fighting them, where their lives structurally support their internal dramas, and so on. The work moves more and more inward, at the same time that it affects more and more profoundly the material conditions of life.

Susan, for instance, works as a clerk in a public utility office. She tells us that she's bored with her job, although, "It's okay; it pays well, and it's a whole lot better than a lot of other jobs I've had." Between work and her boyfriend, she has little time for other things. "I have some friends, but I don't see much of them, and besides, they're always busy with their own families or boyfriends." As she practices sticking up for herself with Bob, she realizes how much she depends on him, both to help her with real-life crises, and to provide the zing that she fails to get elsewhere. So long as she needs Bob so badly, she is hard-put to rattle his cage as much as she'd like.

Stage two of Susan's work, therefore, is to look for other sources of joy and well-being, to take the pressure off her relationship with Bob. She begins to ask more from her

friends, wanting regular dates and talking more intimately about herself. Some friends are thrilled with these changes, others are not, and she soon realizes she needs new friends. Where can she meet people? The question leads to another: What would I like to be doing that might put me in contact with people I like? She confesses that she's always had a secret yen to paint, and she signs up for classes at the local community college. To do so, she must recognize and combat the profound Pig which sees her as boring, stupid, a drone with nothing to offer others but her sexuality.

As the quality of her life and of her “ self-esteem” improves, she becomes more and more discontented with boredom at work. Newly engaged in the project of connecting more deeply with other people, she begins to talk to fellow-workers and discovers that many of them, too, are unhappy. They cook up ideas among them of ways to improve the quality of their jobs, including some innovative visions of organizational restructuring. Together, they begin to tackle the management.

One thing leads to another. Two fascinating facts emerge about working at the prompting of the client's wishes. First, while we never interject politics as an overt agenda, very often the project of personal improvement quickly leads to political action, in the broad sense of the word “ political.” That is to say, individuals can rarely change

their personal psychologies without bumping up against real structures of power and injustice in the world that must be confronted and changed. To seek power to change the world is the essence of politics. In a very real sense, problem-solving demonstrates that the personal and the political are one and the same.

The second interesting quality of working contractually is how often the work ends up being very comprehensive. Radical Psychiatry is often accused of being “not deep,” because we apparently concentrate on “superficialities.” According to our theory, the distinction is a false one. In practice, that theory is supported over and over again. People take on the most intimate and profound parts of themselves in the course of working on the most mundane.

Families and the Past

Because we engage in a contentious dialogue with Freudian views of the unconscious and of developmental theory (see Chapter 14), we sometimes are guilty of oversimplifying on paper our thinking about birth-families and the past. Biological families are important for two, interconnected reasons. First, the Pigeon is initially formed in the context of the family. The experience of small children is dominated by parents and siblings, although they are not exclusive influences. They themselves are operating in a

larger social context. They transmit ideas that have wide cultural currency.

Moreover, the very structure of the family is a potent source of ideology. One mother (who usually does the greatest amount of childcare), one father, perhaps some sisters and brothers, grandparents often at a distance, some shadowy aunts and uncles and cousins who appear at the Thanksgiving table expecting affection: the shape of the nuclear family in and of itself teaches potent lessons. We learn that mother, with too little help and too many demands on her heart and hands, is “supposed” to supply everything we need and in fact does not. We learn to compete for what we need. We learn that women and men relate differently. Studies show that fathers relate to children in ways that are often more verbal, more about play, punishment and teaching. Mothers, on the other hand, spend the bulk of their time with children dressing them, feeding them, scolding them about safety or chores or behavior, coddling them, nursing them — in general, tending to the necessities of bodily existence and family living. We learn that men dwell in a world of ideas and learning, while women are bounded by the mundane. From the treatment accorded these roles in the outside world, we learn to respect the one and treat the other with contempt.

The family is indeed a schoolroom of life. It is not, however, the only one. From the beginning of infancy, the larger world is a presence. The clothing infants wear, their toys and food, conventions about sleeping arrangements (cribs versus family-beds) all are mediators of social norms and notions. Television flickers in the room; music is in the air. Baby carriers begin early-on to influence body postures. Think about the differences between small infants carried straddling a hip, in a firm structure on the back, or in a soft bag against the grown-up's belly.

Before long, children are actively watching television, reading books, playing with toys loaded with social significance (white-skinned, blue-eyed baby dolls; guns and sticks and sling-shots; Barbie dolls and G.I. Joes). Playground interactions take shapes particular to the culture. Children in India run in multi-aged packs, for example; in America age segregation is much more the rule. Village children find toys in trees and animals and ponds, while city playgrounds offer ready-made climbing structures, swings and slides. Every experience, in fact, from birth onward, carries a lesson about the particular world in which a child is growing.

Nonetheless, experiences with the family of birth do carry a special significance. Because children in our society are so thoroughly dependent on parents for care, the points of view of parents are especially weighty. How father or

mother, sister or brother treats a child is of very great moment. The earliest, and sometimes some of the most potent, conceptions of the world are formed through these interactions, and they stay with us far into adulthood. Along the way, they are altered by other realities, reinforced by some, challenged by others, recombined in a myriad number of ways in a never-ending process. In other words, childhood consciousness is only the beginning of the story, not the end. But it is an important start.

To fight the Pig, therefore, it is often very useful at some point to understand where it came from. What was it in your own experience in your particular family that made you think you were crazy or bad? How did the family's treatment of you correspond to what you later figured out about yourself in school? Did your mother and three older sisters always do everything for you, convincing you that you were privileged on the one hand, and incompetent on the other? And did the fancy private school you went to confirm both those notions? To understand the historic roots of the Pig can be one very useful strategy. It is not always the most useful, however. Moreover, it often tells you some of what you need to know, but by itself does not necessarily tell you what to do about it.

The other way in which the family is important is contemporary. Those very family transactions that tended to form your Pig are likely to be continuing today. In more

conventional therapies, people sometimes construct very exact pictures of dynamics which in early childhood undermined their power to be happy, and then do nothing to alter those dynamics in the present. We are alert to the current transactions between people and their families, and we regularly urge people to take their power in the moment, and to struggle against debilitating dynamics right now. A favorite technique is to notice the transactions that activate the Pig when one is in contact with parents, and then to write a letter giving criticism and asking for changes. Often, this work seems hopeless to people. "My parents are old, they know nothing of therapy; they'd never, ever change." Statements like these are a reflection of the familiar ways that power is distributed in families: parents have it all, and children must adapt, or fight in underhanded and rebellious ways. What we are urging is precisely an alteration in those arrangements of power. We are suggesting a vision of equality between parents and grown children, in which children have rights equal to the parents. It is often a startling idea to parents. Surprisingly often, after the initial shock and bewilderment about what to do differently, parents may be relieved, welcoming the effort of children to make relationships better and the leadership they provide in doing so.

Group Dynamics

Every group has its own dynamics and gestalt. After years of leading problem-solving groups, I am struck by how unique the character of each particular mix of people can be. At the same time, several patterns and problems do tend to be common to many groups.

Minorities: Our group members more or less show the same demographic characteristics as therapy consumers in general. The majority are white, heterosexual, female, in their twenties to forties, middle-class (in the broadest definition of that word), and able-bodied. However, many working class people come to us, as well as many lesbians, a smaller number of gay men, some people of color, occasionally a disabled person, a few teens and a few people sixty and over.

In women's groups, we try to keep a balance between heterosexuals and lesbians, although lesbians are frequently somewhat in a minority. In mixed groups of seven, we tend to give women the numerical advantage. It is undesirable for anybody to be a minority of one in a group, although sometimes it is unavoidable. Support from at least one other person who shares the particular aspect of identity that's in question (who is also gay, or black, or elderly, or disabled) is very helpful, both as a

source of feedback from that particular vantage point, and also as a check on the judgments of the other group members. In the context of a cooperative agreement, and also because our general commitment is to the truth, to demystify the lies which characterize our society (see Chapter 2), we are obligated to be honest about our racism (see Chapter 21), homophobia, ageism and ableism (see Chapter 19), and to unlearn it. We presume that nobody immersed in a society in which “-isms” are so intrinsic can escape their influence. But we also think that such ideas are internalized oppression, or Pig, and, like all Pig, they can be uprooted.

It does occasionally happen that a group contains one person with a particular identity, at least for a period of time. The group leader tries hard to fill the next opening with someone else of the same community. Sometimes, when the task of identifying Pig is falling too much to the minority person, the rest of a group has met separately to take the initiative on unlearning their racism (or whatever). In general, the complaints and fears of the affected person must be taken very seriously and addressed (see Chapter 21). The tools of emotional literacy are enormously helpful.

Secrets: People keep secrets in groups for a variety of reasons.

They may Rescue other members by keeping silent about held feelings or complaints. They may give up their own time, or refrain from working on something they think will upset others.

Some people fear gossip. Ruth worries that Robert from her group will tell Janet, who works in the same office with Sam, the person about whom she wants to complain. Especially in the second decade of working in the same community, networks of acquaintanceship can grow quite Byzantine. Everybody knows somebody who knows somebody else.

Group members sometimes worry that others have heard their story too often before, that they will be bored, or worse yet, angry, wondering “ why she hasn't gotten off that yet!”

People often are frightened to talk about sex, money, politics or religion. Sexual problems are embarrassing, money evokes envy or contempt, politics are too controversial or dangerous, religion is “ taboo” in a “ radical” therapy. Stuart is a member of a political party which has often been persecuted. Many of his most important connections with people are with party members. Yet he is wary of stating what his affiliation is

to people he doesn't know well. In addition, his fellow party members are urging him not to give the show away.

In general, fears about working on something are useful. It is naive to believe that people will treat you well until you know it to be a fact. On the other hand, what's the point of paying good money for a group where you can't talk about what really matters? Hesitations are the raw material for making a group safe, an act of power which in and of itself is educational. To be able to say what you fear, check out the truth in it (and the group's task is to validate paranoias), and then construct the protection necessary are invaluable skills to have.

Stuart consults the group leader first privately. She urges him to tell the truth as soon as possible. They devise a strategy for checking out the preconceptions of group members about his politics, and for making an agreement of confidentiality that is convincing to Stuart. The group leader also urges Stuart to explain to his party-fellows why it is important to be able to talk openly in group, and to find out what guarantees they want of safety. Finally, she tells Stuart that there is some risk involved, although the risk can be minimized, and that he is the only one who can decide whether it's a risk worth taking for the benefit of being able to improve the things he wants to work on in his life.

Community and “Confidentiality”: Several of the problems noted above have to do with confidentiality. We have a rather unusual position about this matter. On the one hand, we promote a rule that people not discuss work outside of group lightly. The rule of thumb is that information not leave the room. The important exceptions are that the leader discusses people in collective (see below), and the trainees in their training sessions (see Chapter 12).

We are critical of a tendency in our culture to privatize personal business. Problems of isolation and mystification are central in our theory (see Chapter 2). What fuels the desire for “privacy” (more accurately, secrecy) is the assumption that others will judge one harshly. Often we make that assumption because we judge ourselves so cruelly. And it is true: most of us have learned to think in precisely those ways about ourselves and others, a facet of our internalized oppression (see Chapter 5). But in a community where there is clear agreement that nothing anybody does deserves judgment, to be open with one’s business is likely to be more beneficial than harmful. I do not wish to idealize the extended Radical Psychiatry community; to be sure, this is not utopia. But there is a common value on combating Pig, and that goal is protection against mean gossip.

Ruth tells Robert her fears, and Robert confirms that he and Janet do ordinarily talk freely about everything in their lives, that it would be unusual for him not to tell her about something that was relevant in his life. Ruth asks for a special agreement with Robert: “ I want you to be very, very careful about what you say to Janet. If you learn something here that would be hard for you to keep from her, given the nature of your relationship, I want you to tell me that first so we can figure out together how to handle it.” What the agreement implies is that Robert's relationship with Janet is important, too, and that there are likely to be ways that information can pass around this circle of people that are worthwhile for everyone.

Sex: We do not put lovers in the same group with each other. Occasionally, however, love affairs arise among people in a group. When that happens, a special set of problems arises. People are often strongly tempted to hold back information in the presence of their lover. They may need a separate space in which to think through troubles in the relationship, or to talk about being turned on to someone else. Lovers tend to make unspoken agreements not to talk about certain things, to Rescue each other around sensitive criticisms. They also have an understandable tendency to want to appear in a favorable light to a lover, particularly a new one or a would-be lover.

In general, we urge people to opt for friendship rather than love affairs with other group members. If, however, the attraction is strong and people choose to pursue it, we ask that they talk about it first. Starting a love affair involves a shift in the stroke economy of the group. Fellow group members have a right to know what the shift is about. Clearly, sex is a matter for autonomous decision-making; we do not wish to legislate it. But it is also a group matter, and the group deserves to be clued in. Most often, a love affair requires that one person switch to another group, to re-establish safety and equality for everyone concerned.

Power and Peers: Power is a central facet of our view of relationships (see Chapter 1). Part of what is “healing” about the group experience is being with equals in an atmosphere where cooperation is valued. But power is not an abstract concept, nor a unitary one. We must say what powers exactly we are talking about. Group members have equal rights to time, to strokes, to attention, to help. The shared commitment to equality guarantees a sincere attempt to avoid abusing powers which may derive from inequalities in the real world. Men, for example, learn in group to recognize ways in which they may assume a right to be taken more seriously, to talk more frequently, or to be afforded other special privileges, and the advantages to them as well as to women in being cooperative instead.

Nonetheless, some real inequalities do exist. In some groups, for instance, some people know each other outside of group, often having elaborate interconnections (living or working together, having friends in common, etc.). The power to elicit strokes inside group is affected by those connections outside group. Often, even when people are all strangers to each other, some group members are more drawn to each other than others. Strokes may not be exactly equal. It is our practice to be honest and forthcoming about these inequalities. For all intents and purposes, power is substantially equal among people in a group, and the exceptions can be addressed and either changed or accepted without ill-effect.

Between group members and leaders, on the other hand, there is a definite inequality of power. The group leader sets many of the terms of the group. She decides on which night it will meet, how many people will be in it, the ground-rules for participation (see Appendix 3) — the fundamental structure and philosophy of the group. Moreover, she does not work on her own life here. She knows a lot more about group members' "business" than they do about hers. We are generally willing to answer any questions about ourselves, and we are self-revealing whenever it is appropriate to be so, saying when we draw on our personal experiences, for example. But we also assume that people don't come to group to find out about us; they come to get help with their own problems, and so we try not to intrude our own problems into the process.

This relative mystification of the group leader can lead to an inequality of strokes.

Our stance about the leader's power is controversial. Some people, especially feminists who have struggled hard and bravely against hierarchy in the world, wish all power inside groups to be leveled. We have resisted doing so for two reasons. First, we think it is an unlikely task, so long as a leader exists at all. We prefer to talk openly about inequalities that in fact exist, especially since we do not think those inequalities are necessarily bad.

Indeed, we believe that it is precisely for the sake of the therapist's power that people, in some significant part, come to group. The leader is not a better person existentially; she is not a superior being in any context that matters. But she does have specific powers. She knows some skills for working on problems. She has accumulated experience through the years of hearing people's stories and watching their work. She has access to the even greater pool of expertise and experience represented by the collective (which we'll return to below). Moreover, the very fact that her own person is relatively absent from the process of the group gives her a greater-than-ordinary power to help fight the Pig. This last power is one which people can freely assign to her, and when it is important to do so, withdraw. I have spoken of protection and permission. Group members are directly benefitted by

giving to the leader the power to provide them. It is enormously empowering for individuals to be able to assign tasks like these to someone, with the promise that she will be very careful not to abuse those powers (not to inflict her own agenda, not to use them as sexual capital, not to treat lightly confidentiality, etc.), and with the knowledge that the assigned inequalities are temporal and situational. They apply only to the group process, and only so long as they are useful to the group member.

It does sometimes happen that the lines of power between therapist and group member are emotionally charged. A person may give over more power than feels comfortable, seeing the leader as magical or feeling that he cannot get along in the world without the therapist's help. More traditional therapists see this transaction as "transference" (see Chapter 14). It may be true that some elements of the exchange are common to other transactions with people in authority, maybe even parents. Rarely, however, is that quality the only important one, if it is important at all. What is more important is that the therapist be humble about the power given her, and that the group member be welcome to take it back when she wants.

Optimism is a very important part of the group leader's healing power. The simple anticipation that people can make the changes they seek — an anticipation implicit in the structure of the group, in contracts, in the straight-

forward way of working — is an empowering transaction. Optimism springs from two sources. First, over the many years that we have collectively done this work, we have been moved and heartened over and over again by people's successes. We have literally been educated to optimism by results.

Second, our underlying political stance is itself optimistic. To locate problems in conditions which exist in the real world, and in their learned reflections inside people's heads, is to suggest a do-able set of actions that will lead to change. Conditions can be altered; Pig can be unlearned. The tasks are straight-forward and manageable.

Our therapeutic politic is closely linked to a world view. Let me say that Radical Psychiatrists do not share a political "line." One of the most compelling facts about our Collective is the variety of points of view it comprises. Some of us are Marxists of an old school. Others come out of the New Left. Still others evolved their social conscience in church environments. The Women's Movement was a definitive politicizing experience for others. There are atheists and witches among us, socialists and democrats, confirmed urbanists and "back-to-naturers." Debate is lively, occasionally heated, always educational, and generally productive. We are content to live with differences, and to learn from them, because we have a very compelling reason to be together: our shared

work, and the unity we experience about the theory that underlies it.

What we do share is the conviction that people move toward well-being, and a view of history that sees behavior in a progressive light (see Chapter 3). We are very careful not to impose any particular political view on people in groups. Instead, our politics are contained in our psychological theory, and in the construction of our practice. We often speak about the wider context for personal problems, in order to demystify the experience of that problem and as a means of nurturing. When Sandra, a member of a prominent dance company, wept because she felt excruciating guilt about her envy of a fellow-dancer's skill, we spoke of the competitiveness of the art-world, and of how scarcity of money and an artistic ideology based on the notion of individual genius promote competitiveness. We both helped her to examine her own responses, to understand them in the larger context, and to find ways to address her legitimate needs for recognition and for continuing growth as a dancer. We did not lecture her about the evils of competitiveness, or the ideals of a cooperative art-world.

Leaderless Group: One time in a month, most groups meet without the leaders there. While the group follows exactly the same procedure as other nights, doing a full-fledged

problem-solving regimen, this is a time to experience a wholly peer group, when different things can happen. People tend to talk more, to practice problem-solving skills, to take risks they might not with the leaders there, and so on. The therapists get a rest, and the group members learn things they might not otherwise. Hogie Wyckoff dubbed this night “leader-full” group as opposed to leaderless.

Leaving Group

There comes a time, anywhere from six months to four years after starting group, when people are ready to leave. There is no value in Radical Psychiatry on “doing therapy” for its own sake. If people have problems and wish to work on them with the help of a group, then and only then should they be there. Sometimes a person knows she has a problem, and chooses not to work on it. Perhaps her career is more important than the lack of a relationship at the moment. Perhaps things are rocky with her teenaged child, but basically tolerable and not as pressing as the painting she is newly learning to make. It is crucial that the therapist not superimpose her own agenda.

For this reason, group leaders do not make leave-taking difficult. There is always a good reason why people talk about leaving, and most usually it is because they are ready

to go. Occasionally, a group member may change his mind, having talked it through with the group, and realized that there is a new contract he wants to make. Sometimes, the discussion may lead to the conclusion that he has not completed his current contract and is feeling hopeless. Usually, that hopelessness is grounded in some helpful criticism for him, for the group or the leader. Very occasionally, a group member or leader may volunteer the opinion that the leave-taker is succumbing to her Pig, that she could in fact benefit from staying in group and working things through. This is an intervention which should be made by a therapist only with a great deal of care, and only after having truly understood the legitimate reasons why the client is considering going. Most of the time, when people talk about leaving, they have given the matter a good deal of thought and have rightfully come to the conclusion that it is the right thing to do.

Once the decision has been made, people are free to leave on their own time-schedule. Usually, both they and the group appreciate a week or more notice, to get used to the idea, to tie up loose ends, and to ritualize the parting. Sometimes, however, people want to leave more abruptly, and they may. The top priority in participating in a group is to be benefiting from it; leave-taking should follow that rule, which ordinarily guarantees that people will also take sufficiently good care of their fellow members. It is very hard on relationships, for instance, for people to leave

without first discussing it in the group as a whole. A telephone call to the leader is not sufficient. But it almost never happens that people who have had a significant experience in a group would choose to leave without good-byes.

On the last night, we urge people to both give and get strokes. Sometimes, those strokes take the form of recounting the work accomplished over the time of participation. There are almost always stores of strokes to be given; this parting ritual both underscores the connections forged in group and sends the departing member into the world well-stroked.

As we've done groups for two decades, we've found that many people return for second or third rounds of problem-solving — a heartening procedure. If there is no such thing as “mental illness,” then “therapy” cannot lead to cure. Instead, people are learning ways to solve problems as they arise. Sometimes, the help of a formal group is enormously useful, and that is the time to join one again. Often, because people have taken care of the most obvious problems, and because they have learned many skills in their first group experience, they come back primed to work deeply and effectively on the next level of their problems. Once again, we all know best what we need. Trusting people to be their own “diagnosticians” has paid

off handsomely over the years we've led problem-solving groups.

CHAPTER TEN:

MEDIATION

Becky Jenkins

Claude Steiner

The Art of Mediation is one of the most powerful techniques we have developed in Radical Psychiatry and an important contribution to the general field of “conflict resolution.” It became clear to us that there were few, if any, models of cooperative behavior to guide people when conflicts arose in their families and love life, on the job or in the community. We saw an absence in the field of psychology of an analysis of power and competition that would aid people in their struggle for equal, happy relationships.

In the coming decade of the '80s it is clear that the material conditions necessary for life (jobs, housing, food, natural resources) will become more scarce and more expensive, and that consequently the pressures on the social units that sustain our emotional life — the family, lovers, friends, and workmates — will become more intense. Child-abuse, wife-beating, divorce, loneliness and

madness are on the increase. More people wander about alienated and disconnected from either families or defined community.

Where are people learning to be cooperative? How do people learn to communicate clearly to others what they think and feel, without being judgmental and hurting others' feelings? How do people resolve their conflicts without violence or giving away huge quantities of money to lawyers? Obviously, Mediations won't erase all these serious social problems, but learning how to work cooperatively on our disagreements is essential if we are to come together to find solutions.

Over the years, most of the Mediations we have done have been between two people, usually a man and a woman in a relationship. We have also done many Mediations for gay and lesbian couples, children and their parents, friends and co-workers. We have Mediated union staffs, health clinics, food coops, political organizations, newspaper staffs, restaurants, artists' groups, collective households and people who own property together in both the city and the country. We want to share what we have learned in the hope that it will be helpful and that in the future these techniques will continue to be improved and developed.

THEORY

Causes of Conflict

Our approach to Mediations comes out of Radical Psychiatry theory. “Establishment” therapists call their work that resembles Mediations, Counseling or Family Therapy. We picked the name “Mediation” because it reflects our belief that people who are having trouble have real, concrete differences: they are thinking differently, feeling differently, wanting different things. It is our belief that when these differences are identified and clearly stated, without judgment or cruelty, they can be negotiated. It is important to agree that a “creative solution” might include dissolving the relationship, understanding why it didn't work and leaving with a minimum of bad feeling.

Who Can Be Mediated

Since Radical Psychiatrists believe that conflict emerges when differences are (objectively) real and possible to identify (not “just in your head”), we insist that these objective differences be discussed, negotiated, and, if possible, changed. Some people and organizations, however, defy the intention and spirit of a Mediation: people who have more than their fair share of power and resources and who refuse to give them up. We won't do

Mediations between Standard Oil and “their” workers, or between wardens and prisoners. It is our position that a Mediation requires an assumption of equal rights and a desire to equalize power so that everyone can pursue their needs equally. We are only interested in negotiating between people who have a basic desire to work and live cooperatively, or who, in our terms, have or would like to have a mutual Cooperative Contract.

Cooperation Contract

In her book, *Solving Problems Together*, Hogie Wyckoff defined cooperation as:

...working together for everyone's good, including one's own. The Radical Psychiatry rules of cooperation are based on the following assumptions: there are sufficient resources to share, the individuals involved have equal rights; no one will lie or keep secrets; no one will misuse or abuse power through power plays; and no one will Rescue - that is, no one will do more than an equal share of the work, or anything she does not want to do.

To summarize, a Cooperative Contract is an agreement to work on:

1. no lies or secrets (distorted or withheld information),
2. no Rescues (doing more than your share, or something you don't want to do), and
3. no power plays (any action intended to get people to do things against their will). Rescues will be explained in greater detail later in this article (see also Chapter 7).

Who Can Mediate

Being a good Mediator takes skill. It takes a person committed to listening to both sides of an argument with an open mind and compassion. This capacity is manifested in being able to see why people act the way they do rather than judging them for it, and in looking for solutions to problems rather than finding who is to blame for them. Mediating takes power and conviction. A good Mediator is someone who is not afraid to offer her opinion, to say the unsayable and to evoke the best from people, to be both tough and tender.

SETTING UP THE MEDIATION

The ultimate success of a Mediation depends, to a large extent, on its having been set up adequately, most often

over the phone. There are a number of questions to ask and issues to negotiate before homework is assigned and a time and a date agreed upon.

Crucial Questions to Ask:

I. Does everyone want to have a Mediation?

It is most important to avoid entering into a Mediation with people who are not really interested in mediating their difficulties. It is not uncommon for a wife to drag a reluctant husband to a Mediation with threats of leaving him, or for a young person to come with parents because they feel they have no choice. In a large group there are often one or two people who are shy about talking about their problems in a large group or in front of a stranger.

Often people are worn out and feeling hopeless because of all the fighting and struggle that has gone on before the Mediator is called. Many people have had bad experiences with ineffectual counseling. Some of the complaints we most commonly hear are that other therapists allow people to vent angry feelings without restraint and care. They leave these kinds of sessions feeling great pain and hurt but without any new ideas or insights.

Unless everyone concerned wants a Mediation there is really no point. It won't work. We ask anyone who is unsure about it to call and speak to the Mediator separately. It is best if the reluctant party calls on their own volition, and is not dragged to the phone. We do not accept a third person's word. We do not ourselves call people or initiate contact. Most of the time a careful explanation of the general form of a Mediation and the homework assignment will allay people's fears. Sometimes just hearing the "warm and reasonable" voice of the Mediator over the phone makes a difference.

It is important that the Mediator ask, with real interest, what people are afraid of and be ready to validate the reasonableness of the fear, and to speak to it. For example, a woman might be afraid that a male Mediator would not be aware of sexism — his own and her husband's; she might doubt his ability to be impartial. If her fears can't be worked out, another Mediator should be found. Use your good judgment. The admonition here is to be extremely careful. You must be prepared to refuse to do a Mediation, no matter how badly someone may want it, if the conditions are not right. You'll have one more chance to check things out at the beginning of the Mediation itself.

2. Will everyone concerned be there ?

Often a Mediation will be requested when one crucial person will be missing (out of town or working). We once consented to do a Mediation for a large (14 people) collective household when one of the people had to be out of town. Finding a time convenient for all those people, including the Mediators (two of us went) was extremely difficult. After hesitating, we were assured that the missing person had promised to abide by any and all decisions made by the group in her absence, and that everyone knew her views backward and forward, well enough to represent them during the Mediation. It was an emergency: they were facing eviction. The Mediation was long and difficult. Finally, hard-won agreements were worked out. We left exhausted and victorious. We heard several days later that the missing woman had returned and been extremely upset when she heard what had been worked out. She was completely puzzled about how it had happened, and she refused to go along. Everyone had worked very hard for nothing.

3. Will everyone accept the Mediator as the ultimate authority during the Mediation?

This question is especially important in situations where the Mediator and the people don't know each other and

people don't have any experience with Mediations or know how they work. It is also important in large groups where specific issues are hotly disputed: e.g., one person has been asked to move out; people are fighting over ownership or money. The question of authority is raised in order to establish agreement that — for the purposes of the Mediation and only during its duration — people will defer to the Mediator as the ultimate authority in any matters being disputed, including procedure. For instance, someone might disagree on how to respond to a held resentment, or might rebel at the seemingly endless process of “clearing the boards.”

The Mediator needs a mandate (agreement) from the group to proceed according to her judgment, especially when things get tough (strong disagreements). This does not mean the Mediator is in fact the ultimate authority. Any participant can agree to disagree or leave the Mediation, thereby escaping the Mediator's opinion and the opinion of the group. Making this commitment ahead of time is helpful in preventing people from going into the Mediation with private, unspoken reservations which render the Mediation useless.

Homework

During the conversation setting up the Mediation, we explain to people that we want them to do some homework. We explain that this work will facilitate the process, helping it to go faster and reach a satisfactory conclusion. We want people to have time to give some calm thought to the matter at hand and walk in to the Mediation with thoughts and feelings as organized as possible.

A Mediation depends for its success on the rational, objective, linear part of people's faculties. We want to avoid, as much as possible, an emotional scene, with everyone hurt, angry, crying and thrashing around. Mediation is not an emotional release technique, but rather a process for thinking about and solving problems in a new, creative way. People who are fighting can usually release their emotions, and often do, without paying for it or having others watch. What people want are some new solutions. Be sure to ask people to prepare their homework on their own, without consulting others. We want each person's independent, individual thoughts and feelings.

I. Contracts

We ask people to prepare a Contract. A Contract is a clear, definite set of goals to be accomplished within the time of

the Mediation. Examples of familiar contracts are: “improve communication,” “learn to give and take criticism without fighting,” “improve sex,” “dissolve the relationship and stay friends,” “stop fighting,” “make clear agreements about the division of work,” “change economic arrangements,” and so on.

2. Held Feelings

We ask people to write down their Held Feelings: a statement of an event that made them angry or hurt their feelings and which has not been expressed. We explain that we want to clear the air, learn what is going on, and teach them how to exchange criticism in a way that is helpful.

People are asked to use this very simple, fill-in sentence: “When you (A_____), I feel (B_____).” We want two pieces of information: (A) an action (a verb), and (B) a feeling (an adjective). “When you come to a meeting late, I feel angry and hurt.” “When you raise your voice, I feel frightened and angry.” We ask people not to get fancy, just to record single events and use simple words to describe what feelings were evoked. Simple words for negative feelings are: angry, sad, hurt, frightened, ashamed, guilty. People must be encouraged to record anything that made them feel badly, no matter how silly and trivial it seems. People often ask if they should

write down something they have already said before; the answer is: yes, if they still have strong feelings about it.

The people who enjoy this assignment are those who welcome an opportunity to get all of the stuff in their head and hearts out on paper in an organized fashion. Often the people who have trouble with this assignment are those who discount their feelings and find it hard to remember the specific actions or events that made them feel badly. Men most often fall into this second group. More about that later.

3. Demands

We ask people to prepare their demands, things they cannot continue in the relationship without; for example: "I cannot stay in this relationship if you continue to have other lovers," or "I cannot stay in this relationship unless I am allowed to have other lovers," or "I want a baby," or "I don't want a baby." "I want to move to the country," or "I don't want to live with other people, collectively or any other way." People don't always have bottom-line, non-negotiable demands, but when they do, it is important to know them. This information will be useful in arriving at a Contract for the Mediation.

4. Paranoias and Rescues

Depending on how well-acquainted the person is with our work and these techniques, and how difficult it might be to explain Paranoid Fantasies (a current fear about what another is feeling and doing that is a secret, or at least, not obvious) and Rescues (things you have done or said that you don't want to do or say), we might ask them to include them in their homework. Most of the time it is too difficult to explain all of this material over the phone and all that is asked for is Held Feelings, Contracts and Demands.

Payment

Finally, it is important that the payment or barter for the work of the Mediation is clear before the Mediation is convened. If the Mediator's hourly wage is twenty-five dollars, and people want to offer goods or services instead, the exchange should be crystal clear to all so that it doesn't become an issue during or after the Mediation. Being a Mediator is hard work, including recovery timer later. It is important that the Mediator be recompensed in some satisfying way.

Advocates or “Outsiders”

Lately some of us have been experimenting with the use of advocates, that is, a friend who is outside the fight, whose function it is to be close at hand, to nurture and be supportive, and to make sure her charge is not feeling bad about herself and losing her capacity to think and proceed rationally. This advocate can perform important functions after the Mediation; for instance, he can be an objective memory bank about what went on when fully-active participants have forgotten. On occasion, if issues are to be dealt with about which the Mediator is not expert — such as race, gay or age issues — a consultant should be invited to sit in. In addition, the Mediator may want to bring along someone she is training or, if the group is large and issues complicated, she may need an assistant. All of these people will need to be discussed with all concerned, and permission gotten for their presence. In general, “the more the merrier,” up to eight people (or until the room is too crowded and uncomfortable), as long as it is understood that all the secondary people must subsume their needs to the needs of the people being mediated.

“Gossip”

We have discovered, after years of practice, that gossip, or information on the “grapevine” about people in a fight, can be extremely useful. A word of caution, however: all

such information must be taken with a grain of salt, for it is probably inaccurate, one-sided and sometimes just downright malicious. Despite that, it can alert a Mediator to a problem that needs to be considered. Different perspectives from different people, while not necessarily correct in themselves, when taken together give a picture of what's going on which could be helpful in the course of the Mediation. The correct use of information (gossip) depends on the premier quality of a good Mediator: someone who knows her own biases and keeps them out of the way through a process of careful sorting.

THE MEDIATION

Warm-Up

It is important that a Mediation take place in a comfortable, pleasant space which gives people the confidence that they can speak their minds without being overheard, and that they will not be intruded upon by uninvited outsiders. Seating is important. The distance between people engaging in the Mediation and between them and the Mediator should be neither too far nor too close for comfort. It is important that the Mediator does not sit closer to one of the parties than to the others in the Mediation so that she may keep an equidistant perspective on the situation. People's advocates should sit within

touching range of the person they are advocating for. In short, the seating arrangements need to be thoughtfully considered in order to make everyone feel protected, safe, and trusting. The first few exchanges in the Mediation should be spent relaxing and getting comfortable. There is no reason why there should not be a few minutes of idle get-acquainted chatter to precede the work. Some of us may serve tea or coffee.

Checking In

As soon as everyone is physically comfortable the Mediator should ask how each person is feeling, and that question should be answered by each person in turn with special attention to people who are scared or especially uncomfortable. If any negative emotions are expressed, time should be taken to find out what exactly they are and what, if anything, can be done to alleviate them.

Many times these feelings have to do with worry about the Mediator's prejudices and biases. This is a good opportunity to explain how we use the idea of Paranoid Fantasies, how they are presented and how they are responded to. For instance: "I'm afraid that you will take my wife's side in the Mediation because you are a woman and a feminist" — a perfectly reasonable fear (or Paranoia). The grain of truth must always be found and

stated by the person receiving the fear. “Yes, it is true that because I am a woman and a feminist, I have a keen eye for women's problems, and sometimes my feelings can get intense. However, I am well aware of how women can add to and accept their lot. My work here is to be objective. I understand that neither you nor your wife will learn anything here if I am unfair. I also trust your critical judgment. If you think I am being unfair, please stop me. I promise to be open to your criticism.”

It is not uncommon for us to know one of the people in a couple we are mediating — for example, to have that person in a problem-solving group we lead. This can lead to a fear that the Mediator will be prejudiced in favor of the person she knows best. We reassure people by explaining that our work is to be on top of such prejudices (validate what they are, if they exist), to protect both of them from abuse of any kind, and to accept and welcome criticism if we should make a mistake. That usually reassures people. It also helps to tell people that a fight is almost never the fault of only one person.

Once a frightened eight-year-old came for a Mediation with his father. He carried a Snoopy blanket, and when the Mediation began he turned his back to the adults in the room and stuck fingers in both his ears. The Mediator made the decision to give it a try and proceeded to ask the father some questions without disturbing the little boy.

When the child heard the Mediator tell his father that taking away the boy's allowance when he didn't clean his room wasn't fair, he unplugged his ears and joined the Mediation.

Other common fears before a Mediation starts are: "I'm afraid I'll start to cry and I won't be able to stop." Or, "I'm afraid I won't be able to make clear what I really feel, and I'll realize that only after I leave." Or, "I'm afraid I'll hurt his feelings." People anticipate that the Mediation will be real "heavy" and emotional. They are legitimately terrified to open themselves up, anticipating harsh criticism, blame and shame, or that something awful will be revealed. Sometimes this is due to the general reputation of confrontive encounter groups, attack-therapy approaches. Often it is because there are absolutely no models for good criticism, and people simply associate telling the truth with hurting others.

We reassure people, validating whatever fears we can, but explaining that we hope we will not only help them solve this current conflict they're in, but also teach them a method of problem-solving for the future; that we are interested in loving confrontation, not attacks; that if anyone is overcome with emotion, crying or rage, we will stop to give people time to cry, calm down, dry their eyes, and get their thoughts back together.

Sometimes telling people the general agenda for the Mediation, especially that it will end with “strokes” (verbal compliments) is reassuring. We are not asking people to let it all hang out without helping them put it back together before they leave.

Contracts

Having gone through the preliminaries of making people comfortable and taking care of their fears, it is time to begin the “formal” part of the Mediation. Ask people to get their written notes and give you their contracts. For example:

Julie and Harry are a young working class couple with a year-and-a-half old son. She is in a problem-solving group with the Mediator and has moved out of their small house to her sister's apartment with their son. Harry wants as his contract to find out what it will take on his part to make this marriage work (he adds it is the number one thing in his life), and to convince Julie to move back into their house. Julie says she wants to find out if it is possible to get the energy needed to save the marriage, and that she would like to continue living apart, and seeing Harry, slowly, while separated.

Earlier when they had been asked for their fears, Julie had said she was afraid to hurt Harry's feelings, afraid that she would be "too nice." Harry had said he felt afraid it wasn't going to work, that Julie was going to ask him to give up too much. The Mediator at this point needs to determine whether what people want from the Mediation is possible. Are their objectives mutually exclusive? Can the Mediator "deliver," be helpful?

On rare occasions, at this juncture, a Mediation can be called off. If after asking questions, you discover that no one is willing to compromise, it is useless to continue. In the case of Julie and Harry, if Harry had been unwilling to discuss an interim arrangement with his wife, seeing her while she lived with her sister, or if Julie had made up her mind never to live with Harry again, then it would have been our opinion that it was useless to go on without a change in the contract.

In almost all cases, even when the Mediator suspects that a solution will not be possible, either because of accumulated experience or an intuitive flash, it is better to let the Mediation continue. People need to be given the opportunity to go through the experience of exchanging Held Feelings before they are ready to give up on a relationship they feel deeply about. It is always possible, of course, that these people will be the exception to both your experience and your intuition.

Clearing the Boards

The exchange of Held Feelings, Paranoias and Rescues is the real “meat” of the Mediation. Their full expression not only clears out Held Feelings and opinions but also provides the perceptive observer with information which slowly forms a composite picture of what the conflict is all about. This process is fascinating. It is as if a three-dimensional hologram, a plastic representation of the relationship, slowly grows in the mind of the Mediator until she feels that she understands the situation well enough to be able to make helpful recommendations. The uniqueness of each person and each situation, no matter how many people and stories one has encountered, never ceases to be impressive.

Clearly this process only works if people are willing to be completely truthful and to reveal all of the feelings relevant to the situation. When people express their innermost and heartfelt emotions and the events which evoke those emotions, they will in fact provide the observers, the participants and each other with a concise and moving picture of the conflict. We use these specific, ritualistic forms for the expression of feelings and thoughts to insure that the exchange will be clean and safe.

In addition to clearing out and supplying information, the exchange of Held Feelings, Paranoias and Rescues is in itself a useful lesson in “Emotional Literacy” (see Chapter Eight). The sophisticated awareness of one's own feelings and the feelings of others, and the knowledge of how most constructively and nurturingly to deal with them, is being “emotionally literate.” True, one Mediation cannot teach all that needs to be known about emotional literacy, but it can be an important first step. A major objective of a good Mediation will be accomplished if people learn skills that will make the service of a Mediator be needed less frequently, if at all.

I. Held Feelings

A Held Feeling expresses what a person felt when she was exposed to another's behavior, and did not say. The more specifically described, the better. Harry: “Last Friday evening when you stopped the project we were doing together to go take care of Tim, I felt frustrated and angry.” Julie: “When you come home from work and read the paper right away, I feel neglected, disappointed and sad.” The person expressing the Held Feeling has to describe with clarity what the other did (specific times it happened are ideal) and how they felt as a result.

The person receiving the Held Feelings must work hard not to be defensive. The recipient needs to acknowledge (write it down, nod, or say: “I hear you”) that when he behaved in such-and-such a way, the other person had some feelings that were connected with that behavior. Harry wants to defend himself against Julie's feelings. He's exhausted after a full day's work; he needs some time to read the paper and get himself together — all perfectly understandable, but it misses the point: when he does it, Julie's feelings are hurt. The work of the Mediator is to urge the person hearing a feeling to relax and listen to how the other is feeling, even if he interprets his own behavior differently or feels that his behavior is not fairly portrayed. The impulse to correct another's perception often is a major problem in itself. What others feel is not up for debate.

With respect to Held Feelings, there are some things that happen fairly routinely. For example, it is a common occurrence for women to arrive at a Mediation with more Held Feelings prepared than men. That's probably because of the way that most men are oppressed (some notable exceptions are men who are artists or in other fields that need men to feel). Men are not given as much permission to feel, nor to pay attention to all the details of what makes them feel bad. You can't have a population of deeply-feeling men. Who would dig the ditches, work on the assembly lines, and push papers around in artificially-

lighted rooms all day? Men discount themselves, and then they forget they have done so, while women have more permission to be sensitive and to take better care of their feelings. Women, in their roles as mothers and nurturers of men, *have* to feel.

One of the exciting things we have noticed over the years is that, as a result of the Women's Movement, men's consciousness is changing. There is a whole new group of men who take the problem seriously and are beginning to think and feel differently.

Sometimes when a woman arrives with more feelings to give than her man, her material will inspire him. He will be reminded of events and feelings he had forgotten. Get him to take notes as they occur to him.

“Pigging”: Some people have to be painstakingly taught how to exchange feelings properly, without angry name-calling. “When you act like a slob, I feel angry.” (“Slob” is not a clearly described action; it's an opinion.) “When you left the dirty dishes in the sink, you were being a dirty slob.” No good: that's not a feeling, that's still just an opinion, a value judgment (“People who don't wash their dishes are dirty slob”). Someone else might think that not washing their dishes was a reasonable, ecological thing to do; or she might just not care. The Mediator's job is to prevent people from talking to each other in such a mean way, a way we call “Pigging” (See Chapter 5 and

Appendix A). Pigging is defined by us as name-calling, using metaphors, overstatements or “you are _____” statements. These styles of speech lead to the use of judgments and evoke hurt and angry responses (otherwise known as a fight).

This part of the Mediation may take a long time and needs a lot of patience and thoroughness. To help protect people we have developed some additional tricks:

Asking: Before every Held Feeling, Paranoia or Rescue expressed, it is important that the recipient be ready and receptive. Accordingly, we make sure that the question is asked, “I have a Held Feeling; do you want to hear it?” If the answer is “yes,” things proceed. During a Mediation it is unlikely that the answer would be “no;” people have made the appointment to do just that — exchange feelings. However in “normal” life sometimes the answer to the question should be “no;” if people are too tired, distracted, or ill to hear and respond thoughtfully to a Held Feeling, it should not be given.

Taking Turns: People take turns exchanging their Held Feelings, etc.: first one, then the other. In a large group, make sure no one speaks a second time until everyone has spoken once, and so on. The theory behind alternating is that it is a way to keep any one person from getting overloaded. In a group, often more than one person feels

the same thing about a specific person. The Mediator must protect that person from getting the same criticism over and over again, each on the heels of the one that came just before it. Ask people not to repeat a feeling if it has already been given (unless they just must in order to feel better; that can happen sometimes if people feel very, very strongly about an issue). Also, ask people who want to give a Held Feeling to someone who has just received one, to wait or to give one to somebody else if they can, while the receiver has time to rest.

New Subject: Make sure that one Held Feeling is not answered with another. For example, “When you left the dishes in the sink, I felt angry,” might be followed by “When you nagged me to wash the dishes right away, I was angry (too).” While the second resentment might be legitimate, its timing is probably wrong. It sounds suspiciously defensive and seems to be a discount of the previous resentment. Mediators have to be vigilant; people are smart enough to figure out how to argue and fight no matter how careful the technique.

2. Paranoid Fantasies

When a person has a Paranoid Fantasy, they are suspicious and fearful that someone is consciously thinking or doing something that is hidden, or at least not overtly stated. We have discovered that the less people know each other, the

more fantastic or outrageous-seeming are their Paranoias. A Mediator must be sure that Paranoias are expressed and validated. They are often found immediately behind a Held Feeling.

In fact, it takes people some time to distinguish the difference between a Held Feeling and a Paranoia. For example, Julie says, “When you were late for dinner, I felt you were angry at me and that was the way you were taking it out on me.” “I felt you were angry at me, etc.,” is not a feeling; it is a perfectly reasonable Paranoia, or intuition, about why Harry was late to dinner. But given in this fashion, it will rightfully make Harry angry. It is a speculation about why Harry has done something without asking him. Properly done, this complaint has two parts: 1) a Held Feeling — “When you were late for dinner, I felt hurt and angry” — and, 2) a Paranoia — “I am paranoid that when you were late to dinner it was because you were angry and trying to take it out on me. Is there some kernel of truth in that?” Harry answers, “Yes, it's true; I left the warehouse later than I usually do because I was angry at you and didn't want to come home. It is not true that I planned to be late for dinner; I didn't think about it.”

Remember that we consider Paranoia to be heightened awareness that always has at least a small grain of truth (see Chapter 8). To invalidate Paranoias is to produce emotional damage, and if done consistently and

systematically it will cause madness. Using the process of finding a kernel of truth both validates people's intuitions or perceptions, and at the same time takes away the distortion and brings the Paranoia into line with reality. For example, Harry has a Paranoia for Julie (after telling her he is angry that she almost never initiates sex): "I have a Paranoia that you don't like sex." Julie replies, "It's true; I used to enjoy sex with you when we were first together. Now there is no romance." When pushed, Julie makes it clearer what "romance" means (watch out for such catch-all words; they don't communicate much information). "I mean there is no foreplay; you don't say sweet, sexy things to me; and you don't keep yourself looking as nice as you used to."

If the recipient of a Paranoia is trying to be cooperative, she is under obligation to find the "grain of truth," whether large or small. Whatever the answer, the validation has to satisfy the person suffering the Paranoia, or more validation needs to be sought. It is not permissible to discount a Paranoia in its entirety.

3. Rescues

Rescue describes the times a person does something she doesn't want to do, or does more than her share of obligations (see Chapter 7). (Obviously, people must sometimes do things they don't want to do — like work, or

empty the garbage. It is important in a cooperative relationship that no one is doing more than their just share.) To Rescue is to disregard one's own feelings and rights, thereby generating feelings of resentment not only in the Rescuer but also in the person being Rescued (we call that person the Victim). People who are treated as Victims get angry at being treated as if they can't take care of themselves. For example, Julie says, "I Rescued you on the camping trip when I didn't ask to sleep separately on the nights I really wanted to be alone. I was afraid I would hurt your feelings." Expressing the Rescues that have been committed not only is an acknowledgment of an error, but a revelation about the possible source of heretofore unexplained bad feelings. (Julie felt grumpy during the trip and didn't know exactly why; certainly Harry didn't know why.) It places some of the responsibility for bad feelings on the Rescuer rather than solely on the Victim. Harry might have felt bad if Julie had said she wanted to sleep alone, but he can't be asked to take the responsibility for the fact she didn't even mention it. Stated Rescues do not require a response except for an acknowledgment that they have been heard and understood.

4. Flexibility

Even though we have established narrow guidelines for the expression of Held Feelings, Paranoias and Rescues, as well as for the general form and order of a Mediation, it

may become more efficient for the Mediator to pass over or rearrange some of these guidelines. Whenever it develops, however, that a speed-up or change allows discounts or judgmental statements to fly, then it will be necessary to retreat to the painstaking, step-by-step, ritualized approach — especially during the exchange of feelings.

The more experienced a Mediator is, the more flexible and experimental she can afford to be. For example, a Mediator could allow more than one Held Feeling to be given at a time (Harry gives Julie all his Held Feelings and when he is finished, Julie gives all of hers), if people understand the process and seem to be feeling calm enough to hear all of that material at one time. Some of us begin a Mediation by asking a few questions about people's ages, jobs, number of children, years married, whatever. Some of us insist on a ten to fifteen minute break in the middle of a Mediation. Some of us never work alone in a group larger than four. Some of us never work alone. Radical Psychiatry Mediation is a new art, and it needs skilled and concerned people to experiment, make changes and improve its power. A word of caution: All of these techniques have come out of many years of collective practice and criticism. It is important that people add to and improve these forms with the feedback and help of others, not in isolated practice.

Analysis and New Agreements (otherwise known as "The Moment of Truth")

All the information is out. The Mediator has taken careful notes, asked many questions, and carefully observed the interactions between people (both verbal and non-verbal). She has not yet suggested any solutions. There are several questions a Mediator has been trying to answer in her mind and the process has unfolded up to this point:

- ◆ What are the objective, concrete inequalities between these people (power, money, responsibility, skill)?
- ◆ What repeated behavior could be corrected that would help them solve problems and improve their lives? (Examples: stop shouting; give Held Feelings sooner; have weekly date for fun; have weekly date to work out schedules and give Held Feelings; share initiation of sex 50/50.)

With a clear understanding that any analysis has zero probability of being completely correct and that any analysis will have to be accepted by both or all the participants to have any effectiveness, the Mediator can now give her analysis and suggest some new agreements. One more teaching technique: before speaking, the Mediator could ask the participants to say what they think the major problems are. This provides an opportunity for

people to take their own power and say what may already be obvious to them, as well as giving the Mediator more time and information to figure out what is going on.

Mediator: "I think that both of you have been in a long-standing power struggle in which you, Harry, have been wanting Julie to take care of your emotional and sexual needs, as well as your new baby, and Julie, you have wanted Harry to spend more time around the house helping with the baby and chores, generally hanging out and being loving and supportive in a non-sexual way. You have also depended on him to support the family financially. Both of you are constantly angry with each other and expressing it with power plays and regular fights. You have done some damaging things to each other, especially you, Harry, when you hit Julie, and Julie when you ran away with the baby to your sister's without telling Harry where you were and what you were doing. I am not sure it can be fixed. The division of labor has been too unequal for too long; most of your interactions are fights; you almost never have any fun together; Julie seldom enjoys sex and wants to live separately. I have a couple of suggestions of what you might try before any final decisions are made. Does what I have said so far make sense? Would you like to hear my ideas?"

It is difficult to reproduce exactly and explain this crucial moment in the Mediation. The point is, not to be shy with

an opinion. If people knew what was going on or what to do about it, they wouldn't come for the Mediation. If people agree with what you have said so far and want to hear more, continue.

Mediator, continuing: "It is our experience that a complete separation of at least six weeks is often helpful. It gives people time to rest, heal their wounds, and re-evaluate their feelings about the relationship. It also could be a time for you to do some work on yourselves — join a problem-solving group, join a men's group, make new friends to break your isolation, look for a job, Julie; etc. You could also try living together again under some extremely strict rules of behavior so that power plays and fights are avoided. It is my opinion that neither of you can take more hurt and abuse. What do you think about these suggestions?"

There are a number of possible alternatives for Harry and Julie to decide upon: they both may want to separate; they both may want to stay together; or one of them want to separate and the other to stay together. If Julie wants to move and Harry would like them to stay together, Harry will have to give in. There is no way to force someone to stay in a cooperative relationship against her will. The Mediator needs gently to make that clear to Harry. There is no way for him to be happy with a companion-lover who is with him against her will. The Mediator can also be

confident that the separation will catapult Harry into positive life changes he cannot imagine now. He should be told that. If Harry and Julie want to separate, all the details must be carefully negotiated and agreements made. (It helps to ask all parties to write down these agreements as they are reached.) How long is the separation? How thorough? Will it be complete: no phone calls, no letters, no third hand information from mutual friends, no sharing of familiar haunts (restaurants, bars, meetings, parties)? How will work be divided: childcare, bill-paying, other obligations? If there is an emergency, what is the procedure? (Often we suggest that they pick a mutually trusted third party to carry messages that cannot wait and concern business only. If children are involved, close friends and relatives can be agreed upon to help transport kids who are too young to make arrangements for themselves.)

If they decide to stay together, how will they deal with arguments? What is each one of them going to work on independently to improve their relationship? Harry should be urged to promise never, under any circumstances, to strike Julie or in any way take advantage of his superior physical strength.

This cannot be emphasized enough. It is ridiculous to carefully negotiate a cooperative contract which depends on equality if one person insists on exercising an

advantage that the other can never match and that will be the final arbitrator in a disagreement. Harry could decide that all this cooperation stuff had worn him out, that a punch in the mouth is more effective. Julie's fear would prevent her from saying what she really thinks.

How are they going to improve their sex life? (Harry could be urged to touch Julie more often and not insist it lead to sex. Julie could be urged to initiate sex 50% of the time, not leaving all the responsibility for timing and invention to Harry.) The secret for all of the above is detail. As the Mediator pushes for the details to be confronted and resolved, new conflict and information may emerge. Time should be allowed for the unexpected. As the Mediator becomes more skilled, Mediations should get shorter.

Another analysis from a different Mediation might run as follows: "The seven people in this household have been polarized into two opposing groups, one which backs Jack and the other which backs Ralph, who are vying for power in the house. Those who have chosen to remain neutral have been harassed for not taking sides in the argument. The life of this household is threatened by the power struggle between Jack and Ralph. I suggest that this group decide whether they want Jack, Ralph, or both to move out, or what will be required if both of them are to stay. I have a prejudice here and that is that you, Ralph, will not

be open to any cooperative behavior (as I've defined it), judging from your unwillingness to hear criticism and your general response to this meeting. I think it is you who should move out. But, for now, I am willing to negotiate whatever wishes the group expresses. I suggest that everybody else in the house stop taking sides and Rescuing both of these people and that you insist that they either settle their differences or move out."

Again, people are asked what they think — whether they agree with the analysis or not. All sorts of things will have to be negotiated, such as how do Ralph and Jack decide who moves out? How will the one who is moving out be compensated? How much time will he have to move out? What if he refuses?

Another example of an analysis: "Mary and Susan, you have a strong and loving relationship which is being undermined by the fact that Susan wants to have lovers outside of your primary relationship and Mary does not. I think that you are going to have to negotiate this difference and come up with some pretty drastic compromises if your relationship is to survive. Mary, either you will have to accept Susan's desire to be non-monogamous, or Susan, you will have to give up your desire to have other lovers. I want you to know that this difference is usually extremely difficult, if not impossible to fix, but because of the strong love I see and feel between you, and because both of you

share the idea that non-monogamy is a good idea, at least in theory, I think it will be possible to work out careful and detailed agreements about what you can do. First you might tell me what we are to work on — monogamy, non-monogamy, or compromise?”

This conflict is an extremely common and painful one for people. It is important that if people decide to work cooperatively on non-monogamy, that the details are carefully worked out and forever up for re-negotiation. Loving, tender care is necessary if it is to work.

Yet another analysis goes: “This working situation, which is supposedly one in which equality of power and decision-making prevails, is in fact not that at all. Some people in this organization have a great deal more power than others because of their seniority in the organization and because they happen to be men. There is a pretense that everyone is equal when in fact that is not true. John especially takes on a lot of power and a lot of responsibility, not only because he was here first and knows a great deal, but also because he has a tendency to assume power. However, he is not being given an opportunity to give this unequal power up since no one is filling the vacuum which he occasionally leaves. Everyone is responsible for this dilemma in that John is Rescuing and everyone else is allowing him to do the extra work and take the extra responsibility. It makes sense everyone is resentful: John,

because of the extra work he does, and everyone else because of his tendency to talk more, interrupt, and make unilateral decisions. I suggest that John give up his extra power once and for all. I think he wants to, although perhaps not all at once. People in this group must decide whether they will or will not take on both the power and the responsibility which John will leave behind.”

Again, all of these alternatives can be negotiated. What will John do and not do? For how long? Who will take his place? What will be his compensation for giving up power, and so forth?

Every conflict is based on a number of contradictions out of which it is possible to find one major contradiction that subsumes all the others. The detection of this major contradiction is the substance of this section of the Mediation.

In the above examples, the major contradictions are:

- ◆ Harry is completely dependent on Julie for nurturing and intimacy (with sexual intercourse as its primary mode of expression), and Julie is dependent on Harry for economic support (and is suffering from isolation as a mother at home all day alone with a baby).

- ◆ Mary wants to be monogamous and Susan doesn't.
- ◆ Both Jack and Ralph want to be in charge and have the decision-making power in the house. (Secondarily, the rest of the members of the household have not taken their power, insisting that everyone equally share the decision making.)
- ◆ John feels angry and overworked but is not willing to give up his extra power. (Secondarily, the members of the collective want to take more power but have not been willing to do more work.)

Be careful that you don't make the error of pursuing a secondary, or lesser, contradiction to the exclusion or neglect of the major one. For example, it would be a waste of time to work out a carefully cooperative division of work between the people who are in the collective without pointing out the role of John and the results of his Rescue. A good Mediator must tenderly but emphatically nail John and his uncooperative behavior, always giving him and the group the benefit of the doubt. They would do it differently if they knew what "it" was and how.

Wrap-Up

Another Mediation

Sometimes it is impossible to get everything done that people hoped to achieve during one Mediation. The Mediation must keep shifting and reevaluating what is really possible given the time limitations and limitations on human energy. The Mediator must work hard not to Rescue by trying to fix everything. By this time your “average Mediator” has been moved by people's sweet honesty and deeply felt needs, and she feels the impulse to try to fix everyone up. New Mediators often work for hours, leaving on all fours and with not much to show for it. Don't do it. Let people do some work on themselves and the situation with the limited agreements you do have time to hammer out, and come back in several months for a “check up.”

Mediations usually take no less than two hours and should not take more than six. Most of us find that after three to four hours, exhaustion sets in, the brain weakens and grows lax. Within the limits of the energy of the Mediator and the group, choose goals that can be accomplished. On the other hand, be careful not to short-cut working out satisfactory agreements in sufficient detail, or people will leave with a sense of having gotten little accomplished and having wasted their time and money.

Strokes

A Mediation should be ended with Strokes (verbal compliments). It is incumbent upon the Mediator to pace the Mediation in such a way that time is left for them. Strokes are the pay-off for the work of the Mediation, and sometimes what happens can be predictive of what course the relationship will take. It has occasionally happened that at the end of a long and detailed Mediation, people cannot give strokes to each other; when all is said and done, “their juices have dried up.” It is difficult (and hardly desirable) to revitalize a relationship when the affection is gone.

On the other hand, it is more often true that after people have struggled long and hard to identify the course of their troubles and to come up with solutions, they have a new, revived sense of love and respect for each other. Freely-flowing strokes are a good sign because they mean that the relationship is still basically alive and “cooking.”

When people stroke each other at the ends of such hard work, their whole struggle is put into the context of mutual affection and a desire to cooperate. Strokes make it clear, and are a needed affirmation, that the driving force in all successful relationships is love and/or respect. Effective strokes should be clean, powerful and to the point. “I like the way you look,” “I like the way you acted during this

Mediation,” “I like the way you talk,” “I like the way you make love,” “I like the way you smell,” “I like how open and honest you are.”

The Mediator should not hesitate to give the strokes she feels for the people she has worked with. It is best to wait until strokes are flowing freely between all other participants. Finally, it is important that the Mediator not leave the room without getting some strokes. This work is too hard, takes too much heart and caring, just to take your money and run. A few “You are a terrific Mediator” s will go a long way.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

BODYWORK

Sandy Spiker

Beth Roy

The mid-1970s saw a blooming of alternative therapies along many paths. Among them was a new interest in techniques of bodywork, a method that derived, in the main, from the work of Wilhelm Reich.

Stated simply, bodywork is about reconnecting the mind and the body. Reich theorized that emotions were actually a body experience, that feelings operate as a flow of energy in the musculature. We are alienated from a wide range of physical sensation — almost everything, in fact, except pain and sexuality. At the same time we lose contact with our own deepest emotions.

Moreover, even when we are aware of what we feel, we are severely restricted in expression. It is hard to find a situation in which we can let go in safety and with full encouragement. Our society simply doesn't support that kind of behavior. Abandon can be found only in spectator sports, some churches, at wild parties which are usually

stimulated by alcohol, or in one's car while driving on the freeway. It is hardly surprising that the '80s have seen a proliferation of sports-related riots, of freeway violence, of evangelical ecstatic churches. Heavy-drinking, heavy-drugging parties are a way of life for many Americans.

Wilhelm Reich and the Origins of Bodywork

Reich, a disciple of Freud's, was trained in psychoanalysis. After a number of years, he grew critical of the practice, impatient with its length, restive because its results were so often imperceptible. He began to experiment with more dramatic and concrete techniques.

Reich fastened on Freud's theory of "libido," or sexual energy. To Reich, the notion that the human psyche is powerfully influenced by some form of energy was intriguing. A literalist, his dissatisfactions with psychoanalytic results prompted him to ask a set of concrete questions about the idea. Until that point, Freud's writings had a typically metaphorical quality: he postulated the existence of libido, but was unconcerned about examining its exact nature or consequences. Reich set to work to understand the ways in which body energy is akin to psychological energy, and the ways in which both become disrupted.

Connections between mind and body had become very obscured and alienated during the Victorian age, a process both abetted by Freud's emphasis on the intangible unconscious, and challenged by his revolutionary emphasis on sexuality. Reich's attempts to spell out the exact nature of that connection quickly took on a revolutionary character. The more he examined the ways in which mind and body are an organic whole, the more he was also forced to look at the ways in which individuals are a part of the social order. As he looked more and more inward, more and more concretely at the individual's psychology, he found himself looking more and more outward, or politically, at the way the individual was connected to society. Reich hypothesized that energy became blocked in the body, that circulation and electrical sequences were literally altered by patterns of tension in the muscles, and he asked how that blocking came about. What happens to people to block energy?

Oppression, Reich answered. As people are painstakingly formed into beings who fit the needs of society, their natural impulses and inclinations must be inhibited and altered, or oppressed. To do so, the physical manifestations of those impulses, the actual tendency of muscles to behave in particular ways, must be changed or blocked.

Pig in the Body

Children are taught many injunctions (see Chapter 5) that have concrete consequences for their bodies. “Don’t cry!” little boys are told. Men, however small, are supposed to “be brave.” To show what you feel is a disadvantage in a competitive world (“The other boys will think you’re a sissy; you’ll never get chosen for the team;” “If the boss knows how scared you are, how much you want the promotion, he’ll think you’re weak and pass you over.”). Men (and increasingly women in the business world¹) are supposed to be able to take what comes to them, do the job however adverse the circumstances, go-it-alone without fear or sadness. So “be a man, son,” and dam that flood of tears.

But it takes a physical as well as a mental act to stanch a flow of tears. You must hold back your tears, gulp down your sobs. To do so, muscles must be contracted and held: the throat tightens, the chin trembles, the lips compress. The more often you repeat the process, the more adept you become. You can stifle your sobs more quickly, more

¹ A fascinating portrait of how women are changed by the business world is offered in *The Third Sex* by Patricia McBroom (William Morrow and Company, New York, 1986), an anthropologist who studied high-powered women working in finance.

thoroughly. Eventually, you develop a habit; like Pavlov's dogs, you learn to respond to the slightest impulse to cry with the clenching and tightening needed to resist. The body takes over; not-crying becomes as automatic as crying once was.

Meanwhile, you still feel sad. With no outlet for the feeling, it becomes an intensely painful sensation. So the mind turns away from consciousness of that about which it can do nothing. But it is difficult selectively to erase emotions. The brush wipes a clean slate, and along with sadness vanishes a wide range of other feelings. "Don't cry!" bleeds over into "Don't feel!" "Don't feel!" becomes justified by "Feelings are a weakness," which suggests, "The world is a cruel place; bear up and fight hard." An ideology is formed, that corresponds to the shape of the world. A competitive society *is* a cruel place, and it needs people who will compete hard in order to work.

What we have presented here is a very simplified sketch of how social injunctions are internalized, through the medium of the body, and become psychological systems. In the '70s, as many people turned to Reichian work and to Bioenergetics to address their physical-psychological selves, we, too, became increasingly aware of the body component of our work in groups. We developed our own version of bodywork.

Radical Psychiatry Bodywork

What we sought in bodywork was a supplement to group work, which tends to be verbal, rational, linear, and goal-oriented. We began to offer monthly sessions, usually on a weekend morning, where group members could experience alternative ways of working on their problems. The first model for this work was developed by Claude Steiner, who did one session monthly for all the members of his groups. Before long, other practitioners began offering joint sessions, open to members of all Radical Psychiatry groups.

We rented a dance studio, in order to have enough space for ten to twenty people to move around and to lie down. Several group leaders would be there, assisted by as many trainees as possible. We scheduled three to four hours, and instructed people to come dressed in loose, comfortable clothing and to bring along foam mats, sleeping bags or blankets. In the early days, we offered these sessions as part of the “deal” when people paid for a month of group; in return, group leaders did not meet with their groups once a month (the origin of “leaderless group”).² After some time, bodywork practice became more specialized,

² See Chapter Nine for more about the subsequent history of this idea.

because it interested some group leaders more than others. As that happened, we struggled with the economics of the matter, and began to charge a nominal additional amount for the bodywork sessions, to cover the cost of studio rental and to pay the “specialist.” We will return to the questions of money and space, and the unresolved problems we struggle with in relation to them.

We apply to bodywork all the same principles that underlie our other work. We seek to share power, and to keep a cooperative contract.

Contracts

As in group, we begin by making contracts, although these are for the session only. Everybody sits in a circle, and each person says what she or he is there to do. Sometimes, when bodywork is an unfamiliar way to work, people may start by saying their fantasy about coming to the session. Often, we help people to connect that fantasy to work they are doing in group. A woman, for instance, who has a problem with Rescuing, and has made an ongoing problem-solving contract to ask for what she wants, might contract in bodywork to express whatever she feels. She may be worried that she'll pay too much attention to other people's sounds, feel sorry for them, want to help, and lose touch with her own needs and feelings. She can ask

permission from the group to ignore them, and decide firmly that her own work is her top priority for the day.

Other typical bodywork contracts are: “Getting angry,” “Crying,” “Feeling good,” “Releasing tension,” “Getting in touch with my feelings,” “Relaxing,” and so on.

Warming Up and Getting in Touch

Generally, the work begins with some warm-up exercises, anything to loosen muscles and get people in motion. They should be fun; we frequently do them to background music — a little rock'n'roll goes a long way to loosening people up!

Next, we might do an exercise that relates to a number of contracts. It's surprising how often common themes can be found. If several people are working on anger, for instance, we might have the group growl at each other, or fight for a towel, or walk around shouting “No!” at each other. Bioenergetics practitioners are a rich source of these thematic exercises. But this is also a chance to be creative and, again, to have a good time.

The core of Radical Psychiatry bodywork is generally the next phase of the session. We ask everyone to lie down comfortably. We suggest that they loosen their belts,

remove rings and watches — generally unfetter themselves so that they can move in any ways they wish. Sometimes we'll talk people through a simple “getting-in-touch” exercise. Always, we interject a great deal of explanation of what we are doing.

Bodywork has a tendency to become mystified. Because we are habitually cut off from our bodies, when we begin to re-experience them, we are apt to be surprised. Many of the sensations and experiences of bodywork seem extraordinary to people. It is easy to attribute the fireworks to the magic of a leader, or to be scared about the secret capabilities one discovers in oneself. We seek to put the process back into the realm of the ordinary, to give people ways to possess their own work intellectually and well as physically — a direct outgrowth of our commitment to responsible uses of power.

We begin by explaining the process on which we're about to embark:

The purpose of bodywork is to provide an opportunity for people to speak from and with their bodies. Our culture causes us to disconnect our minds and bodies. As a result, we stop being conscious of what is happening in our bodies. This exercise is designed to help get reacquainted.

Close your eyes and breathe naturally. Let your arms relax at your sides. Focus in on whatever it is that you're conscious of right now, to whatever is occupying your consciousness. Consciousness is not limited by this room and this moment. Right now you might be in the past or in the future or in another galaxy. Pay attention to where you are right now and when you have a clear idea, speak out and say where you are so we all can hear. I'll give you some time to get in touch with that.

When you are ready, imagine that your consciousness is a light. You can use this light to survey your physical self and to notice what is going on. Start with your toes, imagining that the light reveals what is inside them.

Gradually, we talk people through a slow and gentle journey into their bodies. Most of us have a very limited range of possible discoveries. We may notice that some part hurts, or that another part is tight. We ask questions in order to stimulate an increase in available vocabulary:

Shine the light on your thighs. What do you find? Are they hot or cold? Soft or hard? Is one higher than the other, or shorter, or thinner? What color are they inside? Are they shiny or dull? Does the light reflect off them, or is it absorbed?

Each question is followed by a sufficient pause for people to introspect. Timing is very important in these exercises;

the leader needs both to keep the process moving, and at the same time to be unobtrusive, to stimulate ideas without dominating them.

Eventually, we ask people to report on their experience. We encourage them to be wild and bizarre:

One of the ways we're separated from our bodies is that we're told many of the things we experience are crazy. It is not all right to tingle, or to feel your thighs are ropes or sponges or whatever. Here's your chance! Anything goes here.

Hesitantly at first, from one corner of the room and then another, people begin to speak:

"I found my stomach was like a cave. Its walls were pocked and shiny and black and red and cold. But there was a warm stream of golden liquid flowing through the cave, shining light everywhere and making me feel good."

We congratulate the person on her description, encouraging other imaginative ways of expressing our inner experience.

"I felt that my feet were much higher than my head, although I know I'm lying flat on the floor. When I shined my light inside my head, it seemed flat, like the

inside of a book, while my feet were soft, and squirmy, like they were full of worms.”

“I had a pain in my chest. When I looked at it, it was a knot of metallic strands. Only, while the light shined on it, it began to soften and unravel, and the pain went away.”

Deep Breathing and Emotional Release

Already, we begin to see body changes, happening gently and without effort, just because of a change in consciousness. After everyone (who wants to) has spoken, we continue with a new set of instructions. In what follows, we concentrate especially on creating a climate of safety, in which people can do and express exactly what they please:

What you've just done was to use your mind to gain a better understanding of your body. You might have noticed that the simple fact of concentrating attention on some part of your body changed the way your body felt. As your body sensation changes, so also will what is available to your mind. In this way, we can go back and forth between mind and body.

In this session it is OK to express what your body has to say. The kinds of things that people do when they express what we feel in our bodies would probably

create difficulties in the outside world. We provide a situation here where there is total safety. It doesn't matter what you do with your body, what posture you assume, what movement you make, whether you cry or scream or yell; it's all OK, and you won't get criticized. You need feel no embarrassment or fear. The worst that could happen is that somebody else doing this work does not like whatever you are doing, and they may say so. But then you don't have to stop as long as you're not physically injuring anyone, and we will make sure that you don't accidentally hit or hurt someone or yourself.

These statements are designed to create a sense of trust and safety so the person can effectively deal with the strong messages which we all hear from our Pig (see Chapter 5) when we are about to express a strong feeling. Typically the Pig will say things like, "You are making a fool of yourself!" or, "This is childish and immature. Stop it!" or, "People will hate you for being so crude." The leader's reassuring statements come from her own Nurturing Parent, and provide the participants with ammunition against injunctions from the Pig. The permission and protection we provide in this way are essential to effective bodywork:

Some of the sensations you've been reporting — feelings of floating, hollowness, or heaviness, tingling or tight bands around some part of the body or energy fields, streaming sensations or what-have-you — can be alarming. People who feel them can get scared that

they are losing their minds, which is in fact true. You are being encouraged to lose your mind, but remember that it is perfectly safe. You can get it back anytime you want. You are not really losing it — just setting it aside for a while.

If you get scared, however, say so, and if you want something ask for it. We will be here for anything you need. If you need a pillow to hit, or an extra blanket because you feel cold, or someone to hold your hand or hug or massage you, or if you need a tissue or something to spit or throw up into, just ask. We are here to take care of your needs while you explore your feelings.

Now that we've set the stage, making it safe, and encouraging people to ask for whatever they want so that it will continue to be safe, we begin to shift gears. We teach people how to alter their breathing in order to intensify their feelings:

How we breathe has a lot to do with how much we feel and also perhaps how we feel. Not breathing deeply has the effect of constricting your feelings, and breathing deeply has the effect of fanning your feelings like embers in a fire. If you blow into them, the embers will glow and sometimes flames will break out. It's the same with feelings: breathing will make them more vivid, and sometimes it will cut them loose into a roar.

I'm going to teach you a little bit about breathing deeply in order to facilitate your contact with your bodily feelings. Now you will use the power of your mind, of your consciousness, to alter your body. In turn, your body will make available to your consciousness more intensely experienced feelings.

At this point we give a brief exercise in thoracic and abdominal breathing, teaching the difference and then showing how to combine the two in order to maximize respiration. We instruct people first to breathe into their chests, expanding them as fully as possible on the exhalation. We suggest they notice which muscles limit their chest's expansion, and self-consciously increase their capacity. Sometimes it is helpful for people to lay a hand on their chests, and sometimes a helper will gently touch a tight spot.

We turn next to the abdomen, again instructing people to breathe more fully, to allow their bellies to balloon out with the inhalation and collapse with the exhalation.

Finally, we suggest a three-part breath: inhale into the chest, then into the belly, then exhale fully. It sometimes takes a while, and some individual coaching from the assistants, for people to get the knack of breathing so fully. Also, people may begin to experience peculiar sensations, and to get frightened:

It is common for people to begin to feel some unusual tingling while breathing deeply. That's normal; don't be frightened. As muscles begin to relax, they may shake. It's good to let yourself shake. Also, some people's hands may contract and stiffen. This is a phenomenon called "tetany;" it is harmless, and you can stop it anytime you want by shaking your arms, breathing normally, or a variety of other ways.

You may want to raise your knees, plant your feet firmly on the floor, and let your legs hang in a comfortable position. This allows your hips to relax. Also, it is a good idea to breathe through your mouth. Most of us have tight jaws, a result of the many injunctions we have not to speak. Mouth-breathing helps you to relax your jaw.

Sound and the Capacity for Expression

Now we are ready to move to the next phase of the exercise: making noise. Again, the politics of this move coincide with the bioenergetic consequences. Our most heartfelt feelings are literally silenced by society; in order to release those feelings, we must relax the muscles which restrain expression. Making noise helps:

When you are ready, make a noise as you exhale. It can be any noise, anything that suggests how you are

feeling. It might be a sigh, or a growl, or a song or a laugh.

One of the ways we are oppressed is that we are limited to a very small range of expression. We can speak words, if they are rational and "sensible." But if we go around growling, or sighing, or shouting, we are considered crazy and locked up in asylums.

Here's your chance to break the rules. Make whatever sounds you please. Nobody outside can hear us. Nobody inside will mind. Go for it!

Often, because we have no models for sound-making, it is helpful for the bodywork leader to make some noise herself. She may walk around the room, picking up the muted experiments of people, and mimicking them, making them louder, more strange, playing with variations on them. Be experimental, all in the service of giving people permission and ideas.

As the sounds begin to flow freely, people will start to experience waves of feeling. Someone may weep, someone else to shout and become angry. In another part of the room, a man laughs uproariously, while a woman screams. All these expressions are fine. The leaders and assistants move about the room taking care of people. Someone may want to pound with angry fists; pillows should be securely placed under her hands so she won't

hurt herself. Someone else may want to curl up and be held while she cries. Tissues and sips of water are freely supplied. People often want necks or backs or hips massaged, to help in the relaxation of tense muscles. Some need to hear nurturing messages to help fight off restraining Pig messages. “You're doing just fine; let it all come out. What you're feeling is good and right.”

It is very important that the helpers provide what is wanted, but also they should not jump the gun. We often have a strong impulse to Rescue, and it should be ardently resisted. When in doubt, it is better to ask people whether they want something, and what it is, than to plunge in unasked. It is helpful for the assistants to keep people's contracts in mind, and to remind people to be guided by them.

Throughout, the leader periodically reminds people to keep breathing. The release of emotions often comes in waves, with people taking heart from others in the room, or responding to their neighbors' work. So also are their occasional group lulls, when a little cheering on may be helpful.

There is a common “Bodywork Pig” that is biased in favor of big, noisy, explosive work. Emotional release of this sort can, indeed, be very relieving and illuminating. Often, though, very subtle changes happen that are just as

important. To experience a tingle when one has felt nothing but big feelings for years is a revelation. Men, for instance, often need space to feel exactly what they feel, to be in touch with the softer and smaller sensations. It is very important that the leader not prejudice the work in one direction or the other.

The bodyworker develops an intuitive sense of when the group as a whole needs encouragement to do more, and when the work is finished. At some point, usually after an hour to an hour-and-a-half, she will say:

We're going to stop soon. Think about what you may need in order to finish. Ask for whatever you want.

When you are ready, slowly sit up. Let's form a circle and talk about what happened.

Wrapping-Up

The closing circle is an important part of the process. Adequate time should be left to do it fully. People are urged to report on their experience, and to finish anything that is incomplete. Don't send people back out into the world without this kind of completion.

"I started out feeling really silly, and a little pissed off. I didn't want to breathe in such a peculiar way. Then you

said to do whatever you want, and so I started to yell, 'No! No, I won't breathe deeply!' I realized quickly I wasn't kidding; I was really pissed off, and you brought me pillows so I could pound. I had an old-fashioned temper tantrum — it felt great! But as it ended, I remembered how I was punished as a small child for tantrums, and suddenly I got terribly sad. I cried and cried. It was terrific to have Sandy hold me. Now I feel all soft and glowy. What an experience!"

Another person looks uncomfortable and reports, "Nothing much happened for me. I breathed and breathed; I really worked very hard at it. After awhile, my hands stiffened and tingled. I didn't like it at all, and so I stopped breathing, but my hands stayed stiff, and I was getting really freaked out. Finally, Mark suggested I clap my hands together. That worked, and was fun, and I laughed a bit. But generally, I felt awkward and shy and I'm not sure why this was useful."

Someone asks what his contract was. "To feel whatever I feel," he answers. "Sounds like you did that," the bodywork leader comments. "Now that you know how to handle the tetany more effectively, maybe next time you'll be less distracted by it."

The group member replies, “I feel bad about doing so little when other people had such big responses. I need some strokes about what I did.”

Strokes (see Chapter 8) are almost always easily forthcoming after a group experience as powerful as this one. Someone from the same problem-solving group says, “I know from our work together in group that just to come here was a big event for you. I also really am moved that you hung in there, and saw the thing through when you were scared. I think you did do big and important work.”

Strokes

After everyone has reported, the session ends with strokes. One of the side-benefits for us in doing bodywork in this fashion is that it helps to extend the Radical Psychiatry community. People from various groups meet each other, and have elaborate strokes to give at the end of working. People often need strokes by the end, because they have done work which runs so strongly counter to the Pig. Make sure that everyone gets what they need, and that people are not shy about asking for particular strokes, or strokes from particular people.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

As we write this chapter, in the late '80s, we are in the midst of yet another re-evaluation of bodywork. We have no doubt of its value. But the fashion for this sort of work has passed in the culture. Fewer group members are excited about doing it, although they often become more interested after having experienced it once. Without pressure from our groups to offer bodywork, we have a tendency to overlook it. Arrangements are difficult to make. It is hard to find spaces large enough, and they tend to be expensive. Mounds of pillows and covers and tissues and so on have to be carted to the rented studio. Over the years, we who practice Radical Psychiatry have become busier. We do more groups, more Mediations, more individual sessions. To take time out for bodywork has become increasingly problematic.

Lately, we have begun experimenting with other ways to do more intensive work with group members. We are holding a series of one-day sessions, at about three-month intervals, in which we do more experiential work, although not necessarily bodywork. At one, for instance, we talked about the theory of the Pig, and then divided into small groups so that people could fight their Pigs using psychodrama techniques. Interestingly, in the very early days of Radical Psychiatry, we used to offer something called

Permission Workshops which were not dissimilar to these All-day Intensives.

Nonetheless, we are not happy with the difficulty we find in integrating bodywork into our practice. Here is a continuing frontier for more experimentation.

CHAPTER TWELVE:

TRAINING

Marian Oliker

Mark Weston

The Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective's apprenticeship model of training reflects its practical, experiential, and cooperative approach to problem-solving groups. As trainees in Radical Psychiatry we gain skills in emotional literacy, a deeper understanding of the concept of Internalized Oppression, and an approach to relationships through an analysis of power. We are exposed to a point of view concerning relationships that is based on a system of cooperation, with no secrets and no Rescues. Through the course of our training we learn to sharpen our intuition, learn to give criticism without judgment, and discover the power that strokes and nurturing have in the healing process.

As apprentices we learn therapy skills in a unique way: by observing experienced group leaders as they practice. The apprenticeship model reflects the BARP Collective's point of view that people do their best work in the company of

supportive co-workers and learn most effectively by direct observation. As apprentices we learn a craft, by watching the group leader, by listening to group members, and by experiencing the role of facilitator under supervision.

To become a Radical Psychiatry trainee an individual joins the training collective, apprentices to a practicing group leader, and observes her/his problem-solving groups and Mediations. The training collective consists of two experienced group leaders in a teaching role, and any number of Radical Psychiatry students (usually 5 or less).

APPLICATION TO TRAIN

Anyone interested in training is asked to write a letter of application to the BARP Collective, explaining their motivations, interests and goals regarding a Radical Psychiatry practice. Usually, applicants have been in a problem solving group with one of the trainers for some period of time, although this is not necessarily a prerequisite. Upon receipt of the application and a subsequent interview the trainers, in conjunction with the existing training collective, make a preliminary decision whether or not to train the applicant.

This decision is based on a number of factors: 1) the applicant's desire to work cooperatively as part of a peer

collective (both as a trainee and as a practicing group leader); 2) the applicant's willingness and enthusiasm for becoming a student of Radical Psychiatry; 3) the nature of the applicant's previous experience in a variety of areas (group facilitation, contact with other communities, background in the arts, special interests, etc.); and 4) the personal connection that is felt between the trainers and the applicant.

Present day American culture sets a norm or standard for individuals that is predominantly white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and financially independent. Deviations from this norm usually precipitate second-class opportunity and/or treatment, as well as feelings of loneliness and fear. As Radical Psychiatrists we are committed to struggling against this influence of the dominant culture, and feel that *all people* suffer as a result of the oppression of any. Consequently, we have a special interest in bringing people of color, lesbians and gays, the disabled, and working class people into the BARP Collective. By developing a theory and practice based on the many varied experiences of all peoples, we are better able to effectively analyze and combat the oppressive effects of popular culture.

After all of the above factors are considered and weighed, the final decision to train an applicant is made by the entire BARP Collective.

THE TRAINEE MEETINGS

Once accepted an individual becomes a member of the training collective and will usually train for anywhere from three to five years. The trainee observes at least one problem-solving group per week as well as any Mediations that may become available. Twice a month the trainees meet together with the trainers, to discuss questions and comments that arise from observation.

These meetings are facilitated by a member of the training collective. An agenda is put together cooperatively, which includes time for: 1) asking specific questions derived from group observation; 2) discussions of Radical Psychiatry theory; and 3) taking care of collective business and scheduling. Personal work that pertains to training or which interferes with the business of the meeting can be taken up at this time also. Membership in the training collective is not exclusive of participation in a problem-solving group. Often it is beneficial to be in group while training since new aspects of old Pig messages are often elicited by the training role.

The bulk of the meeting is taken up with questions posed by the trainees. The fundamental skill to be learned in

training is that of formulating and articulating questions. These questions fall into at least four major categories.

The first category of question is informational in nature. Answers to these questions should help to clarify specific transactions between the group leader and group members. Often, when a new trainee is confronted with a move or transaction on the part of the group leader that seems wrong, the first impulse is to think something critical. The trainee may think, "I wouldn't have done it that way, she/he should have said ...". This is not only critical, it implies greater knowledge on the part of the trainee. Rather than formulate a criticism for the therapist it is essential that the trainee assume a lack of full understanding and formulate an informational question. It is only by assuming that the trainee doesn't have all the answers that learning can take place³. An example of such a question might be: "I don't understand why you told Frank he was hard to work with. Can you tell me why you said that?"

³ We do not wish to imply here that it's never appropriate to be critical of the training leaders. It has been our experience that most often, when a new trainee is feeling critical of the group leader, it has to do with feeling one-down and competitive. It's unusual for an inexperienced trainee to catch a mistake by the group leader, but of course it happens.

The second category of question stems from a reaction the trainee has to a group member's work. These questions relate to a feeling-response or intuition the trainee is having. For example, "I felt a little irritated during Karen's work last week, and I think it has something to do with the way her Pig operates. What do you think is going on?" Another example might be, "I like Cindy, but I'm having trouble coming up with strokes for her. Why is it so hard for me to give her strokes?"

The process of starting with a feeling-response and formulating a question is excellent training for later work as a group leader. It helps the trainee develop skills in using feelings and intuitions to formulate criticisms, strokes, and identifying Pig messages.

The third category of questions is somewhat different from the previous two. The focus of these kinds of questions is inner-directed, and designed to help the trainee deepen her/his awareness of what is sometimes called an "inner dialogue." By this we mean the nearly constant flow of thoughts, experienced as words and conversations, in our heads.

The point of these questions is to find out what the trainee is thinking and feeling. This is important information because the natural responses a trainee feels when observing will indicate possible avenues for future Pig-

fighting strategies as a group leader. For example, the trainee might feel a little irritated when a particular person is working. In the trainee role, it wouldn't be appropriate to bring this feeling up during the group. But as a group leader, it might be helpful feedback for the person working to know how others are being affected by the content of the work, or the manner in which it's being presented.

New trainees learn the skill of watching various kinds of feeling responses and internal Pig messages by monitoring their thought flow. By focusing on the inner dialogue, listening to what it's saying, and using this information as feedback regarding the group, the prospective group leader monitors not only her/his own reactions, but those of the group as well.

Questions for the trainers in this category might be, "After I spoke I felt embarrassed and stupid. By the time I left group I was feeling really awful. Why do you think I felt so bad after talking?" Or, "When Sheila was working all I could think about was how hard it was for me to feel sympathetic toward her, and that I'll never be able to do this work. Is there something wrong with me? "

As part of the group, a trainee is directly affected by and affects the transactions that take place. The experiential nature of the apprenticeship model provides the trainee with the raw materials (feelings, thoughts, reactions) which can be sorted out with the trainers during meetings. The

trainee can then receive critical feedback, nurturing support, and the collective benefit of years of wisdom concerning group facilitation.

The fourth and final type of question to be discussed involves taking a specific transaction and formulating a theoretical question. This process encourages the trainee to notice that many transactions occur repeatedly and that general techniques can be applied to these exchanges. For example, “Jim seems to want to leave group whenever he is feeling really bad. What do you do when someone wants to leave group suddenly like that?” Another example is, “Jamie doesn't want to make a no-drinking contract. What do you do when someone doesn't want to make a contract that you think is essential to their work?” The trainer then has the opportunity to answer these questions both specifically and theoretically.

Once a month the training collective meets without the trainers. This provides an opportunity to do problem-solving for each other without the help of the teachers, and builds a sense of solidarity and support. The sense of community they develop as a group can directly influence the strength and power each feels personally.

PHASES OF TRAINING

The first phase of training is silent observation, and is begun with the trainee's introduction to the group. The group leader will explain that the observer (trainee) will simply watch the work and not speak. Group members may ask the observer questions or check out paranoias if necessary.

This silent part of training is very valuable. Because the observer has no responsibility to give feedback she/he is free to fully concentrate on the group leader and the work being done. It's also a time for the trainee to pay close attention to herself, to observe, feel, examine and formulate questions.

During this phase it's common to feel outside of the "stroke economy" of the group, and for good reason. The observer is neither group leader nor group member, and is therefore outside of the normal flow of strokes in the room. It is crucial during this phase to use the support of the training collective, and to ask for help in fighting the Pig messages that observing can sometimes bring on.

Even though almost no words will be spoken, a silent observer's presence is strongly felt by members of the group, and can provide a nurturing influence. On the other hand, this watching presence may make some people feel judged or competitive. The observer pays close attention to

how people in group are responding, and treats this as another among many opportunities to learn.

This silent phase begins the trainee's first lesson in power. As a future Radical Psychiatrist she/he is beginning to view group members as "clients" for the first time. If the trainee has been a group member prior to training, this is a fundamentally different way to perceive people in group. In turn, she/he is seen by group members as having a somewhat privileged position. The trainee usually requires time to adjust to this new role. This is a good opportunity to observe how a newfound position of power can affect the trainee's perception of group dynamics.

This silent phase of training also holds important lessons concerning the concept of Rescue. For instance, it's common for a trainee to feel that she/he has some crucial bit of feedback the group member should hear. By remaining silent in the face of this impulse, the trainee fights the urge to Rescue. The absence of the trainee's feedback leaves room for group members to figure things out for themselves, and offer feedback to one another at their own pace.

Part of a group leader's job is to resist the temptation to fall into Rescue by doing more than one's share of the work. Trainees are especially vulnerable to the danger of putting out more than 50%, and are encouraged to watch for a

feeling of “urgency” when contemplating feedback. This is often a warning signal of an upcoming Rescue.

The second phase of training involves giving strokes to people in the group. By this time the trainee has come to know people's work, and can offer strokes that will be a welcome addition to the group's stroke economy.

As a result of the many injunctions stemming from the “stroke economy of scarcity,” group members are often not used to giving or receiving strokes freely. The trainee has an opportunity to contribute strokes that can act as a model for group members. This will also encourage people to feel free about expressing the strokes they have, which often serves to increase the over-all stroke-giving in the group.

This phase marks another lesson in power. The fact that only strokes are given at this time is appropriate to the trainee's status and position in the group. As a new presence in group, a concrete relationship has yet to be defined. Giving strokes is a comfortable and safe way to begin speaking. It helps to establish the trainee as a nurturing force in group, and introduces whatever individual style she/he may possess. Giving strokes helps to develop a feeling of trust between the trainee and group members.

As a group member, the trainee was free to give feedback during the course of the group. Consequently, there is usually an inclination on the part of the new trainee to move back into that position. However, the role of trainee adds weight and impact not previously present in the feedback. For this reason, trainees are at first not permitted to speak, and later permitted only to give strokes. This allows the trainee plenty of time to observe the group leader closely, and to consider potential feedback without the pressure of having to be "right."

The third and longest phase of training can be broken down into sub-phases as well. It is here that the trainee begins to give critical feedback, at first by asking questions of group members during the work. These should be simple, direct questions which seek information and help to clarify the work being done. For example, "How do you earn money?" or "Where does your family live?" or "Had you been drinking before the fight with your girlfriend?" or "Does that co-worker have more power than you?"

Questions such as these are different from the leading questions that will be attempted later in the training process, which are intended to direct a person's thinking along a "therapeutic" line. For example, "What do you think would happen if you said no?" or "How are you feeling right now?" or "What would you like from us?" or "What's making you cry?"

Next a trainee will begin to give simple feedback that is short and easily heard. It can come in the form of reinforcing the leader's feedback or be in response to a question asked by a group member. It's best for the trainee to give feedback in the form of a feeling or an intuition, in contrast to giving a more formal analysis that may break down a transaction or form a conclusion.

Once the trainee begins to give more complex feedback and to ask directive kinds of questions she/he is moving into the final stages of the training process. At this point, the trainee begins "leading out" with group members.

At this point in the training, the group leader will explain the new role of the trainee in group and explain how her/his participation will change. The trainee asks a group member for permission to be in charge of the work for that evening. If for some reason the group member strongly objects, someone else is asked. When a trainee is leading out, the group leader usually remains silent and observes. The trainee is free to ask for help from the leader at any time. Sometimes the group leader will make a closing comment or fill in an aspect of the trainee's feedback.

The final step will be to co-lead a group with a practicing group leader, or a graduating trainee. At that time, the trainee is considered for membership in the larger Collective. While this may conclude the formal training

engagement, it does not mean that learning has stopped. Graduated trainees are considered new group leaders, and usually continue asking for help and suggestions from the more experienced leaders for some time.

POWER

During the training process, which takes place over several years, one of the many objectives for trainees is maximizing opportunities for learning. This is done by asking questions, taking chances, making mistakes, hearing criticism and working on personal problems. The student role is fundamental in achieving this objective. It demands a willingness on the part of the trainee to understand and accept the inherent power inequities that go along with the trainer/trainee relationship.

One of the most difficult things to become accustomed to as a new trainee is the feeling of relative powerlessness. Usually new trainees have been accomplished group members, and as such have enjoyed a position of power and expertise. As a new trainee, however, it's back to square one, often with the former group leader as trainer. This shift from "expert" to "novice" can create a feeling of competitiveness. In this frame of mind, it's very difficult to ask questions.

It's also common at this time to feel a sense of loss, since the important, nurturing role of the group leader has been replaced with the critical, yet supportive role of the teacher. The resulting feelings can make it difficult to concentrate on the task of learning. It's an important juncture to talk about the difficulty of making such a transition, and to get support from the other trainees as well as helpful feedback from the trainers.

At this point, the group leader moves from a primarily nurturing and possibly parental role into a more direct, adult role with the trainee. Fortunately, as the trainee studies, learns, and gains experience she/he will begin to gain power and grow into someone the trainer will work with as a peer.

While it is clear the trainee benefits from this learning process, we wish to point out that the trainer(s) gain something as well. An observer provides a source of interest in group that is experienced as attention and strokes by the group leader/trainer. The trainee provides energy, enthusiasm, and new information in the training meetings that can be helpful to the group leader. There exists a give-and-take between them that serves as a kind of equality, nurtures their relationship, and makes the power imbalance of the student/teacher roles acceptable to them both. New trainees, by offering their interest in learning Radical Psychiatry, give the trainer(s), the

Collective as a whole, and the community at large continuing input and energy, which helps to keep Radical Psychiatry theory and practice growing.

As with any craft, it is difficult to be a beginner, and training in Radical Psychiatry is no exception. Making mistakes, though painful, is essential to the learning process, and receiving critical and supportive feedback is vital to becoming a skilled group leader. We as trainees have found that developing friendships with each other helps to make training more comfortable.

The excitement of learning, working hard, and of being part of peoples' development feels good. The opportunity to apprentice with group leaders as they work, and later, to practice in their presence, prepares the trainee in a way that cannot be matched or replaced. As members of BARP and its training collective we are part of a group effort, and benefit from the support, strength, and enjoyment that comes from membership in a working community.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: COLLECTIVE

Beth Roy

The existence of a group for practitioners is an integral part of what we do as Radical Psychiatrists. Indeed, we do not believe that anyone can define herself as a “Radical Psychiatrist” unless she belongs to a collective.

Collective is a group of peers, which is to say that all members have equal rights. Decisions are made by consensus. Members are committed to take seriously each other's feelings and ideas, and to work consistently toward equality. While equality is the objective, we are also very clear about the ways in which we are not equal. Some of us have been practicing for twenty years, others have begun leading groups within the past year. Some of us have been the teachers and therapists of others. Some of us are older. Some collective members depend entirely on Radical Psychiatry for our livelihoods, while others have credentials and jobs in institutions. Still others have separate sources of income. These ways in which power differs are important to identify. But our goal is to share power at every opportunity, and to avoid abusing the real power we have (see Chapter 1).

BAY AREA RADICAL PSYCHIATRY COLLECTIVE

Those of us leading groups in and around San Francisco meet weekly in the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective (BARP). BARP is a place for us to continue to work on ourselves, our own on-going problem-solving group. At this writing, there are ten collective members, most of them leading groups or working in allied ways in a variety of agencies.

Meetings follow our standard cooperative plan (see Chapter 4): We choose a different facilitator each week, we make a timed agenda, we start with check-in, held feelings and paranoias, we do our business and (ideally) we end with strokes. We meet for three and a quarter hours, and sometimes we run short of time and stint on strokes — not a good idea! It is evident in all progressive and pioneering work, and especially in the “helping professions,” that the world at large is not generous with appreciation. Money is one medium for strokes in our culture, but we are committed to charging the lowest possible fees for our work. While clients may be warm and overt in their appreciation of our work, often their work itself supersedes our need for strokes, and it rightfully should. We are there to help them, not vice versa. Moreover, strokes from group members, while very

gratifying and helpful, are nonetheless different from strokes from peers. Collective members know everything about us, all our faults and fears and problems. Strokes from them are especially empowering.

The agenda in Collective meetings has three parts: business, group work and personal work. Business consists of announcements of meetings, or new books, or interesting articles, or anything else of general concern. During group work we present questions about our practices, getting concrete help figuring out how best to help our clients. Access to this sort of “consulting” is invaluable. Each member of each group has the benefit of ten sets of experience, multiplied geometrically by the magic of creative collective thinking. Occasional discouragement and self-doubt is part of the work; to be nurtured by nine other people who know exactly how you feel and don't in the least share your down moment is an extraordinary experience.

The third part of the agenda is our own problem-solving group. We present our personal problems and get help in exactly the same way group members use group. The fiction that “shrinks” are supposed to have worked out all their problems before they “graduate” is part and parcel of the mystification of alienation. That expectation is in itself intensely alienating for therapists. It is no wonder that they have one of the highest suicide rates in the country.

COLLECTIVE DYNAMICS

I have said that the objective in collective is to work toward equality. A common mistake we and other counter-culture, egalitarian groups have made is to confuse a desire be equal for the thing itself. As I have noted, all sorts of differences exist within BARP; indeed, it is precisely those differences which often make things challenging and interesting. Some of those differences have no impact on the distribution of power in the collective (like the fact that some of us are “old-time Marxists” and others are “New Age mystics”), while others are highly significant (some of us oldtimers have larger and older practices, and therefore more referrals, than others who are newcomers).

Over the years, we have struggled hard with each other and learned a lot about power. The forms we use (held feelings, paranoias, strokes) have helped, because we have a common language for talking through problems. But they are not in and of themselves always sufficient. For while we are in agreement about those with power sharing it with anyone who is ready and willing to take it, in fact that process of change is often not smooth. It can be fraught with hard feelings, power plays, suspicions and anger on both sides of the power divide. Often both taking power

and giving it up are more like hard labor than a stroll through a flowery meadow.

What especially complicates an already difficult process is the fact that we are a small community, and that ex-teachers and therapists co-exist in a peer group with ex-students and clients. We challenge every rule of “professional distance” held dear by more conventional practitioners, because we truly believe that people who come to problem-solving groups to work on themselves are often extraordinarily talented practitioners, and that good group leaders tend to be people with a wide variety of life experiences.

Often a shift in power inside collective accompanies a joint work-project, like the running of a teaching Institute.⁴ These shifts often appear first as interpersonal conflicts. One person becomes angry at another who is scheduled to make the most interesting presentations. She has worked hard at the administrative tasks, and wants a greater share of the public glory. On the other hand, the presenter has done this same workshop for years, and it is very popular. People coming to the Institute want to see her “perform.”

⁴ For many years we have held an annual Radical Psychiatry Summer Institute, a three- or four-day event that’s part teaching workshop, part community gathering, part conference for thinking through ideas.

She contributes to the problem by harboring some doubts about whether her colleague is experienced enough yet to do the hard work involved in this presentation.

Hurt feelings and anger usually arise from some group problem, which can be unraveled and agreeably solved with careful and disciplined attention from the group as a whole. Our tendencies to “blame” others, natural at the outset of a struggle, need to be quickly corralled into more self-critical and analytic modes. Several techniques help us in this process: our use of Held Feelings and Paranoias, our ability to facilitate meetings, our analysis of power, and our rules about gossip. (Information that is second hand must be assumed to be distorted and should be checked out with the originator; anything that is third hand or more should be ignored, because the distortions are likely to be so many.)

Conflicts can be hard on the heart. What makes them worthwhile, aside from the “idealistic” values of trudging ever onward toward greater equality and a richer group, is the material basis for our unity: our shared practice. To cast the necessity for “struggle” in terms of moralistic values is a mistake; as important as they are, those values are rarely sufficiently motivating by themselves to carry the day. If resolution is not achieved, people will leave feeling doubly guilty, or self-righteous, or defeated, or angry.

On the other hand, we have real and concrete reasons to work difficult things through. Not only do we earn our livings from our joint endeavor, but we share very strong principles which we are enacting in the world. Sometimes, in the midst of a conflict, our reasons to be together become blurred. It is always helpful — both enlightening and inspiring — to remind ourselves of what they are.

Most of the time, though, we are not fighting. One of the most thrilling of group dynamics on the other side of the ledger is the experience of creative, collective thinking. Our weekly agenda is usually crammed with urgent questions and work, and we rarely have the luxury of time to talk through new ideas. Periodically we hold an all-day meeting, or go to the country for a weekend retreat. We invite trainees, and we have the pleasure of “making new theory,” or raising questions and spinning off each other's ideas and experiences to come up with new formulations. These discussions, too, can become competitive; we try to stay on top of our tendencies to be argumentative and over-exuberant. In general, however, some of my most thrilling times in collective have come in the course of these sessions. It is very, very rare to have the experience of a cooperative discussion of ideas which matter dearly.

Another invaluable element of collective is the opportunity it affords us to share information. Often my colleagues

know something about members of my groups. They have worked with them before, or encountered them someplace else in the community. It is very common for people who know each other, who are lovers or roommates or co-workers, to be simultaneously in groups with different leaders. To pool these views of people is an enormous asset. Most clients in therapy are without a context. The therapist sees them in the most unreal of settings, in isolation from their ordinary lives. That view has great potential to distort the therapist's way of thinking about her clients (see Chapter 14). To hear about a love affair, or a fight, or a joint project from the point of view of another participant is highly enlightening. That information advances people's work in groups enormously. Our practice of "consulting" each other in this manner is very controversial among therapists. We value the beneficial results of shared information highly over more conventional habits of "confidentiality."

Collective is one of the most concrete and striking ways in which Radical Psychiatry is different from many other forms of therapy. So integral is it to our conception of our work that it is difficult even for practitioners with twenty-years' standing in the community to imagine leading problem-solving groups without it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CRITIQUE OF TRANSFERENCE

Beth Roy

The analysis of transference is an important tool used by many therapies. Originally formulated by Sigmund Freud, it is central to psychoanalytic practice, and also to many psychodynamic approaches which do not necessarily see themselves as “Freudian.” Radical Psychiatrists do not use transference in our practices.⁵ Why we have chosen to work as we do illustrates many of the most fundamental theoretical and political differences we have with Freudians.

For many years, we avoided publishing explicit critiques of therapeutic approaches with which we disagreed. Our values oppose competitive behavior (see Chapter 6), and it is very difficult to criticize a point of view that differs from your own without being competitive: “We’re right, you’re wrong. We know better than you.”

⁵ Other Growth Movement therapies such as Gestalt, Transactional Analysis and Bioenergetics are also uninterested in working with transference.

But while we've wanted to "set a good example," we've also had a tendency to be provocative. We represent a minority philosophy, and we often see ourselves as David battling a whole lot of Goliaths. Regrettably, we are sometimes rebellious, and express ourselves in challenging absolutes: "The unconscious doesn't exist! There's no such thing as transference!"

I hope to present this chapter in a different spirit. I do believe there are many ways to describe the same phenomenon. We see things one way, while Freudians, as well as many other therapists who do not consider themselves to be Freudians, see them another way. What is interesting is precisely those differences, first why they exist, and second, where they lead in practice. The way we seek to think in Radical Psychiatry opposes concepts of right and wrong, and puts things instead into a context of history and interests (see Chapter 3). It is in that spirit that I hope to conduct this dialogue.

WHY TALK ABOUT FREUD?

Many of our humanist friends tell us they are not interested in debating Freudian ideas, which, they argue, have already been discredited and are old-hat. There was certainly a time, in the decade of the '70s, when that observation seemed to be true.

But times change, and with them philosophies. There is a new interest in Freudian conceptions. Feminists, for instance, were enormously instrumental in opening up dialogue in this area, mounting a very important attack on the obvious misogyny in Freud's writings. Now, however, a cutting edge of feminist psychology seeks to redeem Freud: Nancy Chodorow, Lillian Rubin and Carol Gilligan turn to Object Relations theory to produce a woman-favoring redefinition of the Oedipal transition; Kim Chernin and Susie Ohrbach write brilliantly about the sexist politics of body imagism using a psychoanalytic framework. Local progressive schools of psychotherapy teach "psychodynamic" models which rely heavily on Freudian notions.

This return to Freud does, to be sure, embody important departures from the "master." Freud himself developed a very particular practice, psychoanalysis. Most practitioners today do something else, various forms of psychotherapy that are much less intense than traditional analysis. They see people weekly instead of daily, for five years instead of fifteen. Most psychotherapists allow themselves a good deal more interaction with their clients; few, for instance, have people work "on the couch."

Yet the concepts of Freud continue to pervade their work. Specifically, three ideas run through much of this more modern work:

1. The unconscious: the idea that certain material is held captive by repression in a part of the psyche which is unavailable to access without some intervention that counters the repressive force.

2. Developmental theory: the idea that a certain order of events universally characterizes the growth of children, and that disturbances (or what JoAnn Costello calls “glitches”) in that development decisively affect adult behavior.

3. Diagnosis: the idea that mental experience and behavior can be categorized as healthy or ill, and treated according to a medical model of disease and cure.

Some of these ideas once represented major contributions to the thinking of the times. Freud's articulation of the concept of the unconscious, for example, introduced into the dialogue of his day the necessity to make order out of “irrationality;” on some level, people's imagery and ideas “made sense” to Freud. Liberating notions of sexuality

also permeated Freud's work. To a modern mind, many of his ideas seem stilted and obscure. But in his time he was revolutionary in insisting that children and women experience sexuality, and that all sorts of behaviors condemned as “perverse” were in fact natural and, absent of repression, widespread.

WHY CONCENTRATE ON TRANSFERENCE?

In his analytic practice, Freud used three central techniques: free association, dream analysis and transference. The first two of these have fallen relatively out of favor (although there are certainly practitioners who use both). It is transference which continues to be used frequently in psychotherapeutic practice today. Why that is true, I believe, is because the notion of transference most fully embodies the fundamentals of Freud's theory. To analyze this concept, therefore, and to compare it with the work of Radical Psychiatry, is particularly useful both in contrasting the two, and also in illuminating further how we work and why.

In theory, psychoanalysis thinks about the unconscious and developmental theory, while Radical Psychiatry thinks about power and Internalized Oppression.

In practice, psychoanalytic therapists seek to remain unknown as people, to reflect back the experience of their

clients, to interpret, and to work one-to-one. Radical Psychiatrists instead use contracts, an analysis of power which seeks to demystify the therapist, and a cooperative contract in a group setting.

These differences, I argue, are *political*. They reflect and carry within them different ideologies, which I want to make explicit in this chapter.

WHAT IS TRANSFERENCE?

It is an important assumption in Radical Psychiatry theory that people are not crazy. However difficult to understand, people's responses are always to something real. Therapists are people, too, including Freud and neo-Freudians. Before defining the Freudian concept of transference, therefore, I want to delineate the real phenomenon to which I believe they are responding.

Freud observed that “patients” often acted toward him with an intensity the cause of which was not immediately obvious. They distrusted him, loved him, hated him, trusted him too much, rebelled against him, and so on. Freud had the hunch that some part of that response was not about him, but reflected instead past experiences and conclusions. His insight is not unique; it is an idea commonly expressed in a number of different forms.

Stereotyping, for instance, can be a related phenomenon, in which ideas from other sources determine our responses to what is happening in the moment. Sometimes we generalize from our own experience. Studies have shown, for instance, that patients tell their doctors only what they are asked to tell; they do not volunteer information, because they expect the doctor to ask all the right questions, and to be uninterested in anything they volunteer. Years of experience of exactly that transaction has taught patients a particular expectation, that leads to a particular behavior — what doctors characterize as patients' not giving them all the facts.

Freud focused on the parts of the doctor/patient transaction that were mysterious to him, and he concluded that the mystery lay in the recesses of the patient's past and in her unconscious. He defined transference as "...a whole series of psychological experiences [that] are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment." What is more, he interpreted that revival as a distorted one: "The peculiarity of the transference to the physician lies in its excess, in both character and degree, over what is rational and justifiable..."⁶

⁶ "Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," in *Collected Papers*, vol. III, p. 139.

History of the Idea of Transference

It is a paradox that Freud came to his theoretical conclusions through detailed observation of transactions. A large number of the patients being treated for psychiatric symptoms were “hysterics.” Most were women, mostly from the upper classes, who suffered physical ailments that seemed mysterious, unconnected with physical causes, and which consequently were concluded to be “in their heads.” Psychoanalysts today report that hysterical symptoms are very rare indeed (although a modern counterpart might be the concept of “psychosomatic” illness); hysteria⁷ was very much a phenomenon of the times.

One popular form of treatment was hypnosis. Freud began professional life as a hypnotist. While most hypnotists used simple techniques of suggestion, one, a man named Breuer, had accidentally discovered that hysterical symptoms often vanished if the patient was made, under hypnosis, to recall a traumatic event associated with their onset. Freud became Breuer's student. But where the teacher was content to cure people without insight into the

⁷ The word *hysteria* is derived from the Greek for “uterus,” a broad hint of the gender-based biases connected with the concept.

reasons why his technique “worked,” Freud was more curious. Indeed, he described himself as a passionate student of society in general, a frustrated anthropologist, forced into medicine to earn a living, but really hungry to discover the origins of all things human. (The search for “the origins” was generally a popular intellectual quest in the last decades of the nineteenth century.)

Freud began to experiment with free association, using it as a research tool to discover more about people's thoughts. He had people lie on a couch (the position commonly assumed by subjects of hypnosis) and say whatever entered their minds, with no censorship. Freud began to notice that at some point, people's associations ran dry; they reported having no further thoughts or images. He was fascinated by the recurrence of that experience, and, interestingly, named it “resistance,” seeing it as the first form of transference. Resistance had two meanings for Freud: first, that patients resisted getting well, and second, that they resisted the intervention of the doctor.

To couch these observations in terms of resistance was of some significance. Freud was accustomed to obedience; he was a patriarch in a patriarchal age. His formulation was thus consistent with the social mores of his time. But Freud also had a habit of making great leaps of intuition, and this was one of them.

Many of Freud's ideas about transference and resistance were developed in the course of his working with a particular patient, a woman named Dora. Dora was a young woman who came to Freud because of recurring coughs and respiratory ailments. After three months in analysis, she announced one day that she would consult him no more, and she left furiously angry at him. Freud, predictably, accounted for her behavior as resistance, and in a famous case history analyzed the reasons in her past sexual history that would account for such a transference.

From a modern point of view, Dora had every reason to be enraged at Freud. Dora's father was Freud's friend, and had instigated the "treatment." He was probably genuinely concerned about his daughter's health, but he was also involved in a complex romantic intrigue. His secret lover was the wife of a man who lusted for Dora. The father promoted his daughter's love affair with this man, about whom Dora was profoundly ambivalent. It was in the context of this drama, and the young woman's very smart suspicion that she was being offered up as payment for her father's liaison, that Freud sought to conduct his "scientific" analysis. In the process, he effectively promoted the father's cause. Dora's refusal to cooperate was well justified by the obvious facts of the moment, whatever contribution her past might or might not have made to her decision.

What Freud rightfully discerned was that the transactions of the consulting room could not be disassociated from those of Dora's life, nor of her past. But his interpretation discounted the legitimacy of her rage and lost him his patient.

Modern Usages

The 1980s have witnessed a return to Freudian concepts by many psychotherapists. Such changes of fashion are not arbitrary; they correspond to wider-reaching social trends. In the '60s and '70s, Growth Movement theorists challenged the domain of Freud, because they wanted to replace an intrapsychic view with a more emotional or transactional one. Feminism was one important inspiration for some of these changes by women (and men) angry at the obvious anti-woman bias in Freud's writings (the notion, for instance, of penis envy received pages of bad press). Other therapists, like Eric Berne, wanted to popularize psychological concepts, to make them accessible to people without extensive specialized education. Many practitioners were frustrated with the results of a psychoanalytic method which had become prohibitively lengthy and expensive, and therefore was beyond the reach of any but the most well-to-do and devoted. These were times when hierarchy and

professionalism were being challenged on many fronts, when women, for instance, organized to take back power (especially over abortion) from the doctors. To be sure, many of the spokespeople of this therapeutic movement toward the accessible and the obvious did not couch their theory in these terms. Some simply felt ill-suited to the psychoanalytic style:

I was always terribly bothered by the sense of personal impotence as a therapist doing psychoanalytic work. It always made me feel terribly non-contributory and it always made me feel stifled, insofar as it precluded me from using myself in a way that I felt inclined to use myself, more floridly, and I couldn't stand the rules, of which there were so many spelled out....And I was very depressed by this whole business. I thought that I would open a grocery store rather than go into practice.... *(From an interview with a Behavioral therapist, now migrating toward psychoanalytic psychotherapy.)*

At the same time, both social movements and the turning of numbers of people toward therapy reflected a growing need for meaning and social sustenance. The '60s began a busy trend away from family, toward suburbia and affluence, away from communities. The flower children identified the malaise which resulted, seeking a personal lifestyle revolution. Other movements demanded bettered conditions in other terms.

An active market developed for quick, relatively uncomplicated therapy. Economically, times were good; middle class people could afford to pay reasonable fees for help with their personal quests. The psychiatric system did what American systems are so good at doing — it accommodated the need, making room for “helping” therapies, as opposed to “real, in depth, psychoanalytic cures.”

In the ‘80s, that radical crest has passed. Money is harder won; churches promote old-fashioned virtues; politicians call for a return to the family, and the ethic of hard work and financial stability. Many therapists, like many of their fellow citizens, fear for their futures, and are no longer willing to be consigned to the radical fringes of society, nor to a deprecated “helping” role.⁸

On the consumers' side, people feel worse about themselves: success is hard to come by, people want “deeper” cures with an intensity that corresponds to the internalization of hard times and intense competition. If you're middle-aged and lose an executive position, or

⁸ When I recently interviewed therapists about their work, I discovered that most of them had turned toward more psychoanalytic work than they had done in the previous two decades. Most reported wanting to do “deeper” work.

young and unemployed, or female nearing forty, underpaid, at the top of your job ladder, and suddenly scared about being alone, you tend to blame yourself. You, after all, are who the culture blames.

If the '70s were a time for realizing potential, the '80s are a time for curing failure. Listen to this modern-day psychoanalyst talking about a patient:

The chief difficulty is that she simply makes no progress whatever [in her profession]....She's not interested in making progress in her status, she *says*. But it became clear when she came [into analysis] that part of her difficulty was that she wasn't making any and it was eating away at her. (*From a private interview.*)

In recent interviews with therapists, I listened to the ways in which they talked about transference. Their discussions had two very noticeable qualities. First, transference was central to their way of working. Second, they spoke about the concept as if it were beyond dispute, with an unchallengeable absoluteness:

First of all, defining transference I don't think is that difficult....I know people differ on the uses of it, the abuses of it, how to use the transference, what it means, but I don't think — there's a very small group of people who deny that transference exists. I mean, *I think that's almost like denying that the nose on your face exists.*

You can say that your theoretical bent is that you shouldn't use the transference or talk about it. You know, there might be some reasons why you'd want to say that. But to say that it doesn't exist is denying a basic reality of life. (*From a private interview; my italics.*)

In fact, the notion of transference is not so obvious, even to those who use it. Some people use it very specifically to mean that the patient acts out on the therapist her feelings about her parents. This is the simplest definition — a sort of one-to-one mapping of one's unconscious (and “true”) relationship with one's father or mother on the person of the therapist. What that relationship is, what parts are important, differ according to the school of thought. Object relationists, for instance, are more concentrated on the very early “diadic” (two-person) relationship with the mother. Freudians look more to the Oedipal period, a three-way drama of mother, father and young child. The therapist I quoted above gave me a more encompassing definition:

...transference is all the unconscious feelings, thoughts and assumptions that you bring to a situation based on your past. So it's that microcosm of the past represented in the present that is essentially unconscious because it is timeless...the feelings we have right now about some situation can re-stimulate earlier experiences and they can go way back to being two months old. It's not a logical choice of `am I going

to feel this way?' It just happens. (*From a private conversation; italics added.*)

Transference, Then and Now

Many of the same therapists who saw transference as central to their practices, also told me that Freud is “old-hat.” *Their* version, they insisted, was updated, fundamentally changed. It seems to me that there is some truth in that statement. There are some *differences* from Freud's original formulation:

First, there is *less emphasis on disease* — a gain of the Growth Movement period. Many still do diagnose. Kohut, for instance, sees himself as dealing with “narcissistic disorders,” but quickly adds that that's just about everyone. While a disease model certainly still prevails in official psychiatric circles (community agencies, for instance, rely on an elaborate listing of diagnoses called the DMSIII), there is less inclination to diagnose among psychotherapists.

A second, and related, difference is that there is *less emphasis on sexual elements*. In the final analysis, Freud's understanding of neuroses was couched in sexual terms; transference for him, at least in one articulation of the concept, was a process of new symptom formation which

encompassed the therapist in a sexuality-laden relationship. Neo-Freudians often see transference in broader terms.

The third difference is that transference is *more likely to be seen transactionally*. Modern neo-Freudian psychotherapists look more at the contribution of the shrink to the patient's responses. Freud thought transference might "cleverly attach itself" to something real about the doctor, but modernists see the doctor as more intrinsically involved.

What has *not* changed since Freud, however, is more fundamental:

Transference still is seen as *resulting from a distortion of early development* (a "developmental glitch") that leads to a disorder of the unconscious.

Secondly, the concept still *represents an attempt to simplify transactions*. The therapist is still trying to be as little a person as possible: some tear labels off magazines that they put in their waiting rooms so patients won't know what they read; others stay strictly out of the public eye, wanting to be invisible:

...it would be wrong from a personal standpoint to be identified politically....Because I don't think it's any patient's business. Anything about me.

Q) Why? What would the harm be?

(A) It would interfere very seriously with the transference.

Q) Because? What would they do with that information?

(A) Because then they'd know who I am. They'd applaud that or they would deplore that. I want to know who they *think* I am. Then I know what's going on with them. *(From a private interview.)*

Thirdly, transference still *represents a very particular power transaction*. As the quote above so clearly states, what is important is what the client brings to the transaction, not the therapist. The doctor knows what is happening, and must interpret it (through words or experience) to the patient. The very concept of transference assumes, first, that the therapist can be a “blank slate” (or very near to it) and, second, that the client has no power to affect the therapist. Learning is all one way; the therapist is static and unchanging, and all dynamic is vested in the “patient.”

Transference in Practice

If the job of the therapist is to provide an opportunity for the client to bring her past into the consulting room and lay it bare for understanding, then certain techniques are suggested.

1. Blank Slate: The first, as the analyst above described, is to minimize the effect of the therapist in all transactions. The therapist does not offer advice or opinions, says nothing about herself, decorates his office neutrally, stays out of the public eye, does not put announcements of political events in her waiting room. The therapist is to be a blank slate on which the client, by constructing a certain relationship entirely of her own making, is to write the story of her neuroses.

To be sure, the practice of therapeutic invisibility has come under critical scrutiny by its practitioners in recent years. Psychoanalytic therapists debate whether it is truly a possibility. To be completely neutral, say the critics, is first of all impossible and, secondly, even if it were, is itself a position and an influence. More sophisticated neo-Freudians, therefore, seek a more elaborate understanding of the role the therapist plays in transactions. Nonetheless, the basic goal, to make it possible for the fundamental

sense of the transaction to be provided by the client, is unchallenged.

2. Reflection: The therapist does not respond to statements of the client out of her own experience of it, but simply reflects back the sense and/or the emotional tenor of what she has heard: “You feel sad when you think about your father.”

3. Interpretation: The therapist seeks explanations for the client's behavior, specifically looking for fulfillment of his theory: “You are mad at me for being cold and unfeeling because your father was cold and paid no attention to you.” Psychoanalytic interpretations tend to turn toward the biological family for substance. What is happening in the present is related to childhood family dynamics, especially with the parents. Problems in the world are therefore of interest, not in and of themselves, but as springboards for talking about the past, and about the client's relationship with himself in the present, not with others.

4. One-to-one Therapy: Therapists who rely on transference as a central concept usually prefer to work individually, rather than in groups. While there is an elaborate literature on transference in group therapy, most

therapists seek simplicity, and therefore go for the smallest number of people in the room: two. To work with families, couples or groups of people dilutes the transference, because more reality and complexity is introduced.

A RADICAL PSYCHIATRY CRITIQUE

Each of the practices listed above, and the theory on which they are based, carries an ideological, or political, implication. Before analyzing those implications, I list the ways in which Radical Psychiatry practice contrasts.

1. We offer *advice*. This advice is of a particular sort, very closely tied to our values and our theory, specifically about cooperation and power. In the process of giving advice we reveal ourselves, because we make our opinions explicit. We are also implying that clients are powerful enough to sort advice, to reject that which is off and change what is useful in ways that tailor it to their own needs. We are careful about language, never saying, “Do this,” but always making clear that what we think is only what we think, not truth.

2. We validate people. We look for the material reality in their perceptions first (see Chapter 3). If a client is angry at the therapist, for instance, we look first for our contribution, for the actual events that provoked anger. Our concept of paranoia (see Chapter 8) embodies the idea that what people think and feel is always based on a kernel of truth, on some reality in the world.

3. We take people at their word, in other words, and a specific form of doing so is our use of *contracts* (see Chapter 9). We do not diagnose; we rely instead on the client's own best judgment about what are problems for her. In an example above, the therapist says, "She's not interested in making progress in her status, she *says*," and then goes on to assume that she really was and should be, even though the woman came to work, not on her profession, but on her marriage. We would take this woman at her word, work on her relationship and trust that she would eventually bring up any problems at work if indeed they were problems for her.

4. We work in *groups*. Our belief in group problem-solving is a very central outcome of our theory. The presence and help of peers is crucial for a number of reasons (see Chapter 9): the most important of them in the context of this discussion about transference is that people can

practice working on transactions in the present. In other words, working in groups is a direct reflection of our emphasis on the present rather than the past. To be sure, we do believe the past contributes, indeed that every transaction in the present carries with it a legacy from our past experiences (see Chapter 5). But we believe, first, that the legacy is much larger than what is experienced in the biological family, and second, that it is only important insofar as the present is important. In other words, our emphasis is very heavily on solving problems *now*, rather than on unraveling causes *then*.

All of this is not to say that we think Freudians are “making up” the events on which a theory of transference is based. It is very true that clients sometimes take the word of a therapist very seriously, giving her “too much” power. Sometimes, this transaction may even be tied in some simple and direct way to history with a parent. Often, however, it can be accounted for more satisfactorily by including in the analysis many factors presently at work. The client may, for instance, want real help, and assume the therapist has the power to give it; if she hasn't, why bother to consult her? There is a widespread need for nurturing, support and protection in our culture, for most of us find too little in actual fact.

In addition to real need, the client may also have bought into the mythology about therapists' extraordinary

expertise and power. Some people fear the therapist can “see right through me;” in response a client may be scared, or rebellious, or relieved. Often clients with too-high hopes are disappointed; they find the therapist knows some things, but not as much as popular culture predicts, and they may react angrily or sadly — or with relief!

There is another reason why people sometimes turn to therapists with more emotion and intensity than therapists quite fathom. We live in a culture which assigns the guardianship of values, of what is right and wrong, to therapists on a level at which people are most vulnerable — on the level of hearts and minds. The shrink is supposed to be an authority on the “right” ways to feel and think, and these ideas are values: they are socially determined and consequently ideological.

Some of these expectations may in fact correspond to those originally placed on parents — to nurture, to protect, to understand. But often those expectations are disappointed in the biological family. People come prepared to be disappointed again, hold their hearts and souls in reserve until the therapist proves herself — not a sign of pathology but of good sense. Or else they come with hearts open and hopeful; they “love” the therapist and feel enormous relief in being able to turn for help to someone who supports and understands them — once again a remarkable sign of good “health.”

Radical Psychiatrists analyze transactions between client and therapist, not in terms of illness, but in terms of power. We try to acknowledge real power differences, and to minimize those based on Internalized Oppression, such as lies and misconceptions about therapists and therapy.

The notion of transference says two things very different from such an analysis of power:

1. Most of the explanation has to do with history outside the room.
2. It is precisely that history which is most interesting in therapy.

Why is it most interesting? Because it is assumed that people act out of an *intrapsychic* reality which is unknown to them, fixed in childhood and inaccessible without help from some authority. In other words, the psychoanalytically-inclined therapist sees the client's response as a distorted one, unrealistic in the circumstances. That opinion is a discount of the client's own perception; what it says is that "the client thinks I have all this power when I really don't." But then the therapist acts in ways that precisely abuse the real power he does have, by having a mystified agenda: to analyze the transactions between the two of them and uncover

unconscious developmental glitches. The therapist deeply believes he knows better, possesses a magic key to the psyche of the patient, and that the patient cannot get better without this intervention. If that is true, if clients are dependent on the goodness and smartness of the therapist, then the therapist does indeed possess a great deal of power. In these ways, Freudian therapists claim power, and at the same time disclaim and mystify it.

What are the ideological implications of the theory and practice of transference?

1. Individualism: People are viewed as if they are isolated individuals, each linked in a steely chain with her own individual past. The constancy of change — people changed by life, and life changed by people — is excluded from this view (see Chapter 2). This implication is promoted theoretically by developmental concepts, that the adult is who she has become through the agency of a nuclear family. Practically an ideology of individualism is promoted by one-to-one therapy.

2. Powerlessness: Transference is based on the idea that people cannot sort through and learn from complex transactions, and that they are not capable of doing fifty percent of the work of changing. This implication is

contained in the theoretical concept of the unconscious, to which the untreated has no access, and in the practice of concentrating therapeutic attention on the past. What is omitted is real support for taking power in the present, real help learning skills, strategizing, gaining allies and so on.

3. Hierarchy: Therapeutic practice based on transference is inherently hierarchic in structure. To be remote and invisible, yet to direct the very nature and understanding of a relationship, is to be very powerful. The theory out of which hierarchy grows is that of the necessity for intervention by an expert, and the practices which make power unalterably unequal are diagnosis, and the mystification of a therapist who has determined unilaterally what the therapeutic contract is to be.

Freud and the Study of Personal History

Other psychologies are also interested in the past, but with less empowering results. It is in fact our critique of the Freudians that they dwell too intensively in what went before, and not enough in the present. We differ from Freudian approaches in several important respects. First, Freud suggested that the bases of the character were determined in the earliest years of childhood, and could be changed, if at all, only by the detailed recollection and resolution of early conflicts:

..we must assume, or we may convince ourselves through psychological observations on others, that the very impressions (of childhood) which we have forgotten have nevertheless left the deepest traces in our psychic life, and acted as determinants for our whole future development.⁹

Radical Psychiatrists, in contrast, believe that we are being formed and reformed all the time, throughout our lives. Every time we transact with another human being, or experience our culture, we are altered. The experiences of childhood are one influence, but they are not “determining.” Consequently, we can change ourselves and our lives by changing how we transact right now.

Second, Freudians view the formative experiences of childhood as occurring primarily within the family. Radical Psychiatrists appreciate the power of our families' ways of treating us in influencing who we become, but we see those ways as being an expression of the social group in which each member of the family and the family as a whole exists. Moreover, we are interested in how those social influences continue to act upon us throughout our lives. Father may treat his small daughter as a pretty doll and introduce the idea that women's power lies in beauty, not brains. But he is only acting in ways he has been

⁹ Freud, *Basic Works*, pp. 581-2.

trained to act, and every advertisement, every movie, every TV program will promote the notions he has introduced to his daughter throughout her adult life. If the Women's Movement affects him, perhaps because his daughter embraces feminism and confronts him, he may change his behavior and his effect on his daughter, and the consequent changes in her will change him once again.

Thirdly, because Freudian psychologists see people as being hostage to our childhoods, they are interested in present transactions as metaphor for those of the past. Transference, for instance, is the theory that patients act toward their therapists as if the therapist were their parent, and it is the working through of this relationship that enables the patient to resolve inevitable problems with figures of authority. Radical Psychiatrists are interested in how power differences affect relationships between people. We are certainly aware that parent-child relationships are problematic, and so are those between therapists and clients. But we do not presume that they are the same. We seek to do in therapy what children often cannot do with parents, which is to negotiate power inequalities carefully and honestly: I, the therapist, have more power because I'm not working on my life and you, the client, are. So I know more about you than you do about me. But that is an agreed-upon inequality, designed to make it possible for me to protect you while you work, and to give you more useful feedback. If we chose, we

could reverse roles; the inequality between us is negotiated and conditional, not built-in.

Sometimes it is true that people act toward a therapist the way they have learned to act toward their parents and others with superior power. We encourage people to work out new ways of confronting power with today's authority figures. Using mother and father as metaphors for authority is largely useless, whatever intellectual appeal it might have; negotiating new relations of equality with actual mothers and fathers relieves contemporary problems and teaches new means of operating in the real world with effective power.

Part IV:

APPLICATIONS

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

FRIENDSHIP

Becky Jenkins

The following is a transcript of a conversation with Beth Roy, whose questions and comments are in italics below.

I think it's important to talk about friendship in some sort of larger social context and to see it as a changing phenomenon: that friendship in rural, pre-industrial society, and also subject to cultural traditions, is considerably different from what we face, those of us who live in the city, in an advanced industrialized culture. The structures of people's lives really preclude friendship, really are organized to prevent friendship: separate housing with no easy interconnections; people are transported, by and large, in vehicles that prevent contact with other people; in addition, people's lives are sufficiently pressured and stressed so that the time and leisure necessary for developing friendship is extremely difficult to come by. For example, if you live in New York City, by the time you get home after a horrendous subway ride or being stuck in the Holland Tunnel as you return to Hoboken, it's extremely unlikely that you will find the energy to come

back to the city to have a leisurely dinner with friends, or that you'll have the energy to take the subway to go back down to the Village and to hang out with friends. Once you're home, that's about all the energy that you've got.

I think it's true in cultures where people are more dependent on automobiles and travel huge distances between the places where they work and the places where they live. The way that life is physically organized, at least in the United States, makes it difficult for people to have easy access to friendship. Friendship is something that takes discipline, pre-planning; spontaneity is something that is practically eliminated in the friendship circles of people's lives.

Would this be a place to talk a little about competition and individualism, the reflection of this in people's heads?

I think that's the additional factor, which is that friendship is not a value in this society. What is really a value in this society is making it, getting ahead, being successful, and also just managing the economic and social pressures on people who are members of the working class, the lower middle class, which are so extreme now in the 1980s that friendship is not a value which is highly touted and promoted by the culture. The value that is promoted around people's personal needs is the value of being a couple, being in a nuclear family, and people expend an

enormous amount of energy to be coupled, to be in a couple, energy that is in no way matched by efforts to be in a large and secure friendship circle.

So it's important to see friendship as a changing phenomenon and to see the state of affairs now, in the United States especially, as a very particular phenomenon which will continue to change, hopefully. In direct ratio to the decrease in the emphasis on friendship is the increase in the emphasis on the need for being in a primary relationship, being in a couple. And it makes sense that with all of the social and economic pressures of life on people, and with the limited amount of energy and resources, that the one place that their need for intimacy and for emotional connection finds expression is in the modern couple, and the modern nuclear family. It's no longer a nuclear family that has extended members: the aunts and uncles, the cousins, often parents, are thousands of miles away. People are thrown back on the couple in a way that we see in Radical Psychiatry stresses the modern couple beyond endurance.

People turn to the couple for all of their needs: their sexual needs, their emotional needs, their intimacy needs, the feedback they need around their work, support, childcare needs—and the only relief that people find is if they happen to have money, and if they have money then they can buy services. But these services do not extend their

communities and their support system; they're simply products. People buy au pair girls or live-in maids or fancy childcare centers, but nothing that extends the community of the child or of the real support system of the parents.

Let's talk about the lack of other structural or organizational connections, churches and so forth in our community.

In the old days, when the community was easier for people to create, there were a number of forms that this community took. People belonged to churches. They might not have been deeply religious, but churches provided a focal point for a sense of extended community. People belonged to cultural organizations: the Basque Club or the Czechoslovakian Club, the Irish Club, the Italian Club, etc., etc. They belonged to social organizations: the Elks, the Shriners, or the Lions. And there are still many places in America where those social forms are active, more or less. Historically, American black people have had enormous comfort and solace in their churches, which have been a focal point not only for their social life but also political and social expression and advancement.

But this kind of disintegration of the social points of the community, again, seems to us to be a result of the intense stress people experience in an industrial, urban and suburban culture. Moreover, in our community of artists,

intellectuals, people on the left, people are critical of the culture and are alienated from what institutions do exist, so this phenomenon is even more intense. The ideology of churches and social clubs is often quite reactionary.

It seems to us that the resurgence of spirituality that is sweeping the Growth Movement and the left is a desperate cry for connection and for a universal vision of what the world should be.

DEFINING FRIENDSHIP

Defining friendship would be a ludicrous thing in some other cultures, like Japan for example, where people know who they are, what their social place is, and have very specific expectations about what a friend is. In the United States, we need to start again to define what a friend is because of the fragmenting of any shared social definitions.

We think that choosing a friend is not unlike choosing a lover. There are several things to consider. One is the level of attraction. How attracted are you to this person? Does she touch your heart, engage your brain, aesthetically please you in some way? These are almost the same criteria you would use to pick a lover.

In addition, it's important to determine mutuality: whether this person is in the market for a friend. Does she need a friend? Does she have more friends currently than she can handle? In other words, you need to find somebody who will share the responsibility and the commitment to the principle of having friends.

There's a good deal of confusion in our culture between a friend and an acquaintance. Most people in the world have many friendly, sweet acquaintances, people who you genuinely like, who you care about, and about whom you'd be extremely upset if something bad happened to them. However, I want to make the distinction between that kind of kindly, sweet feeling about a number of people, and a friendship — a serious, long-term, committed friendship.

A friend is somebody from whom you have no secrets. A friend is somebody who you can call in the middle of the night if you need somebody to take you to the hospital. A friend is somebody who you can count on, who is part of your extended family, part of the network of your social grouping. It's crucial, if you define friendship in this manner, that people approach it with some seriousness. It's not a casual commitment.

WOMEN, MEN AND FRIENDSHIP

It's interesting how the dissolution of friendship has been experienced in America differently by men and women. It seems to me that in more patriarchal cultures, men have more intimacy, that there's great connection and camaraderie between men. It's fascinating that in an industrial society, with the equality of women, that the friendship bonding of men has been virtually destroyed. It looks as if men have suffered the most, in some ways, from advanced monopoly capitalism, that their personal lives have been more decimated. Women in Western culture seem to have been able to maintain the knack of friendship, and even at that it's sorely lacking.

The Women's Movement gave a shot-in-the-arm to friendship between women. For the first time, competition between women was addressed: competition for men, and competition around work and moving up the socio-economic ladder. It was at least named and addressed as a problem.

But men have been isolated in the extreme. They are more dependent than ever before on their mates, on their wives, for intimate friendships. There are a number of men who have strong friendships with other men, but the expression of friendship is usually around some activity — fishing, going to a baseball game, playing golf. Given that men are

not trained or encouraged to be emotionally literate, or terribly interested in emotional connection, it's not surprising that with their friends they don't spend a lot of time talking intimately. It's not the expression of men's being in the society, and therefore it's also not expressed in friendship. It would be really surprising if men who are emotionally illiterate suddenly started talking about their feelings with men friends.

It's ironic. I remember in the '50s women saying, "I don't know why, I just like men better. I can't stand other women." I remember feeling incredibly offended by it, but it had to do with bright, ambitious women feeling they didn't have enough comradeship with other women. The complaint of the '60s, the '70s and '80s is from men, who say, "I don't know why, I really don't like other men." I think in some terrible way the tables are turned — not uniformly; obviously there are a number of exceptions. But I think there is a way that men are more oppressed now by the system than ever before.

FRIENDS AND COUPLES

The result of the isolation of men from other men, and the difficulty women have of maintaining their friendships when they are in relationships with lovers, impacts the couple, and the nuclear family in America, in ways that are

extreme and pernicious. Most couples in the Radical Psychiatry extended community experience problems around time and energy. Couples live in isolated homes and apartments. In addition to all the stresses we mentioned before, of life in the twentieth century, there is the additional work of maintaining a healthy, moving, growing relationship — particularly with the new values of working on relationships. It's a very big deal to have A Good Relationship, whereas in the old days people were satisfied not to have such a good relationship and get on with their lives. It's a healthy turn of events that people are committed to working on good relationships, but it does pose some new problems.

In addition, if a couple has children, they have small people to raise, school, house, feed, clothe and generally supervise. So here we have couples scurrying back and forth to their work, living in isolation, holding down jobs, working on a high quality relationship, and trying to raise their children in the best possible way. Given that agenda, it is miraculous if people have time for friendship. It is extremely difficult. All the centrifugal force of this kind of life draws off people's energy.

So here we have this struggling couple, working on their relationship in this milieu. It is excruciatingly difficult. People need much more than what a lover can provide, even the most attentive lover. They need intellectual input,

they need advice, they need support when they're upset, they need childcare, they need new ideas around childrearing, they need a myriad of things. It's been our experience around couples that one of the most important things a couple can do is for each person to have friends. Almost nothing is as important as that for the success of the couple. It means that trusted people can be turned to in hard times; it means practical help; it means some sort of emotional sustenance that is essential for the good working of the couple.

It's a perfect paradox: the one thing that the couple really needs to survive is friends, and the one thing that is very difficult to do when people are putting their energy into a couple is to maintain friendships. People need either to have an extraordinary amount of physical energy, or to be organizational geniuses.

Or, to live collectively. As an aside, it seems to us that in general it's not been easy or successful for couples to live collectively. The reasons why couples haven't flourished in collective households are interesting, and important to understand; here is a new frontier, especially since there are more and more compelling reasons for people to live with other people, both economic and ideological, and also people really want to be coupled. There is new work to be done.

FRIENDSHIPS AND FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN

One of the things that has happened in American life, because of the size of the United States and the cultural diversity and complexity of the American population, is the phenomenon of moving many miles from one's family of origin. For instance, San Francisco is filled with people from New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Iowa and so on. People move for better jobs, to escape small towns; they move to the big city, exploring, seeking new adventures. This sort of break from family intensifies a couple's isolation.

Some couples are fortunate to have come from a nuclear family which is supportive and congenial. Then there is an additional problem: with the already existing scarcity of energy and time, the presence of extended family further limits resources available for friendships. It's difficult if you are without a family for help and backup and nurturing but it is also difficult if you *have* a family, because they demand time. Often families that have survived the migration to America and the integration into American life can be extremely possessive and jealous and competitive with friends. There is a deep injunction in American culture that the only people you can really trust is your family.

For example, in Jewish families there is a strong paranoia that nobody outside the family is of significance. This kind of paranoia and isolationism of the family are the result of years of racism and discrimination. The same thing is true in a number of cultural groups. The bottom line is that nobody will come through for you except the family. The problem with this ideology is that many people don't have such families. Families are so fragmented in America; either people have families from which they need distance for the sake of their mental health, or the family has disintegrated — people are divorced, or struggling without many resources, or are three thousand miles away from them. Even when families are available, their resources are not sufficient, there just isn't enough that any single nuclear family can supply to its children. People need more than the family can provide.

HOW TO BE A FRIEND

How to Make a Friend: Attraction and Mutuality

The old wisdom on how to find a friend is that it is connected with finding something in your life that you care deeply about. For example, if you are committed to the Jesse Jackson campaign, the likelihood is that you'll meet people you have something in common with if you work on that campaign. Among those people, there will be some

small percentage of folks who will appeal to you, who will “attract” you, or interest you in a more profound way. It's been our experience that the most lasting friendships often, though not always, come about out of some shared work.

The transition from some attraction and interest in another person in a shared context to friendship is a delicate one, and takes some practice. People need to be pursued and carefully checked out. Again, there are two criteria: First, is the attraction mutual? And second, does she have a sufficient amount of time and energy to bring a new friend into her life?

Chemistry between friends is in some ways as elusive as the chemistry between lovers. All of us have had the experience that of the people we were interested in as friends when young people, twenty years later there's a good percentage of them that don't survive. However, everybody has experienced the opposite phenomenon of making a friend in youth who, for some strange reason, survives all the transitions and changes. I don't believe in magic, but I do think there is some combination of luck and “magic” in the choice of friends. In the final analysis, chemistry may be beyond analysis. We need permission to pursue the people who attract us. To put it in the same category as choosing a lover is the right thing to do; it has the same combination of the concrete and the mysterious that is needed for good relationships.

But the other component — and I think it's the same component that's needed for a good love affair — is desire. People have to take friendship really seriously, and really desire it for it to have a chance. You can't just wish that a good friend will come along. Just as with a lover, fifty percent of success is desire, in the sense of : “I want to be married, I want to be in a couple, I believe in it.” The other fifty percent is attraction. The same is true of friendship. You have to say to yourself, “I believe in friends, I want friends in my life, they're absolutely crucial to my mental health, and I'm going to find me some friends.” That works in combination with attraction to another person.

How to Be a Friend: Cooperation and Emotional Literacy

The contract between friends is identical to the contract that we in Radical Psychiatry believe is necessary between family members and between lovers. It depends on equality, and on not being frightened to cross certain kinds of emotional frontiers. People have to be courageous about giving criticism, talking about competition and jealousy. People have to be willing to risk their pride and make themselves vulnerable to make a friendship work. They have to be open to criticism and willing to give criticism to keep the relationship from being static and dying on its feet.

In addition, people need to act with all the constraints that govern their behavior in the work world: they have to be kind, gentle and honest. Our theories of cooperation (see Chapter 4) and of emotional literacy (see Chapter 8) are helpful guides.

What does equality between friends look like? One of the arts of friendship is to know its limits. For example, I love to dance. My best friend doesn't like to dance particularly. But I get an enormous amount of pleasure out of talking with her about ideas, traveling to new and exotic places together, sharing values around childrearing. It isn't part of my definition of our friendship that she dance when I dance, even though I love dancing and can't imagine its not being a part of my life.

Equality is not a vulgar equality. It is an equality of those things that sustain interest.

When one person is in a couple and the other is not, the friendship may be stressed, but I don't think it's terminal. The person in the couple is under a lot of strain. She must fight against the centrifugal force, to lean out of the couple. It is artful to balance friends and lovers, and, as I've said, it is a necessity. There are certain things that need to be done. For example, the couple needs to be inclusive of the single person on occasions, and those occasions

need to be carefully thought out, to be premeditated. There are times when people sometimes need their relationship to be outside the context of the couple; good friends need to be able to see each other and not include the spouse for a relationship to be healthy.

When people have substantially different advantages or disadvantages in society, like interracial friendships, or friendships between a disabled person and an able-bodied one, or a gay and a straight person, or a rich and a poor person, other problems need to be confronted. Some of those are harder than others. The rules of emotional literacy provide the guidance: things must absolutely not be kept secret; no Rescues; people must talk honestly about what their differences are. They need to be defined and constantly on the agenda for discussion. I think some of the most binding and profound friendships happen between people who cross those lines. Those friendships are between people with considerable emotional and personal power. It takes strength, and a kind of self-knowledge and a kind of assurance as a person to be friends with somebody who is different. It's much easier to be friends with people who are similar. When it happens, those friendships can be unusually rich and interesting.

There's a very, very strong admonition against lending money to friends. It's interesting, from a Marxist point of view, that the material issues between people would evoke

the most controversy, the most fear. Lending money, buying property jointly, living collectively — all of those things have to do with crossing some border between socially accepted friendships and something more daring and risky. Generally, Radical Psychiatry promotes the view that those frontiers should be crossed, with care and a good deal of forethought and agreements and contracts and strategies for the worst so that people have protection. We have a very hard-headed, pragmatic view of what people need in order to insure equality. For instance, if people live collectively or own property collectively, they should have very detailed and clear agreements about who owns what, what would happen if somebody dies, or if there's a fight.

We promote these same kinds of agreements for couples. The mythology in our society is that, as difficult as it is for friends to do these things, it is just as natural and easy for couples to do them. In fact, both myths are equally untrue.

We have to move from the conception of all relationships — couples, friends, families — from the unconscious to the extremely carefully conscious and premeditated arena. People have to be aware of the meaning of friendship, the shape of friendship, and the need to protect it.

Love and Commitment

There are two kinds of commitments. One is the commitment that comes out of an agreement to take the relationship seriously and to struggle for its maintenance, even in bad times. That's the sort of commitment that's the definition of friendship, which is that people decide that they like each other, have time for each other, and want to take on the commitment of friendship to hang in there. It's the same kind of commitment people make when they get married — to hang in there, not to dismiss it lightly.

Because friends are less obligated to each other — there are less material things that bind them, like children and houses — there is more freedom for people who are friends to make changes in their life which make the friendship more difficult. For example: to move to Atlanta; to suddenly go to England on a scholarship; and so on. One of the most exciting and wonderful things about friendships when they're good ones is that they can sustain great distances and time apart. People often report on having the kind of friend who they haven't seen in years and when they get together, it feels as if they are beginning in mid-sentence. I think it is possible to feel committed, and to act on that commitment even over great distances and over long periods of time. Friendship has got the unique quality of being able to sustain itself if it's really on

the mark. It's hard on people who are close friends to be separated, but friendship can definitely survive.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: WOMEN PLANNING OUR OWN FUTURES

JoAnn Costello

This chapter is based on a workshop presentation.

The desire to do this workshop came very much from my own life — mostly from my professional life but from my personal life also. I want to talk about that for a minute before getting to the workshop.

My professional life has two parts. I'm a Radical Psychotherapist in private practice, and in that practice I see a lot of women — between the ages of 25 and 48, in the beginning to middle of their adult lives.

The second part of my professional life is working in the San Francisco Community Mental Health system doing therapy in a geriatric, out-patient setting. In that setting I see women (my case load is *all* women) between the ages of 58 and 88, and these women are at the later stage to the end of their lives.

Both groups of women have a lot of problems (that's the bad news), and many of these problems seem to me to be a result of their economic oppression as women and their women's scripting—in particular, the scripting to be fairly passive in making and planning for a good life without consideration of the men and children they have, used to have, or wish to have.

These women in my practice, and my desire to pass on to the younger ones what I've learned from working with the older ones, are my motivation, on a professional level, for doing this workshop. On a personal level my motivation is fear for myself. I do not want to end up like many of these older women I work with, and I think that it takes some serious thought and planning to avoid it.

The worst problem of the older women I see is isolation. They live alone and have all the attendant problems: terrible loneliness, fear for their physical well-being, the burden of chores, bills, etc., by themselves. Eighty percent of the elderly living alone are women.

Now, for all you women who aren't in relationships and want to be because you see it as the salvation for being alone, let me tell you quickly that most of these women were married women. *Married women end up alone* because their mates die younger, and they married men

older than they in any case, so they have before them 10 to 15 years without that mate who was supposed to mediate between them and loneliness. So if a mate isn't the answer to the perfect future, what is?

This brings me back to the younger women I work with. Many of them had the expectation, or at least the hope, of "having it all." These women had some experience of the two decades after World War II when the expansion of the American economy produced unprecedented prosperity: masses of people lived well on very little, had leisure time and the expectation of a similar future.

This prosperity, along with feminist hopes, dreams and demands, led young women to expect that they would have choices—careers in their chosen fields, romantic or sexual love with the man of their dreams, children or not as they chose, the freedom to live alone or in families or collective households.

But it's now the '80s. Loss of the Viet Nam War, the decline of American influence abroad, and a conservative trend in American capitalism have brought about a very serious reduction in social services such as MediCal and welfare. Prices have risen faster than wages. As usual, women have suffered.

Economic necessity along with a social backlash on so-called cultural issues has forced women back to seeing the family as the last refuge against loneliness, rootlessness and, in a worst-case scenario, the bag lady syndrome. The fact that women make only 68% of men's wages (the small increase from previous measures is accounted for by a decline in male incomes) and that they continue to take major responsibility for children, old people, and sick relations makes it easy to see why they would seek the "protection" of a socially-sanctioned institution like the family.

In the 19th century Jane Austen wrote in *Pride and Prejudice* a conversation between two young single women: "Marriage is the only honorable provision for a well-educated young women of small fortune, *however uncertain it may be of giving happiness.*" What I like about this quote is that these young women were not hoodwinked into thinking that they were *unhappy* because they were unmarried. They knew they were *disadvantaged* because they were unmarried.

Today, the ideological hegemony is so strong that women believe that their happiness, their pleasure, their very sense of being worthwhile lies in a relationship with a man. They are tormented by ideas such as:

◆ Nobody loves me.

- ◆ I've done something wrong.
- ◆ I need a baby to be truly happy/ok.
- ◆ I'll never find someone to love.
- ◆ People in couples are truly happy/have love/have security/have someone to depend on.
- ◆ I feel jealous and hateful toward women friends who are in relationships.
- ◆ I feel competitive with other women about the scarcity of men.
- ◆ I measure/count/compare my stuff: men, career, looks, children, house.

It seems clear to me that in my lifetime women are not going to “have it all.” The bottom lines—economic parity with men, a national health insurance (there are 37 million Americans with none), federally-funded childcare, adequate Social Security—are distant dreams. And these systemic changes are absolutely basic to women's sense of safety in the world.

So what are we going to do to maximize the probability of decent, loving, satisfying lives and pleasant days in our old-age rocking chairs? I think that the answer is found in the old Radical Psychiatry formula to gain power: Awareness + Contact + Action = Liberation.

Awareness: The first thing is to stop blaming yourself and thinking you're an anomaly. Women at this point in time (with the exceptions of women who are particularly advantaged by careers, youth or beauty, or the first flush of love) are having a very difficult time. So don't blame yourself, but understand that this is a historical phenomenon.

Do not allow yourself to imagine that you'd be fine if you just had a man/baby. This is a sexist lie. You would have some advantages, but you'd also have new or different problems and the underlying causes for your discomfort would be unchanged.

In addition to not blaming yourself, don't sit in the corner (or go out on a date) feeling victimized. Women often seem to vacillate between two states: self-blame and victimization. Though it's true you are a victim of sexism, one major part of it is being socialized to feel powerless, passive and victimized.

You are also enormously advantaged. You live in a historical time when there are choices: you can get birth control, you don't have to make your own candles, you can own property. You have power and a voice. Look at what women are doing alone and together.

Contact: The good news is that women in large part already have the skills to relate to others. We know how to talk, listen, ask for things, enjoy hanging out and being together.

Make contact and commitment now with the people you want in your life when you're 90. Talk with other women about their lives. Admit your competitiveness. Commiserate. Women have always gathered and gossiped, and done projects together such as quilting. Discover the Consciousness Raising Group. Meet in support groups. Use relationship skills for inter-generational contact. Have young friends. Be nice to old ladies. Relate!

Action: You have to act to make a good life for yourself, both individually and collectively. In the present you must put some *serious time and energy* into finding satisfaction and love in places other than mate/children.

- ◆ Figure out what you really like to do, both for work and pleasure, and do it regularly. Fantasize doing it in old age.
- ◆ Figure out who you like to be with (women and men) and spend time with them. See your future together.
- ◆ Confront coupled friends regarding the social prejudice against singles. Enlist their aid.
- ◆ Have physical contact with other women. Snuggle/sleep together. Go dancing, sauna, massage. Have a baby with the help and support of other women. Plan it.
- ◆ Plan the future. Go in together with two people and buy a house. What are you going to live in in old age?
- ◆ Is money a problem? Get a financial consultant.
- ◆ Do you have medical insurance? How are you going to get it? Plan to be in good health.
- ◆ Form a support group of women acting toward planning their futures. Pick one issue that you

care about which affects your life as a woman and do political work. Organize a women's strike.

Obviously you can't do everything at once. Pick your weak area and make a start. Or pick your strength and build on it.

With friends, good health, and a decent income we can have satisfying lives.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: COOPERATIVE CHILDREARING

Beth Roy

Radical Psychiatry theory has a bias: a strong conviction that personal relationships are happiest when people are most equal, and when they agree to behave cooperatively with each other. Most of what we've written about cooperative relationships (see Chapter 4) has been about adults: lovers, spouses, friends, roommates, and so on. Often, however, we are asked to help people work on problems with children, and they are surprised to learn that our tilt toward equality is as strong here as it is elsewhere.

EQUAL RIGHTS/UNEQUAL POWER

In fact, conducting a cooperative relationship with a child is more confusing and complex. Two adults may have pretty nearly equal power, but a child and an adult do not. When we teach the “rules of cooperation,” we always begin by pointing out that they apply only in cases where people are equal. Don't try to be cooperative with your boss or landlord, we caution people. But between grown-ups and children, the power is not equal: adults are

physically larger and stronger; children cannot earn a living, wander safely anywhere they care to walk, transport themselves from place to place, and so on; adults know important things that kids do not.

How then can we advocate treating children as equals when they are not? And even if that were possible, isn't it too much trouble? Kids are rightfully self-centered, concentrated on their own worlds, not capable of making decisions for the good of the group. Isn't it courting disaster to give up parent-made rules and edicts?

First of all, we need to distinguish between equal rights and equal power. Children and adults are entitled, we believe, to equal rights. Children and adults do not, however, have equal power. When Simon, aged ten, wants to go to see a monster movie, and Gloria, aged forty, wants to see a thriller, Gloria would make a mistake, we believe, if she settled the conflict by citing her prior claim to decision-making rights, simply because she preceded Simon on this earth. Gloria might use her greater power: "We're going to the thriller, because I won't pay to go to the monster movie and I won't drive to the theater where the monster movie is playing." Simon might pull out some tricks of power he has. He might cry, pout, storm around, refuse to go at all. But his power is only to retreat or to harass; if he really wants to see a movie, Gloria has the ultimate power: money and mobility.

What we advocate, then, is equal rights for children and adults, combined with a clear and honest vision of how power is in fact unequal. If you know better than your one-year-old that speeding automobiles kill, you do not respect her equal right to cross a street whenever she pleases. You use your greater power to restrain her. But if you want your twelve-year-old son to do his homework every night and he wants to watch TV, and if you consider his rights to be equal to your own, then you reason with him. You may even reason super-persuasively. But you do not threaten to beat him, or even to withdraw his allowance, if he disobeys you.

Why not? you may ask. How wearing to “reason” with a headstrong twelve-year-old. John, papa to Jesse, a four-year-old who knows exactly what he wants and how to argue for it, asks to be persuaded why he should do the tiring work of negotiating with his son. Why not pick him up, put him in the car and say, “Too bad, Jesse, we’re doing it my way!”

True, it is easier at the moment to throw the kid in the car. Here are three reasons to take the longer route:

1. Violence pervades our culture. It infests families. Its first and final bulwark is the belief that it is all right to strike children. Hitting children is a final abuse of power

that stands, however well concealed, directly behind the usurpation of decision-making power by adults. There is no way John could succeed in throwing Jesse in the car if they both didn't know he was able, and in the final analysis willing, to use his superior force against his son.

2. To pre-empt children's rights is to break their wills.

Kids are freedom-loving like the rest of us. From infancy, they will fight back against tyranny. But eventually they will lose that fight, for adults are indeed a superior force. When they do, they have learned an important lesson: that at root they are powerless to affect their own lives, not to mention the world around them. "Disciplined" children become socially-docile adults.

3. Finally, a more selfish and practical argument: obedience is very hard to obtain for all time. **Children who have been forced to submit today will fight back tomorrow.** Unless you are willing to use Dickensian tactics, to keep the rod always visible and often employed, your kids will get you back. It is no big surprise that teenagers rebel against everything; they've been waiting for years, until their bodies caught up with their souls and they could fight back. Unfortunately, by then the means they've learned (from master teacher-parents) are less than honest and kind: lying ("I'm spending the night at my friend's house" is a clear echo of "I'm taking away your allowance for your

own good”), bullying (“Just try to stop me” sounds suspiciously like “That’s final and I won’t discuss it any more”), etc.

So, if you aren’t concerned about violence or convinced of its connection with childrearing; if you aren’t persuaded by a need to produce a generation of adults who feel and act powerfully in the world; then spare the rod for your own sake. You will reap the rewards in the not-too-distant future, as your kids grow older and larger and treat you with the respect you’ve always shown them.

FASHIONS IN CHILDBEARING

Theories of childrearing have been around for as long as Cain and Abel. They engender enormous storms of intensity. Many people keep quiet about politics, violence, their religious beliefs, almost anything and everything they believe — until it comes to childrearing.

Walk down the street with an infant, and some stranger may tell you the baby is dressed too warmly, or not warmly enough. Men who have never held a baby younger than twenty-five insist on the need for a firm and disciplined hand. Grey-haired women tell you Baby should be sleeping through the night by now, and imply that those 2 a.m. feedings are the fault of poor mothering.

Grandparents view your red-rimmed eyes unsympathetically, and insist you “simply have to let the child cry herself to sleep a few times.”

Ways of childrearing engender such energetic conflict because they reflect our most heartfelt beliefs about life. How we treat our children grows from our axioms about people, whether they are good or bad, civilized or savage, in need of social molding or born with an instinct toward kindness and respect for others. Moreover, we feel deeply obligated to treat our children in ways we think will instill them with the beliefs and traits they need, in our opinions, to succeed in the world. No wonder then that discussions about children are rarely polite and intellectual. They touch the core of ourselves, our fears and convictions about our relationships to life and to others.

Childrearing fashions swing back and forth, tipping the scales to favor grown-up rights one decade, children's rights the next. The Victorians believed children were to be “seen and not heard.” The rules of behavior set by adults were designed to keep kids from disrupting the lives of their elders. It was considered to be good training for children to learn to obey and to squelch any natural inclinations (toward joy, playfulness, sexuality, etc.) which might interfere with their good behavior in a restrictive culture later in life.

Permissiveness, the opposite of authoritarianism, tends to be a popular philosophy in times of economic boom. Unlike the Victorians, who lived in an age of industry-building and capital-accumulation, when thrift and austerity were a practical virtue, middle-class people in affluent times can afford to experiment. Post-World War II fashions, influenced by writers like Benjamin Spock, instructed parents to nurture the wild impulses of little folks. In a reaction against the body binding and emotion squelching of an earlier time, parents sought to free their children's spirits. My own parents still tell the story with glee of how I called my father a "big dope" when I was angry at him. Their parents would have been shocked and punitive at such a statement. Parents were influenced by the Freudian theory that the characters of youngsters are formed within the first few years of life, and frightened that they might make terrible and irreversible mistakes. Permissiveness was sometimes a euphemism for paralysis: better to do nothing than to risk fixing the little darling's psyche at some inappropriate stage of development.

The free-school movement of the '60s carried the notion of children's rights a step further, but also retarded adults' assertion of their own rights further. Adults came to mistrust their own ideas and inclinations, a corollary to the youth movements of the times. The concept of schools without structure and of children's own wants dictating the order of the day was stated with revolutionary fervor –

and it was, indeed, a progressive idea. But it placed all the rights in the hands of the children, and denied any to the adults. Tales of chaos and boredom began to characterize free-schools, and the stories contained some truth. Adults, in rebellion against authoritarianism, and unwilling to impose their preconceptions about what children need on their young charges, were afraid to speak up about their own needs. Grown-up needs were mistrusted as possibly polluted by authoritarianism. But children as a result were protected from realities. Other people do sometimes need quiet. Life may really be easier and richer if you know how to read. Teachers' good-will stretches further when there is some negotiated order to the way time is spent during the day.

The pendulum swung back. Its velocity was fueled by the exhaustion and bitterness of self-effacing adults. "Back to basics" became the slogan of the '70s. Not coincidentally, the times were hard. Liberated childrearing had never gripped the imaginations of working class parents. Now it began to seem an unaffordable luxury to middle-class families as well. Alternative schools were transformed from multi-graded, open classrooms to high-achievement, academic learning centers where children were closely supervised while taught the three Rs. Once again, grown-ups knew what children needed to learn, and how to teach it. The natural impulses of little ones, it had turned out, were altogether too natural to be heeded.

Today, one of the favorite phrases of educators and therapists is that “we need to set limits.” The concept suggests a softened approach to the idea that adults must exercise power over the lives of children. It replaces the philosophy of an earlier day that children are little beasts who need to be whipped into shape, but it is kissing cousin to that notion. For couched in dulcet phrases of psychology, the concept of “setting limits” still suggests that grownup knows best and small people must be tamed or they will overstep the limits of safe and sane behavior.

RULES OF COOPERATION

Elsewhere we have written about the rules of cooperation (see Chapter 4). Let us look here at how they apply between adults and children.

No Secrets or Lies: Often parents ask advice about how much to tell their kids about their own lives. In general, the answer is the same with kids as it is with adults: tell them everything that might be relevant to them. If you are considering moving to another city, if you are considering making a major change in your love relationship, tell them. They will intuit anyway that big stuff is afoot, and they are apt to imagine possibilities far worse than what is actually in the offing. Hiding feelings, such as anger, confusion,

fear or sadness, is another common way grownups lie to children. Kids can handle anything they know up front.

No Rescue: Rescue, or doing more than your share (see Chapter 7), is an epidemic condition in American families. Children are thought to be far less capable than they in fact are, both to handle feelings and to take care of themselves. The question of Rescue will come up often as we discuss common problems adults raise about children.

No Power Plays: A power play is any action intended to make another person do something against her will. Ways adults power-play kids are many. Kids retaliate in kind. A major power play by adults, however, which children cannot match, is punishment. Punishment, and power plays against children in general, reflect unhelpful beliefs about what kids need, what parents must do, as well as an attitude of hopelessness that anything less than force will resolve disagreements.

RESCUE AT THE DINNER TABLE

Part of what confuses us about giving up power to children is the question of what our responsibility is toward them. If I don't force my five-year-old to clean his room, will he grow up to be a disordered personality? It is commonly believed in our culture that children grow into the adults

we create. This view is furthered in several ways. Psychiatrists concentrate their analysis of grown-up behavior disproportionately on patients' relationships with their parents (see Chapter 14), implying that the offspring's problems are the parents' fault. Parents expect to be judged by how their children behave. We are embarrassed if our kids don't "do it right:" speak politely, perform well in school, appear well-groomed and have conventional haircuts. When grown children live their lives in ways that confuse and dismay their parents, mothers and fathers wail, "Where did we go wrong?" They believe that they are responsible for what their kids do.

The question of parents' influence on their children is a confusing one. How the culture at large acts on our psychology is rarely discussed. Instead, each nuclear family appears to be a unit entirely unto itself, as immune from outside influence as it is isolated from outside help. No wonder that Mom and Dad feel they must do it all themselves, and conversely that it is all their fault.

What we fail to see is that influences beyond our control as parents are affecting our children all the time. We teach them values that are themselves culturally determined: be independent, save money, dress neatly, bathe daily, all are values specific to our place and time. In the far reaches of the Afghanistan mountains, only some of them would be highly regarded. Moreover, the very structure of our

family life, the isolation of Mom, Pop and kids in a single-family household, teaches values which we may not consciously share: the value, for instance, of privacy (which often is a cover for secrecy and shame). Privatized families fail to teach skills we need to make and keep friends, even though Mother may urge her children to be more sociable. We learn that the price of intimacy is the sort of dependency in which most families are trapped; no one will feed you, care for you in ill health, tolerate your worst qualities unless they are forced to by blood.

The notion that we are responsible for who our children become goes hand-in-hand with the fear that our children depend on us to do what is healthy and safe for them. Parents make rules about bedtime, eating habits, forays away from home, contact with friends, etc., because we believe that children, left to their own devices, would be subject to overwhelming dangers. As a result, we take more control than is good for our children or for ourselves, over the business of daily living. If we re-examine and scale down our fears, they may contain some useful kernel. Messy rooms, for instance, are unlikely to damage fragile psyches. But it is a reasonable desire that children, particularly boy children who tend to be exempted in our culture, learn the skills of housekeeping. A persuasive argument can be made to that effect, and the skills passed on in a couple of hours. Once learned, however, it is up to the child whether or not he or she does it.

Food is an arena in which power, control and responsibility are often intricately confused in American families, and so it is a good example to consider. Children are made to eat a predetermined amount of food at unvarying intervals. "Three meals a day are good for you." "Eat everything on your plate." "No dessert until you finish your vegetables." The tyranny of the dinner table is as much an American institution as apple pie and the Soaps. Not only are children tyrannized to eat those three well-balanced meals a day, but Mother is tyrannized by making them.

Eating injunctions rest on several assumptions: children's natural inclinations about food are untrustworthy. All people have the same nutritional needs. Appetite is constant; we all should be hungry for the same quantities of food at the same times every day. Without close supervision from parents, children will become ill, too fat, too thin, pimply, or something else too horrible to contemplate.

Parents therefore bear a heavy responsibility: to monitor their children's food intake in detail (be ever on guard against the demon sugar, for instance), and to provide proper meals in a proper sequence, whether their kids want them or not. Two things happen as a result. First, kids grow up ignorant of their own body's requirements,

alienated from their own biological rhythms. It is very often true that children, left to their own devices, eat irregularly. Often, a child will eat large quantities of food one day, and then eat lightly the next. Appetite is variable. Allowed to experience appetite, children use it as an accurate index of their own body's needs. Many children prefer six or eight small meals a day to three large ones. Faced with quantities of food at one sitting, their appetite is quickly satisfied, and then they are hungry again a few hours later. Since meals are not available at odd times, they turn to sweet snacks. Moreover, because what they hunger for is different from what they get, they learn to distrust their body's signals, to know what would really satisfy them. Parents are sure their kids would eat badly if left to their own devices, and eventually they are right. Mother knows best because she has unwittingly taught Baby how not to know at all.

Meanwhile, Mother has been doing a lot of cooking, and a lot of nagging. She becomes invested (I use the feminine pronoun here because this is traditionally a woman's assignment) in doing it her way, all the more so because she has cooked so many meals she didn't want to cook and nobody wanted to eat. She becomes all the more a tyrant, thereby guaranteeing the second consequence.

Kids rebel. To replace a natural system of eating with an arbitrary one takes some doing. Many small impulses must

be contradicted every day. “No, you may not have a snack now, dinner's in an hour.” “Keep away from the cookies, first you have to eat everything on your plate.” “Where did you get that candy bar? I thought I told you...” The emotional edge is sharpened by Mother's overwork. Little fights build into major battles. Kids refuse to eat at dinnertime, sneak cookies on the sly, feed the dog under the table. Temper tantrums accompany the dinner bell or, worse yet, there is sullen compliance. Parents fight back. Not only must Junior eat everything, he must be cheerful and sociable while doing it. Meanwhile, parents wonder why this is so hard. Visions of the happy American dinner table dance in their heads. Where did we go wrong? they wonder, and they feel guilty.

This sequence of transactions is described by the concept of the Rescue Triangle (see Chapter 7). Parents Rescue because they believe their children to be Victims (incapable of taking proper care of their bodies' food needs). Children do in fact become powerless because they lose track of what they really want. They rebel and Persecute. Parents meanwhile, exhausted and Victimized by the extra work, also Persecute, then feel guilty and decide that the problem is their own failure as parents. And what do good parents do? They cook more meals and watch over their children more closely; they Rescue, in short, all over again. Thus the Triangle becomes a pointed vicious circle.

The example of Rescue is duplicated in many other areas. Bedtime, safety, schoolwork, suitable friends, how to dress, drugs, all become battlegrounds where “Mother/Father knows best” and kids rebel.

Are we advocating, then, that children be given complete freedom to do whatever they want? If we argue against the concept that parents need to set limits on children's behavior, will it mean that there will be no limits at all?

What does in fact limit the behavior of children is exactly the same as what limits the behavior of adults: the material realities of life and the need to live with other people. Parents, you remember, have rights, too. Joshua, a musical twelve-year-old who “lives for his drums” and has a beat that may someday set the world to clapping, nonetheless may not practice his drums whenever he pleases. Neighbors complain. Problem-solving groups meet in the basement, and need relative quiet. Parents sometimes aren't into rock-'n'-roll. On the other hand, Joshua's right to practice his music is as high on the list as is our right not to hear him. We negotiate. We agree on certain times he can play, and others he cannot. Some of those times are set by material circumstances beyond the control of any of us: a neighbor works late and needs to sleep until ten in the morning. Other times are compromises. I would like quiet from five to six in the

evening, but will trade it some days of the week in return for quiet at noon when I've scheduled a special meeting. The art of making these compromises is demonstrated by the results. Joshua sometimes feels restricted, but not too often: we tinker with the schedule to accommodate. I still think his beat is terrific, a sure sign I'm not being oppressed.

WHY PARENTS "RESCUE"

Lest "Rescue" become another accusation to make hard-pressed parents more guilty, let me say a little about why parents Rescue their children. The first reason is a material one, and a paradox: given a scarcity of help in most households, it is often too much trouble to let kids figure things out themselves, or eat on their natural body schedules, or negotiate every task to be done. Even though Rescue leads to more work in the long run, because kids fail to learn helpful skills, in the short run it can be more efficient. Susan's body may call for eight small meals a day, but when Susan is eighteen months old and one parent is alone with her and a couple of other kids all day, who's to prepare those meals? If there were more adults around, the natural feeding schedule might be practical. It might be possible to set up the kitchen and food in such a way that even tiny Susan could help herself with a minimum of assistance. But without help, who's to blame a mother for

teaching her child to eat on a convenient rather than a power-respecting schedule?

The first reason for Rescue, then, is about the structure of childrearing institutions, their isolation and scarcity of labor. That problem leads naturally to the second reason. In the isolated family, parents with primary responsibility, most of whom continue to be women, suffer from a shortage of respect and affection, or what we call strokes (see Chapter 8). Women have long understood that being “good mothers,” which means doing everything for your kids and making certain that they are well behaved and well groomed, will earn them strokes. If there is too little power for women in a discriminatory society, then we take power where we can, in the arena of our children. We do so, not because we are “power hungry, grasping super-moms” but because we are human and need respect for our capabilities.

Reason number three for Rescue, however, dictates what we do to win those strokes. Compelling myths mislead us to believe a false picture of what is good parenting. We have already discussed the confusion between responsibility and power. So long as we believe that our children are mirrors of our own failings, we worry too much and work too hard to make them perfect. When three-year-old Jesse spits cherry pits at the formal and austere mother of his friend, his own mother worries that

he is mimicking her own rebelliousness. She does not stop to consider that the friend's mother has been bossing Jesse around all day, and he is angry. She assumes responsibility, and feels guilty.

Too little help and too many expectations of ourselves as parents is a recipe for failure. To feel a failure after having devoted a superhuman amount of time and energy to a task does not make for good humor. Persecution results. Sometimes it is subtle: frequent nagging, being "on the kid's case," generalizing about the shortcomings of the younger generation, etc. But very often in our culture, Persecution takes the form of punishment, and punishment becomes violent.

NO PUNISHMENT/NO VIOLENCE

Punishment is a power play. It is a display of force designed to make a child not do something (or do something) that she would otherwise do (or not do). If we want to reconstruct our relationships with our kids to be cooperative, then the very first act must be to give up the notion of punishment.

There is no proposal I make to parents which is more shocking to more people than this one. Our culture's system of childrearing is so firmly anchored to the rock of

parental authority, that the idea of eliminating the ultimate tool for enforcing authority is mind-shattering. Parents feel panicked. "What do I do then, when the little stinker won't go to bed at eleven o'clock at night? Don't tell me to reason with her; I've lost the ability to think, much less reason, by that hour!"

I am sympathetic. If we lived in extended families, or well-peopled villages, another grown-up would probably be available to take over when you are exhausted. The problem, again, is structural. But given a lot of bad choices, I firmly believe that the worst is to resort to punishment. As soon as you say, "Go to bed or you may not play with Sammy tomorrow," you may have won the argument, but you've lost the battle. If you give up the power to punish, then you are much more likely to resort to honesty. "I'm exhausted. I've worked hard all day. You can go to sleep when you like, but you must leave me alone right now, or I'll cry." Try talking about real consequences: "If I can't get some time alone tonight, I may be too tired tomorrow to go to the playground with you." Be careful, though, that it's a real possibility, not a threat. If you find, tomorrow, that you're not too tired, will you still fail to go to make good on your threat? If so, it's punishment.

The tradition of punishing children by spanking them is old and engrained. Many consider it to be the moral duty

of adults to use corporal punishment for the “good” of the child. Sometimes, it is a premeditated act designed to produce a given result (“Clean your room, or I’ll spank you”). Other times, spanking is an act of uncontrolled rage. In either case it is a brutalization of a weaker person by a stronger one.

Punishment very often turns violent. We live in a culture permeated by violence. There is violence in the media, fear in the streets. The ultimate violence of nuclear war lurks always at the back of our consciousness. When we feel angry at our kids because we’ve done too much, when we think we have a duty and a right to punish them, and when, most importantly, we have memories of having been physically punished ourselves, it is no wonder that we so often become violent. Child abuse is endemic in American life. In a famous study in the mid-1970s, it was found that 80% of Americans believed in hitting kids; meanwhile, the researchers found, some 46,000 children had been attacked with knives or guns in 1975 alone.¹⁰

Violence ends a cooperative relationship. As soon as physical force, or even its threat, is introduced into an interaction, equality is abandoned. Grown people are always stronger and more frightening than children.

¹⁰ Murray Strauss and others, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family* (Doubleday, 1980).

Temper tantrums may be threatening, but they do not equal the power brought to bear by spanking. To spank a child is to make the decision that “Father (or Mother) knows best.” Even though most of us do not actually voice the thought, the organizing principle of the relationship in fact becomes: He who has greater physical strength has greater rights. Not surprisingly, children either become cowed and docile, or they battle back, often using guerrilla tactics known worldwide to those without power: passive resistance (“I’ll say yes, but I won’t take out the garbage”), deceit (“Who’ll ever know if I smoke this joint behind that tree?”), strategic withdrawal (“They can make me come home to dinner, but they can’t make me smile at them”).

Arguments justifying violence against kids are sometimes heartbreakingly thoughtful. Some black adults, for instance, contend that children of color must learn early how to conduct themselves in order to avoid the more serious violence threatened in white racist society toward them. If a kid sasses his mother, better that she should whack him than that he should sass a white policeman and be beaten or jailed. “We’ll stop striking our kids,” say these parents, “when *They* stop beating and killing us.” Zora Neale Hurston, a black anthropologist and writer, describes her father’s fear that Zora would be hanged before she was grown, that her mother “was going to suck sorrow for not beating my temper out of me before it was too late.” Ralph Ellison described home-punishment as a process of

homeopathic violence administered by parents who loved and wished to protect their children.

It is a painful debate. Implicit in the argument is resignation to the state of violence toward black people. Children are trained to watch their step, not to rebel against their victimization in ways that are effective and personally protective. Children of color may be less brutalized than if they were not beaten at home, but they are nonetheless brutalized, suffering an oppression which they do not deserve at home or outside.

Even in so dire and violent a dilemma as that facing black children, then, we would urge parents to break the cycle of brutality, to teach their children by example and language that they have rights to dignity, and to counsel them wisely about how to be safe, to band together with others to fight, rather than to rebel as individuals and be killed.

THE MANY ARENAS FOR STRUGGLE

The problems parents work on in problem-solving groups are many. How can I get the kids to do their chores? What about allowances; how much should they get and under what conditions? What should I do about getting my child to do her homework? As kids get older, problems become scarier. How can I prevent my teenager from abusing

drugs? What about sex, especially under the threat of AIDS? How can I stop the constant fights about curfews and friends?

While each of these questions deserves its own discussion (which, however, would require another book devoted to the subject), there is some general advice that applies to all of them: talk; negotiate; be honest; be open. Struggles are inevitable; children and parents often have different interests, each legitimate in its own terms, but in conflict. Neither kids nor parents are bad because they disagree. But nor is either side “right.”

To tell your children what you think and feel about something is very different from telling them what to do. “I am terribly frightened about drugs, especially about (fill in the specifics, the more specific the better: driving while drinking, letting your life be dominated by the ‘busy-ness’ of marijuana, experimenting with hard drugs that might be unsafe on the street.)” “I’m scared about your flunking out of school, because I know how hard it is to get jobs that are tolerable without a high school diploma.” “I’m not going to turn the TV set off, but I want you to know I think ‘The A-Team’ is incredibly sexist and racist for the following (detailed and elaborate) reasons.”

Overall, what we urge is that parents stick up for their own rights, while giving children theirs. Nothing helps the

quality of parenting as much as support for parents. Find people to talk to who share your childrearing philosophy, and consult them about every detail, every self-doubt, every rageful impulse. Help in the home may be hard to come by; at the very least, be sure you have help in your heart.

Parenting is in a state of dramatic change. Today, more and more children are raised by single parents, mostly mothers. At the same time, more and more fathers are engaging as active parents in their children's upbringings. Ever larger proportions of Americans living in poverty are small children. All these facts alter the ways in which we relate to kids, and raise new questions and problems.

Our contribution as Radical Psychiatrists continues to be an advocacy for power and rights of children, as well as some experience about how to be cooperative. It is just a beginning. But what is surprising is how dramatic and helpful changes occur when children are treated with respect and parents are relieved from isolation and total responsibility.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: LOVE AND RESCUE IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Diana Rabenold

Over the past few years I have sensed a growing climate of disappointment and even cynicism in the Lesbian community regarding the viability of our sexual relationships. I have heard certain despairing comments more and more frequently—particularly from Lesbians in their late 30's or early 40's who have been through at least one and often several serious, long-term relationships — comments which run something like this: Lesbian relationships just don't work; they don't last; we're too emotional, too unstable; it's too painful to break up; it's just not worth all the trouble and grief; we “merge” together, sex dies out; we run off with our friends; etc. In short, some Lesbians seemed to have concluded, in their more bitter and self-deprecating moments, that Lesbians just can't have good relationships, and stop just short of expressing the underlying homophobic thought, “Maybe it's just not natural, and we're really all sick after all.”

In the wake of this concern and disillusionment, many Lesbians have turned to therapy for help with their romantic partnerships. However, I am concerned that many therapists — even so-called “Lesbian-feminist” therapists — are continuing to emphasize family backgrounds and “damaged” personal histories as the major culprits in troubled Lesbian relationships, at the expense of examining the political nature of their clients' problems. In my experience, insights which are restricted to one's personal past are limited in their ability to help clients make major positive changes in their personal relationships. This is because psychodynamic therapy — the kind of therapy I am describing and which is still the prevailing therapy model taught in American universities — lacks a cohesive analysis of power, a theory of Internalized Oppression, or a set of concrete tools with which to fight internalized sexism and homophobia. In short, the revolutionary insight of the Women's Movement, “The personal is political,” has been sorely neglected of late in psychotherapeutic circles, where the emphasis seems to have returned — even among Lesbian feminist counselors — to a largely “the personal is personal” approach, with but a few crumbs of the political realities of women's and gay oppression tossed out from time to time.

The cost of ignoring the deeper psychological implications of economic and political oppression is great. This approach not only deprives Lesbian clients of valuable

political insights into their behavior, but fails to develop useful tools for personal growth and change which emerge from such an understanding. Finally, an approach which over-emphasizes past and personal history often overlooks the ways in which a client's behavior patterns are being reinforced in the present by factors in her social and economic environment.

In this article I would like first to go over some of the general ways in which sexism and heterosexism affect Lesbian relationships, then illustrate how this external climate of oppression can appear within the personal dynamics of the Lesbian couple. In particular, I will discuss a concept known as *Rescue* and how it can be used as a tool to help lovers become aware of ways in which they may be contributing to unhealthy patterns within their relationship, as well as provide specific means of changing such dynamics.

Lesbians of course are not alone in questioning relationships and feeling discouraged about them: heterosexuals are in the same boat. Marriages are breaking up in greater and greater numbers, and women's magazines are filled with the despairing voices of straight women who have serious questions about the possibility of having good, long-term relationships with men. There are significant socio-economic reasons for this, having to do with the changing political and economic role of women

and the family in our society over the past few decades. The family in industrialized Western society has now shrunk to its smallest size in the history of that institution, and places an unrealistic burden on the sexual couple to fulfill all our human requirements for community in an increasingly alienated and individualistic culture.

Apart from general problems facing the sexual couple in society, women as a group are economically disadvantaged in relation to men, earning 63 cents to the dollar that men do. For the Lesbian couple, in which both partners are targets of sex and sexual preference discrimination, the economic burden is doubled. In short, Lesbians as a socio-economic group tend to be poor, struggling, or marginal. Lesbians share the same economic lot (and often the same run-down neighborhoods, low-paying jobs, and other poverty stresses) as other disadvantaged groups in our culture. These economic realities impact heavily on the majority of Lesbian couples. Most studies of sexual relationships show that economic stress is *the* major factor in couple instability.

Heterosexual couples (or at least those legally married) in similar struggling circumstances frequently receive economic support from their respective families: bridal showers, wedding gifts, "hope chests," family heirlooms passed down at the time of marriage, cash gifts, help with buying a first home, help with starting a business, and help

with the care and education of the couple's children. By contrast, most Lesbians couples are not helped economically by their families; indeed, many risk being completely cut off financially when their sexual orientation becomes known.

Every Lesbian couple, whether economically secure or not, faces stresses involving the families' attitude toward the relationship, which more often than not is one of rejection and disapproval. At best the relationship is tolerated but rendered invisible: the couple is treated as two "roommates" devoid of sexuality or long-term commitment. Few Lesbian couples receive the kind of emotional support which heterosexual couples can expect: the recognition and good wishes of their family, friends, and community; emotional counseling and support from older, wiser family members to get them over the "rough spots;" positive reinforcements from role models provided by art, literature and the public media; and an accessible historical tradition buttressed by ceremonies designed to strengthen relationship ties.

Finally, perhaps the most psychically damaging consequence of Lesbian oppression is the revulsion with which our love-life is greeted by mainstream society. It is particularly hurtful and damaging to women, conditioned as most of us are to seek and receive approval from others, to have the most intimate and generally most important

aspect of our lives treated with contempt, derision, or complete silence. It is nearly impossible not to internalize at least some portion of this climate of rejection and hatred into our psyches and self-images from time to time.

In sum, the Lesbian couple wends its way in the world without mainstream support or approval, validation, visibility, role models, or even a visible historical context. It is no wonder — as Marny Hall, a Bay Area Lesbian therapist — has pointed out, that Lesbian relationships often become “havens:” enclaves forming a protective barrier to shield the couple from a “hostile world.” Just as there are forces in the culture constantly attempting to pull Lesbian relationships apart, there exists a counter-pressure within the Lesbian couple to maintain the relationship at all cost, as a crucial source of nurturance, self-definition, and mutual protection — even when threatened by internal conflict.

For most of us, our families served as the means through which we first learned about and acculturated ourselves to the dominant gender, class, race, and able-bodied culture in which we grew up. The attitudes and inequalities of the dominant culture therefore become internalized at a very early age, and continue to be taught and reinforced within us, both at home and in society at large, unless we make a concerted effort to counter these internal messages in an

on-going process of “consciousness-raising” and political action.

One of the results of male dominance is that the desires and needs of women are constantly being denied and discounted. In place of pursuing our own feelings and ambitions, we are taught to substitute the needs of others, most appropriately the men we are intended to marry and the children we are supposed to bear. Thus are set in motion attempts to disempower us from the moment we are born.

The *fact* of women's subordination as a group becomes internalized in individual women as a belief that their personal needs are not important; that to ask for what they want or to get their needs met is selfish, that they are only good and OK if they always put the needs of others first. Indeed, the accusation of “selfishness” — however subtly communicated — has ironically been perhaps the greatest barrier to women's development of a strong sense of Self with which to *be* “Selfish”!

In Transactional Analysis, a school of psychology developed in the 1950s and ‘60s which focussed on the nature of interactions between people, a concept known as *Rescue* was developed.

“Rescue” can be defined in several different ways, none of them to be confused with the ordinary meaning of rescue — that is, coming to the aid of someone who genuinely needs our emergency intervention, such as a drowning child. The most common definition of Rescue as I will be using it (with a capital “R”) is the act of doing something you really don’t want to do, or of doing more than your share of something.

EXAMPLE: Joann asks me to type a letter for her as a favor. Although I don’t want to do it, and don’t really have time to do it, I agree. I have been caught off guard by her request and thought it would be rude to refuse. My typing the letter in spite of this is a Rescue.

Simply doing a favor or a service for someone is *not* necessarily a Rescue (after all, we all want to do good things for people, or need to perform services we don’t like because they just have to be done) but my doing the typing for Joann when—without the internalized feelings of guilt and the need to please which the request aroused, I would have said no—constitutes a Rescue. Two other helpful ways of defining Rescues are: 1) doing more for someone than she is doing for herself (except in situations involving disabled persons, children, or others rendered exceptionally powerless by this culture); and 2) not asking for what you want.

The act of Rescuing is one of the behaviors which give rise to the dynamic of the Rescue Triangle. The "Triangle" consists of three positions one can "play" in an interaction with someone else. What follows is an example of the Rescue Triangle in action:

EXAMPLE: Rhonda doesn't really like to go out on Friday nights: she would prefer to stay home and relax after work and just watch TV. However, her lover Juanica loves to celebrate their first night of freedom at the end of a week by going out to the movies, or a party, or *anything* rather than stay home. But almost every Friday night, at the urging of Juanica, Rhonda accompanies her lover to some outside form of entertainment, often staying up till very late. Rhonda agrees to this, even against her own inclinations, because she wants to please her lover, and is afraid Juanica will think of her as a drab, unexciting person for not wanting to go. Each time Rhonda goes out on Friday night when she really doesn't want to, she is "Rescuing." After awhile, as the tiresome Friday nights pile up, Rhonda gets more irritated and uncomfortable about going out, and begins to feel more and more powerless by giving up what she wants. She begins to deeply resent these outings. In short, she will come to feel a *Victim* of her Rescues, and feel sorry for herself for having to be such a good and sacrificing person all the time. And in my experience, it pretty generally follows that anyone who has felt victimized by a situation long enough,

will begin to feel angry about it. At this point, the Victim will move into the role of *Persecutor*: the accumulated resentment builds to an extreme point, and then erupts. The persecution phase may take any number of forms: an aggressive one such as a big fight; or more passive and indirect forms, such as withdrawing emotionally, making sarcastic comments, or other behavior designed to hurt and get back at her lover. In Rhonda's case, she persecuted Juanica by finally picking a big fight with her over some minor point one Friday night and making sure they both had a miserable evening.

I have shown how Rhonda played out the Rescue Triangle, but when one person has Rescued, the other has also necessarily played a part as well. In this transaction, Juanica noticed that her lover was less than lively on their Friday nights out. She would have liked her to be as excited as she was, but, not knowing the true cause of Rhonda's lack of spirit, thought perhaps Rhonda didn't find *her* to be a particularly exciting or stimulating companion. Juanica would have liked to be able to go out with one of her other friends instead or at least ask one of them to join the couple, but didn't because she was afraid her lover might feel hurt or jealous. So Juanica's Rescue was to go out on Friday nights alone with Rhonda when she really wanted to go with another friend or have other friends join them. As time went on, she also grew resentful at the lackluster evenings she and Rhonda were having, and

when Rhonda picked a fight one evening, she used the occasion to get in some choice “digs” at her lover in the ensuing fray.

On the other hand, if both Rhonda and Juanica had talked honestly to one another about what they wanted to do on Friday nights, the transaction could have looked like this (assuming there are no other more complex issues lurking beneath the surface):

JUANICA: It's Friday night, Rhonda! Let's go out and have some fun! I want to go see the movie down at the Roxie Theater.

RHONDA: I really don't feel like going out tonight, Juanica. I feel tired from work, and the traffic is always bad on Friday night. What I'd like to do is stay home and watch Miami Vice.

JUANICA: Well, I'm feeling too restless to just stay home: I really want to go out. I'd like to call Louellen up and see if she'd like to do something together; but I'd like to save the movie for tomorrow night, if you'll go with me then.

RHONDA: Sounds good to me.

In Radical Therapy, the concept of Rescue has been developed further and used in a more politically conscious way than simply as a description of role behavior conditioned by personal family history. For it is difficult not to draw a parallel between the role of Rescuer and the prevailing conditioning and expectations of women and other oppressed groups in our society. For women, the various internalized messages of sexist conditioning become the psychological motivations for Rescue, particularly within their love relationships, where such feelings become intensified. Many of these internalized messages consist of lies our society has told us concerning our own weakness, worthlessness, and powerlessness, or the powerlessness and weakness of others, who therefore need us to “save” them.

A number of therapists have written about many of the behavior patterns and attitudes I have discussed above, in terms other than that of “Rescue” or the “Rescue Triangle.” And in the examples I have given in this article, I do not mean to imply that Rescue is all that is going on in the transactions I describe. There are many other behaviors and beliefs produced by Internalized Oppression which are beyond the scope of this paper. Indeed, the concept of Rescue as I have used it is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of tools and approaches developed by radical and politically-minded feminist therapists. However, I think that the simplicity of its language, the neatness of the

model, and its particular relevance to women's social conditioning, make the concept of Rescue especially useful in helping women with problems in relationships. I have yet to define these concepts to a woman client who has not immediately identified with the behavior they describe. This makes it an especially accessible tool with which clients can identify and solve relationship problems for themselves. In addition, identifying Rescues often helps to expose some of the more deeply-held negative beliefs which lie underneath. Given that women in general experience pressures to Rescue both from within and without, and that a Lesbian couple consists of two people with such conditioning, my experience has been that the Rescue model can be of particular help to the Lesbian couple.

For many women love and Rescue often become confused with one another. "Taking care of" someone else often becomes equated with "caring" and love itself. It is for this reason, as Lesbian therapist Barbara Sang has pointed out, that "one of the most salient issues that emerges in working with Lesbians in therapy is one's feelings that the other doesn't care enough." Both partners will have a tendency to feel under injunction to be "on call" for each other's needs, although often one will be the heavier Rescuer than the other.

EXAMPLE: Mary has to attend a conference downtown on Saturday. Afterwards, she and her lover have made plans to go out to dinner at their favorite restaurant and go to a movie. They arrange to meet at the restaurant Saturday night. Joan has a car, Mary does not. Mary actually would like Joan to pick her up at the conference and drive both of them to the restaurant. Mary knows she will be tired after a long day of workshops and doesn't want to be riding buses for an hour in order to get to the restaurant. She feels that it would be selfish of her to ask directly for a ride, so instead she drops hints of what she wants: she says they'll have to start dinner late because it will take her a long time to be there, she's going to feel pretty tired, etc. She feels sure her lover has heard and understood these clues. But Joan never does offer a ride, and all day at the conference, in the back of her mind, Mary's resentment grows. Her internal dialogue runs like this: "If Joan *really* cared about me, she would have offered me a ride; she would have *wanted* to do this for me... I would have done it for *her*," etc. By the time Mary reaches the restaurant, all the seeds for a miserable evening together have been planted.

In the above example, Mary's Rescue was not asking her lover for what she wanted. Her silence was prompted by having learned early on that good girls do not ask for what they want (this is known as "selfish" and "demanding"). This left Mary dependent on her lover's intuiting what she wanted and offering it without being asked outright.

The above examples of Rescue and the Rescue Triangle involve only single transactions between lovers. Let me now give an example of a Lesbian relationship as a whole, in which a Rescue *dynamic* has become the chief way of doing business:

EXAMPLE: Lenore is a very emotional, nurturing woman who really gives her all to a lover: as she likes to say, when she falls in love, she really falls in love. As the relationship develops beyond the first honeymoon period, it settles into a pattern in which Lenore loves doing everything with and for her lover, Jesse. She wanted them to live together right away which, in spite of her lover's initial doubts, they did. Lenore loves to take care of Jesse: she nurtures her through all her problems (which seem many), sides with her tiffs and arguments with others (which also seem many), does favors for Jesse whenever needed, gives Jesse money when she runs low, etc. In short, Lenore does a lot of nurturing and caretaking in the relationship.

Jesse was also passionate and romantic at the start of the relationship. Although she was worried about moving in with Lenore so quickly after they met, she agreed to do so, persuaded by Lenore's zeal and also out of practical, economic reasons of her own. In fact, over time, economic benefits which Jesse finds in her relationship with Lenore

— being “tided over” economic rough spots by small loans, the cheap rent of their apartment together, etc. — begins to form a background of dependency needs which Jesse never brings up because she is ashamed of these thoughts and feelings. In addition, Jesse really enjoys being the center of her lover's attention and caretaking, and occasionally assuages her guilt over what Lenore does for her by doing something special for her or being particularly affectionate.

Although both partners are Rescuing in this relationship, it is easy to see that Lenore is more comfortable in the role of Rescuer, and Jesse as the Victim; or we could say, Jesse plays Victim, and therefore Lenore Rescues her. When Lenore does more than her share of work in the relationship, and does things for Jesse without having been asked to do so, she is making the implicit assumption that Jesse can't do these things for herself. That is the way in which Rescue contributes to victimizing one's partner. In this relationship, Lenore does indeed feel that Jesse is not really able to take care of herself in many ways. Lenore feels badly about Jesse's background of poverty and alcoholism and believes that Jesse has been “damaged” irreparably as a result, while she, Lenore, being middle-class and from a more stable family, needs less. Jesse herself probably has encouraged Lenore's Rescues by playing up all the ways she feels Victimized by life and society. There are of course many ways in which people

are concretely exploited in our society, the most obvious being oppression by class, race, sex, sexual preference and disability. However, Rescue speaks to the way in which our behavior often unintentionally colludes with society's view of us as less-than-human, powerless Victims.

On the other hand, Jesse Rescues her lover by not speaking up for things that she wants — more time alone, separate dates with her friends, more concrete agreements about money — because she is afraid of Lenore's anger or hurt over these requests. At bottom, she has come to see Lenore as emotionally fragile, someone who could be shattered by her own moves toward independence.

Let's follow the relationship a little longer. After awhile:

Lenore feels super-invested in the relationship as a result of all her Rescues. She has consistently placed the needs of her lover and of the relationship above her own. Her formerly close relationships with her friends have begun to slide.

Jesse, on the other hand, has begun to feel increasingly angered and suffocated by the relationship. Although she is very demanding on her lover for love, attention and reassurance, she is also becoming more and more burdened by guilt and feelings of dependency which make her want to run away. Her shame about these feelings, her lack of

skill in bringing up emotional issues and her fear of Lenore's reaction keep her silent about what is going on for her.

It is at this juncture that we can see how the dynamics in a Lesbian couple can differ significantly from the heterosexual model. While most men are conditioned to *expect* to be the center of their lover's attention and nurturing, and to feel comfortable in the one-up power position in which that places them, women are not. In addition, most men have careers and work lives that are not only their central focus but which offer them real power and privilege in the world. Most women do not. So where a man in Jesse's position might feel fine about the Rescues Lenore is performing, Jesse feels increasingly guilty and uncomfortable. And where the economic arrangements and expectations between men and women are usually quite well understood (even if unequal), in Lesbian couples financial issues and responsibilities can become obscured. I suspect that many Lesbians have quite a few issues concerning money which they do not make explicit in the relationship, often because they have a "romantic" or "politically correct" bias against bringing up such mundane matters: namely, that women in love shouldn't have to make financial agreements — they should just be able to "trust" each other and "share and share alike." For many women the financial issues are not so much related to power and status as is often the case

with men, but instead involve their over-all sense of dependency or security within the relationship.

In the above example, if the dynamics described were to continue unchecked, one could expect a scenario in which one possible outcome would be that the person who most frequently plays Victim — in this case, Jesse — would eventually move into a role of Persecutor. She would then do something to hurt Lenore; subsequently, Jesse would feel guilty over her bad behavior (“How could I treat her so badly — she’s so good to me”) and would Rescue Lenore in turn: promise or do something she didn’t really want to in order to make up. Guilt is the agent which propels players back into the Rescue Triangle game! One day, after repeated go-arounds of this kind by both parties, Jesse suddenly announces to Lenore that she wants to “take some space” in the relationship or “open the relationship up” to other lovers or — in the worst case scenario — Jesse conducts a secret love affair that eventually comes to Lenore’s attention and ruptures the relationship.

As mentioned before, it makes sense that in a relationship between two women, the level of Rescue can be particularly high. In addition, the Rescue level can reach new heights because a woman lover often gives back more emotionally than men do. Indeed, the major complaint many heterosexual women have about men in relationship

is that they don't "open up," are "afraid of intimacy," and are emotionally illiterate. Between women lovers, however, there is frequently a very high intensity of emotional sharing, intimacy, and nurturance, which can feel wonderfully exciting and satisfying. However, the down side is that at times the emotional heights of the relationship are gained at the cost of completely abandoning the analytical and problem-solving abilities of the participants, who as women have often had this side of their development discounted or discouraged altogether. In this whirlwind of emotions, real issues and concrete problems are never directly and cooperatively addressed. It is a relationship "culture" which one Radical Therapist has described as "Rescue Run-Amok." The high level of Rescue eventually results in almost continuous and sometimes abusive fighting (the Persecution phase), followed by guilty, emotional "make-up" scenes (Rescue), and back to fighting again. The fighting often takes the form of a series of escalating power plays. A power play is something one does in order to get her partner to do something that her partner really doesn't want to do. One example of a power play is my leaving the room and slamming the door in the middle of an argument with my lover. This effectively forces a stop to the argument or discussion in progress, even if my lover wants it to continue. Another example is that of my lover screaming at me in a public place, knowing full well that I hate "public" scenes. This will force me to agree to whatever

she wants or to act complacently, in order to keep the scene from going on. In a bad fight, these power plays can escalate to a point of violence: either actual physical battering, or “psychological battering:” yelling loudly, screaming hateful things to one another, making threats, etc.

While occasional fights and power plays are common enough in any relationship, their habitual occurrence becomes exhausting, frightening, and symptomatic of problems in the relationship which are not being solved. As for actual violence, it has no place in a cooperative relationship. However, lovers resort to power plays for reasons which are important to understand and find solutions for: generally, because they feel desperate, and do not know how to be heard or get their needs met in any other way.

Another form of “Rescue-Run-Amok” encountered frequently in Lesbian relationships is one in which the identities of both partners have become so-called “merged” or “fused” with one another. In such a relationship, both partners are Rescuing in such a way as to suppress conflict over differences or individual needs they might have. Although they typically share a great deal of time together, are mutually supportive, and generally content in their domestic “nest,” such couples have “sat on” a lot of their resentments and individual needs. They have done so for

all the reasons that women and Lesbians are propelled to Rescue in our society, as outlined above, and particularly out of a concern that they might hurt the other's feelings, or that what they want is “selfish.”

In such couples, I have often observed an accompanying loss of sexual activity. Sexual expression begins to feel “incestuous” and inappropriate, and eventually dies out altogether. Keeping sex alive and well in a long-term monogamous relationship is a problem common to all couples, heterosexual and gay male as well. This type and degree of Rescue is sometimes encountered in heterosexual couples, with the same accompanying loss of sexual expression. In many cases, this falling off of sexual expression occurs remarkably early in the relationship—within the first year, and sometimes within the first few months. I believe that in Lesbian couples this is a phenomenon with complex roots (e.g., involving women's socialization around sex and internalized homophobia) and don't wish to overgeneralize as to its causes, but I believe its frequency in Lesbian couples lends yet more evidence to my thesis that the dynamics of Rescue — compounded in Lesbian relationships by the similar conditioning and cultural status of both partners — play a significant part.

The way to stop the Rescues and begin to equalize power in a relationship is to *ask for 100% of what we want 100% of the time*. As simple as this formula sounds, it can be an

extremely difficult task for most women. Indeed, often my work with a client begins with helping her to get in touch with what she feels and wants, so conditioned has she been to put that aside.

In asking for what we want, it is important to ask for the whole 100%, and not whittle it down in size before we even put it out there. We are often in the habit of editing down what we ask for according to what we think our lover will agree to, or what we think we “ought” to ask for. So we wind up asking for 75% or perhaps even half of what we want. The problem with this is that we thereby deprive our lovers of valuable information about ourselves and our needs, and second, it leaves us with a poor position from which to bargain in attempts to negotiate workable compromises.

EXAMPLE: My lover tells me she wants to have a big party to celebrate her new job on a particular weekend. In thinking about her request, I realize that I really don't feel up for *any* kind of a party or social gathering. But I don't want to displease her, and I don't think I have a “right” to say what I'm *really* thinking, so I tell her that several friends would be fine, but I don't want a whole houseful of guests. In other words, I'm putting out about 50% of what I want, but she doesn't know that. She says she is disappointed that I don't feel like having a big party, but she's willing to go halfway and invite about a dozen

people. Now if I really had had “several” friends in mind instead of zero, agreeing to a few more would not have been out of the question. But now I am trapped by the less than 100% I asked for, and agree to this “compromise.” In reality, however, I have Rescued my lover, and will be all primed for some level of Persecution once I have endured the unwanted gathering. My lover will be left scratching her head in puzzlement as I take out my irritation on her.

On the other hand, if I had expressed my not wanting to have a party honestly, my lover and I might have been able to discuss my feelings and find a way to take care of them and her needs as well. In this particular case, we discovered that the weekend she mentioned was very close to a lot of other big social dates on my calendar, and I was getting burned out. We worked it out by agreeing on a later date for the party that felt right for both of us.

In the case of Jesse and Lenore's relationship — if addressed at a point in the relationship when both were still committed to working through their problems together — the task of unraveling the Rescues would involve examining typical transactions between them, identifying the Rescues each is performing, and exposing the fears and guilt which propel those Rescues. They would then be ready to make agreements about how they would do things differently in the relationship in the future. The agreements would be based upon each partner's saying 100% of what

she wants about any range of issues they are having problems with: household chores, initiation of sex, visits with parents, time alone, money, communication, etc.

The goal of cooperative negotiation is for each partner to get as much of what she wants as is possible, rather than for one to give up her needs for the other, or for each to argue over which is the “right” thing for them to be doing. It is in each partner's asking for what she wants that greater and greater equality is achieved in a relationship. Of course, by “equality” I do not mean “sameness” — most often each woman will bring very different qualities and areas of interests and skills to the relationship — but rather a balance of power, an alliance between two whole persons who are equally invested in and equally benefitted by the relationship.

Certainly some of the cynicism I have observed creeping into the community regarding Lesbian relationships has to do with a sense of let-down and disillusionment, now that a decade has gone by since the exuberant and idealistic 1970s. Those of us who were coming out in the Women's Movement at that time had some pretty rosy ideas and unrealistic expectations about the glories of women loving women. We thought that as liberated women, our newfound relationships with each other would *by definition* be equal and devoid of sexism. After a few hard knocks in the romantic department, we are coming to

realize the that as women and gays we are still the products and carriers of sexist and heterosexist conditioning. It took several thousand years for the institution of heterosexuality — epitomized by marriage and its associated meanings and rituals — to perfect itself. One of the reinforcing ideologies which this institution has developed over time is that of the myth of romantic love. Women in Western European culture have been conditioned to accept romantic mythology through countless novels, films, bedtime stories, television, family expectations, that have usually spared us the boring details of reality.

The components of the myth are as follows: Love Is All, True Love Is Constant Bliss, True Love Lasts Forever; don't look too closely at romance or the "magic" will disappear, the spell will be broken. In the Lesbian community romantic mythology has sometimes been elevated into a quasi-political position, in which the idea of applying one's mind to problems of the heart is viewed almost as counter-revolutionary. I have heard this position articulated somewhat like this: to "analyze" romance is cold, unfeeling, and "male." It includes the idea that feelings are of paramount importance, taking precedence over mind and experience. Yet it is essential to the health of our relationships that our minds and hearts work together, to develop "realistic romance" rather than the Hollywood script we've been handed. The uncritical acceptance of this romantic myth by heterosexual women

has been very convenient for men for a very long time: after all, if heterosexual women really looked that closely at the institution of marriage, they might perceive its institutionalized inequality. By the same token, if a Lesbian uncritically adheres to the kind of romantic ideology described above in the conduct of her relationships, she may be unwittingly perpetuating these same, internalized values and ideals. "Realistic romance," on the other hand, is one which draws upon a woman's deepest intuitions, life experiences, and mental abilities in deciding what kind of person she can entrust with her love and emotions. It is one which combines passion and excitement with an honest exchange of criticism, cooperative problem-solving and realistic expectations of what a relationship can or cannot be.

I began this article with a report on negative assessments about Lesbian relationships which I had been hearing from Lesbians themselves. While many of these comments obviously reflected internalized homophobia, I also felt they pointed to genuine areas of concerns for Lesbians in relationship. It has been my purpose in this article to address some of these concerns and to introduce some approaches and tools which I hope will prove useful. However, I want to underscore my belief that the single greatest obstacle to the health of Lesbian relationships is the societal oppression of gay women, and the ways in which that oppression becomes turned against ourselves.

How many heterosexuals, for example, are prompted to blame their problems or disappointments in relationships on their heterosexual orientation?

As Lesbian writer Jane Rule has observed, “[a]s Lesbians who have until recently had no community, whose relationships have been themselves considered immoral if not criminal, we are for the first time in a position of declared responsibility, able to join together, able to describe for ourselves what the nature and value of our relationships are. We should not be surprised at how raggedly we have begun that process.”

The process of defining for ourselves the “nature and value of our relationships” is one not only of crucial importance for the Lesbian community, but also one with profound implications for all women and society as a whole. While our only guideposts in the past have been our own often limited and isolated experiences and a model of heterosexual coupling which is less than ideal for women loving women, we are now engaged in the great task of rediscovering the long history of Lesbian existence, rebuilding its rich traditions, and helping to restore the powerful community of women which became fragmented and suppressed so long ago. It is in such a community, and in such fertile ground, that the full flowering of women's love for each other can take place. During this time of great change and self-definition, it is my hope that we do

not succumb to ways of looking at ourselves that internalize those very attitudes of shame, disapproval, and self-negation which we have fought so long to leave behind. In sum, as we work on those intensely personal issues of love and relationship, we ought not lose sight of their profound connections with the politics of our culture and our times.

CHAPTER NINETEEN:

DISABILITY

Eleanor Smith

This chapter, originally drafted for inclusion in the current volume, was published in the March/April, 1987, edition of The Disability Rag, with the title "Earning Power." What appears here is an updated version.

When Baby Jane Doe, a disabled newborn, made headlines in 1984, editorial writers across the country decided that, since her “quality of life” would surely be awful, her parents should be allowed to let her die.

When Elizabeth Bouvia, who has cerebral palsy, had earlier wanted hospital help in starving herself, she too gained headlines—and the sympathy of editorial writers who, again with “quality of life” comments, agreed she, too, should be allowed to die.

Almost no one asked the obvious question: “What is it that has been made so difficult about raising a disabled child in this society — about being a disabled adult in this society — that warrants death?”

In 1987, Nancy Jones, who had been brain damaged seven years before in a car wreck, starved to death because medical personnel removed her feeding tube at the request of her family. This occurred legally in spite of the testimony of two widely respected neurologists that she was able to understand and follow verbal requests and showed other signs of being mentally alive.

Now, as we move into the '90s, the pressure of disability issues is increasing and decisions are less and less escapable as to how the country, small communities, and individuals will respond to people's unequal amounts and kinds of physical and mental ability. The rising proportion of our population who are old, the still-increasing numbers of people with AIDS and ARC, disabled people's recent unprecedented political awareness and group actions demanding justice — these are among the forces pushing disability issues into the awareness of many people who did not feel directly affected before.

BAD LUCK?

The oppression of disabled people is brutal; the Pigs are vicious. Society demonstrates in many ways that it wants people with severe medical conditions at the very least out of sight, and preferably dead. ("I'd rather be dead than

crippled for life.” “I want to die before I become a burden.”) Yet, though evidence of oppression abounds, disability is not commonly thought of as “oppression.”

Even politically progressive people, who accurately see many other inequalities as oppressions, persist in assuming that the lack of power disabled people face is somehow intrinsic to their medical condition — a personal, individual misfortune.

One way of beginning to see disability as a human-made oppression — rather than an unfortunate stroke of fate — is to ask oneself whether things aren't being made considerably more difficult for people with medical conditions than they need to be. And the answer is, “Yes.”

One thing to notice is that disabled people are kept from earning money by arbitrary rules — rules made by non-disabled society. Because most disabled people are slowed down and have their energy drained in ways additional to the energy-drains on able-bodied people, most do not have energy remaining to accomplish the full-tilt, forty-hour week that our particular economic system generally demands.

Yet most jobs are set up to discourage part-time work. In many institutions part-time work does not exist, and when it does, it usually entails a loss of crucial benefits such as

insurance and sick leave. Often there's a reduction in hourly pay, as well.

As a reason for making part-time work unavailable or very unattractive, management cites the increased time and cost of managing more employees. But maybe an unspoken reason is that if part-time work were an attractive option, great numbers of unhappy workers with no health problems or relatively slight health problems would choose to work less than they do now, while people with severe medical conditions would work more than they do now. Then the crucial-to-exploitation lines between able-bodied (useful) people and disabled (useless) people would blur or disappear.

Besides economic barriers, one notices that barriers are literally built into the environment which cause people with disabilities to need more help than is intrinsically necessary; that cause them to waste enormous amounts of physical and emotional energy. And technology routinely applied to help non-disabled people overcome natural barriers like the telephone, is not widely applied for disabled people. Things like TTYs, open captions on television, computer-generated print into Braille and voice output are not routine in our society — though they could be.

Thus, extra help some people need — because of inabilities intrinsic to the specific medical condition rather than inabilities created by the environment — is far less than we have been made to assume. Even so, such help is not available to these people in forms which allow them to retain their power as respectable human beings.

In today's industrial, capitalistic economies, society is fragmented into individual families — often units of one person. In such an arrangement, people with medical conditions are cut off from the varied informal helpers available in a close extended community where many people come and go in a flowing pattern. In the United States today, a few isolated friends or relatives are frequently loaded with huge unbearable amounts of responsibility to sustain disabled persons. This often leads at best to chronically strained relationships, or worse, to the selective abortion of disabled fetuses, killing of disabled newborns, physical abuse of disabled children or adults, and profound anger, guilt and desperation of caretakers.

Help could be available from state-paid helpers, hired and dismissed by the disabled person, who are fairly paid and impersonal, whose help the disabled person therefore does not have to cajole or reward with gratitude, sex, personal interest, or entertainment. At present, state-paid help is very hard to come by. Only very severely disabled people

have hope of getting it, and then only in certain states. The money to make this happen could be freed up through a redistribution of resources; the economic, human and natural resources to make it possible are already available.

At the same time our society prevents disabled people from helping themselves economically and physically, and creates circumstances in which sufficient help is difficult to obtain for anybody (let alone someone with disabilities!). It promotes the attitude that to need major help is shameful. Competition and self-sufficiency are idealized; cooperation, though given lip service, is viewed with condescension or suspicion. In such an atmosphere, to need long-term or very intimate help — or to encounter someone who does — causes extreme emotional discomfort.

It rarely occurs to anyone that such an attitude toward giving and receiving help is nothing more than cultural convention.

WHAT WE ARE MEANT NOT TO SEE

If one begins to believe that our society is actively creating and perpetuating disablement for some of its citizens, the next question we must ask is: what might an economic system have to gain from such an arrangement?

Disability presents a unique problem to economic systems based on exploitation. Other groups of people can be exploited as workers — by their race, gender, or class; even non-disabled children are future workers. And an argument given in favor of treating old people well is that they have earned their reward through many years of work. But many people with severe disabilities cannot — and never will be able to, no matter what the accommodation — produce at the pace and in the form required by economic systems geared to generate large profits and privilege for a few gained through using other people. By and large, disabled people are not usable in that way.

What takes a non-disabled person only a short amount of time can take a person with a severe disability much longer — either to do more slowly for themselves, or to arrange for someone else to do because they themselves cannot do it. Far from producing a competitive amount of work, many disabled people require work on the part of other people to stay alive. And the work they require is in such a primal form that it can hardly be ignored the way dependence is ignored in the case of non-disabled people — who are asked in our society to operate under the fragile and anxious pretense that they are self-reliant.

In any economic system that depends on workers who at some level feel — and are — used, over-tired and under-

rewarded, those who don't work (unless they are super-rich) must be made to live visibly unenviable lives. People who cannot work "competitively" (full-tilt) must be kept impoverished, isolated, without power, their lives kept miserable enough to ensure they're pitied rather than envied by unhappy non-disabled working people.

If disabled people were commonly seen moving about easily on public transportation, getting in and out of houses and public buildings easily, having access to information, access to paid helpers when help is needed, the opportunity to work as they can, sufficient time to rest, access to money they have not earned to compensate for the limitations in earning power brought on by their loss of endurance; if such disabled people were seen contributing to community life, having friends and being sexy, then no one would pity them or feel guilty in their presence.

In fact, the degree to which non-disabled workers were oppressed would be the degree to which they envied and resented, rather than pitied and feared, disabled people.

Over-work, speeded-up work, unrewarded work, lack of control over how one spends one's work day: all these things would cease to be preferable to the alternative of having a "disability."

Whether specific medical conditions are “disabling” or not depends almost entirely upon circumstance. A quadriplegic with money, enough helpers, equipment such as vans and lifts, and a group of friends and lovers who are not very encumbered by ableist attitudes is not very disabled. On the other hand, an “able-bodied” worker who sprains her ankle but is without the amount of paid sick leave she needs to stay home and heal, and without the helpers she needs to do chores that have now become exhausting, is fairly “disabled.” But this fluid continuum up and down which all people would normally slide according to their current medical condition and other circumstances is obliterated under a system in which “work,” narrowly conceived, is the measure of worth of an individual.

It is not due to medical conditions, but through specific economic practices, physical barriers, and inculcated cultural attitudes that people are very materially separated into the two camps of “able-bodied” and “disabled.” The first must be willing to do unfairly hard and/or meaningless work without much question or hope for change; the second must be kept powerless and pitiable and their situation feared.

LAYERS OF MYTH

Among the most powerful myths that sustain the powerlessness and low valuing of people with medical conditions is the belief that “nothing can be done” about disability. This myth deserves careful scrutiny because it is too central to the issue — and because it is on the verge of giving way.

On the one hand, everyone grants that “much can be done about disability.” Billions of dollars are spent researching prevention and cure of undesirable medical conditions. Besides, disability is clearly and intensely related to class, race, gender, sexual orientation, degree of fatness, age, and other factors that are targets of oppression. These factors greatly influence who is more likely to get sick or injured in the first place; who gets better or worse medical care; who is more likely to be the victim of medical experimentation; whose diseases receive research money; and so on. So, to do something about these oppressions is to do something about disability.

But beyond that, who develops a medical condition is also a matter of chance — a fact disputed by those who believe that god punishes the wicked or that, invariably, we create our own reality. One child in a family is born with Down's Syndrome or with Sickle Cell; the rest are not. One teenager on a high school trip dives into the shallow part of the lake and becomes paralyzed. One middle-aged friend

develops Multiple Sclerosis. This element of chance has helped to obscure the political nature of *all* disability.

A further source of mystification is that, with most oppressions other than disability, most people see that the only problem is the oppression itself. The problem with being Jewish is not Jewishness, it is anti-Semitism. Being a woman in the world would not be a problem apart from sexism. But a severe medical condition appears to be in itself very bad luck. In the world as it is right now, any normally sensitive person realizes that the event of severe disability is catastrophic for the person involved and for those who love and must care for that person.

But the situation of disabled people can be vastly improved even when their medical conditions can't be. Often in fact nothing more can — or should — be done than has been done to cure a particular person's medical condition. That is the point when the status quo discourages our asking several large questions, specifically: How has the quality of life become worse? What systems and what individuals profit from this poor quality? What can be changed, and how? To raise these questions, answer them and take action attacks the core of a system geared to mega-profits.

Maybe this potential threat to exploitative economics explains why William F. Buckley spent an entire editorial reiterating the clearly apparent fact that crossing the ocean

in a computer-equipped sailboat would not make a blind sailor see (and was therefore by implication an absurd endeavor). Buckley didn't concede that a blind person with a cane is better off than one without any tool for mobility; that a blind person with a computer that generates print into voice is better off than one who has no way to read; nor the implications of this train of thought.

The system depends on our remaining with the view that nothing can be done about disability and that people who can't be cured must adjust to a life that is less free, less secure, less dignified, and less fun than an able-bodied life. This tradition has caused many disability rights activists to become angry at the concept of "cure" and at the same time at the concept of "accepting one's disability." Instead, they want solutions that enable life with medical conditions to be as good as life without these conditions — a radical concept on which an economy based on exploitation can't survive.

MOVING ON FROM HERE

For people with medical conditions to begin to see disability as a human-made construct, a manipulation on the part of an economic system, is a basis for new hope.

But it's a profound threat, too, because the fitting response to that understanding is a deep, strong anger — not at God, the cosmos or self, but at our physical and social environment and the people who perpetuate that environment through their attitudes and their policies.

And people who are disabled often cannot afford to express anger. Their lack of power makes them dependent moment-to-moment for their most basic needs: getting food from the refrigerator into their mouths, going to the bathroom, having access to essential information that is at any given moment being written or spoken.

To express anger toward someone who in ten minutes is going to be needed to help you use the bathroom is dangerous, emotionally and physically.

The stakes are, in fact, very high. A person repeatedly prevented from expressing anger learns over time to stop even feeling the anger — or any strong emotion. At some point, the views which perpetuate the oppressive situation take up firm residence in the oppressed person's own head in order to complete the task.

To fight against ableism involves very real dangers to people with disabilities. And for both disabled and non-disabled people it requires a new and very different way of

seeing, thinking, feeling, and talking about disability, acting in new ways, and making new structures.

For non-disabled people, a political view of disability can begin to remove a burden of guilt or helpless sadness as they confront disabled people. The panic, revulsion, nervousness or embarrassment that many non-disabled people feel when confronting disability are not character flaws — they are socialized feelings nurtured by systems that would stand to lose if people with medical conditions were considered as valuable as anyone else.

It is to our advantage to build an environment where the economic structures, the physical structures, the technology, the vocabulary for giving, receiving and negotiating major help create an environment where people with medical conditions can be happy and powerful, and no one needs to be afraid of illness, accident or aging.

The implications for Radical Psychiatry are deep and wide. First, Radical Psychiatry theory has provided an impetus for tracking down political roots of disability oppression: the very simple formulation that almost all bad feelings result from internalized or external oppression motivates a search from confused pain to clear reasons.

Disability issues permeate the work of healing souls:

- ◆ A person in group is doing body work. How does a psychiatrist heal the Pig damage not only of how bodies are “supposed to” look, but how bodies are “supposed to” function?
- ◆ A woman in group is discussing her upcoming amniocentesis, with the plan of keeping a medically “normal” fetus and aborting a medically different one. How is the group's response to this similar to or different from a plan to keep a male fetus and abort a female one?
- ◆ A household comes for a Mediation, and one of the members has a chronic debilitating illness. What are the things the Mediator needs to listen for and the questions s/he needs to ask?

The concepts and tools Radical Psychiatry already uses are well-suited to fight disability oppression. For instance, facing disability issues nationally and interpersonally calls for the most focused attention to distinctions between real scarcity and perceived or manipulated scarcity. Disability issues call for great amount of permission and protection as people express feelings and identify Pigs; they often call for a wider and deeper analysis of the Rescue Triangle

than is commonly conceived; and they provide an opportunity for highly creative and meaningful approaches to cooperation.

CHAPTER TWENTY: COMBATING RACISM

Beth Roy

Racism will not be cured by Radical Psychiatry. Its roots lie in the structure of our society. Its face is reflected in a thousand ways in the course of daily life in America.

Radical Psychiatry can, however, make a contribution to the efforts of people of conscience to recognize our own racism and to do something about it. The ideas and methods we propose here are tools for working together to overcome the attitudes and habits which divide, and thereby weaken, us.

RACISM AS PIG

Racism is a structure of inequality which acts to deny certain groups of people their rights and access to opportunity. As a political institution, racism relies on the internalization of certain attitudes. In other words, people must believe that the members of the group which is discriminated against share certain characteristics, simply by virtue of their identity in that group. Black people are

lazy, women are weak, Asians work unthinkingly and obediently, Latinos are shifty, Jews are greedy: all are generalizations, or stereotypes, based on little or no data. As a result of these stereotypes, individual members of the group become invisible; on first meeting, they are viewed through the prism of these internalized generalizations, rather than on their own merits.

Racist attitudes, then, are Pig (see Chapter 5), according to Radical Psychiatry's definition (Pig = Internalized Oppression). Let me quickly make the distinction between racist *attitudes* and racial *oppression*. The latter is a set of actions taken on the basis of racist attitudes to deny power to the discriminated-against group. Such actions often occur, despite the good, non-racist intentions of the person taking them.

Bob Blauner,¹¹ for example, has detailed the ways in which people of color are disadvantaged at the University, despite the expressed (and sincere) intention of progressive faculty members to challenge racism. The underlying assumptions of the University (that scholarly work is constituted in a particular way, that academic standards must be maintained, that those standards rest on a particular culturally-determined set of beliefs, etc.) work against the

¹¹ Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (Harper & Row, New York, 1971).

success of people who hold different cultural values, and who have been traditionally excluded from the institutions which promote those of the University. This form of institutional racism (that which operates independently of the attitudes of the perpetrators, and so would have a strong tendency to continue even if prejudice were to disappear) is common among progressive groups.

In another example, a progressive theater company may wish to include more actors of color, but cannot find good scripts with parts for them and cannot bring themselves to consider radically unconventional casting (women in men's roles, people of color in roles which are clearly intended for white people, and so on.)

In Radical Psychiatry, we have long grappled with the contradictions of our position, because it tends to exclude many people with whom we would wish to be allied. For instance, we have resisted becoming credentialed, for theoretical and political reasons (credentialing standards select for a kind of therapy to which we are explicitly opposed). Yet to be uncredentialed means that we cannot work in agencies which pay (relatively) decent salaries. We are therefore dependent on private practices, and must charge fees. We try to keep those fees low and flexible, but nonetheless they exclude many people — many people of color, for example — who cannot afford them. Moreover, potential Radical Psychiatrists must be willing to take a

very large risk, to work extra hard against substantial odds to support themselves during the slow years of building a practice. The success of that endeavor is even more problematic when practitioners seek to work with communities (such as working class people and people of color) who do not tend to seek out private therapy. Over the years, more and more Radical Psychiatrists have opted to get degrees and licenses, and to work inside mainstream institutions, bringing with them their radical predispositions. The effect has been productive, but has raised new problems. There are no perfect solutions to these contradictions. But if we decide that we are truly intent on working together in interracial groups, we must be willing to make institutional changes that may challenge us deeply.

We are still, however, left with the problem of our internalized oppression. Once we think of racist attitudes as the Pig, we can begin to say some things about how it works, and how to fight it. First of all, racist attitudes are always wrong. It may be true that the Pig attaches to some grain of truth. It may, for instance, be true that a given black teenager is less motivated to work for good grades in school than is his white, affluent classmate. The black youth may have figured out that his chances of getting a job are so small, even if he excels in school, that they are not worth taking. He may be resentful and rebellious as a result. None of this behavior, however, proves the racist

Pig about him, that he is lazy and shiftless. That is a generalization. It stands outside of time and place (When and where is he lazy? Is he lazy when repairing his motorcycle? Is he shiftless when writing and performing popular music?)

The second characteristic of the Pig which is useful in the fight against racist attitudes is that the Pig can be changed. The Pig is an idea which has been learned. Consequently, it can be unlearned and replaced with ideas that are more accurate and truthful. Some ways of changing Pig ideas in a problem-solving setting are outlined in Chapter 5. I suggest below some strategies specific to a discussion of racism in other contexts.

Finally, to say that racist attitudes are Pig is to say that they come from a social milieu by which we all are influenced. Racist notions surround us: We see mostly white actors on television, unless we are watching a "Black piece." White is "normal," Black is "exceptional." Asian women models are very often dressed in lacy underwear or girlish dresses. Many citizens of big American cities never see a person of Chinese origins outside a laundry or a restaurant.

To recognize our own racist Pig, then, is not to confess original sin. It is very important to be able to be self-critical without self-blame. The majority of people in our

society are immune neither from being stereotyped, nor from stereotyping others. I am a middle-aged woman. Sometimes, when I meet a person for the first time, I can read in his eyes his preconceptions about me: square, comfortable but not sexy, sweet but not interesting. On the other hand, I was recently part of a group that was challenged by a Japanese-American woman: Did we not assume she was shy and withdrawn? I found, to my consternation, that I did indeed. It was an assumption that proved entirely wrong, and that I have not since repeated.

Guilt and shame about racist ideas are not helpful. They lead to silence, and from there to an impregnable stronghold of secrecy. When unheard and unchallenged, the Pig festers. Only when it is out in the open can it be examined and undone.

Guilt and shame, however, are closely associated with pain and dismay about the racist state of our world. To combat the former is a step toward healing the latter. It is in the interest of all of us to do this work, for we all are affected in some way by a divided society, riven by racial (as well as other) injustices.

FIGHTING RACIST ATTITUDES

The fight against racist Pig can most sincerely be undertaken in the context of racially mixed groups. That does not mean that we cannot (or should not) work on our racism, or other -isms, at other times and places. But nothing motivates like necessity, and it becomes essential to fight stereotypes when working cooperatively with people affected by them.

People who have been oppressed by stereotypes, however, are frequently unwilling to struggle very hard with those who hold them. People of color, women, older people, gays, lesbians, and disabled people are often weary of warding off others' prejudices. Too often, particularly in groups of progressive people, criticism about racism is met with well-meaning discounts: "No, no, I didn't mean that; some of my best friends..." Or criticism is seen as accusation: "How can you think that about *me*? Others, maybe, but not me!" Not surprisingly, people who have been wounded by discount may eventually resort to attack. Criticism may turn ugly, for on its back are riding huge monsters of resentment and frustration.

Here, then, are four suggestions of ways to fight racist notions:

1. Listen very carefully to criticism from a discriminated-against person.

Even if it is badly delivered, it always contains some grain of truth. It may be mistaken in detail or in its speculation about intent, but the complaint is at its core useful and correct.

Think of criticism of this nature as paranoia, in the Radical Psychiatry sense (see Chapter 8). Like paranoia, such criticism always has a kernel of truth. Be sure you have understood that kernel before you act on any impulse to excuse or defend yourself. It will be much easier to take this unguarded posture in the face of criticisms if you remember that you are not a bad person for holding some mistaken belief. Such attitudes are inevitable, given the racism in our culture, and you are to be commended for working hard to discover them and to change.

2. The person giving criticism also shares some responsibility.

People who have suffered racism, sexism, or any other -ism, are not under any theoretical obligation to struggle with such attitudes when confronted by them. However, when people have come together in a cooperative group for some shared purpose, the affected person stands to gain

direct and personal advantages by giving criticism. It may be wise for her to do a minimum of work. If others in the group are not willing to work hard, harder than she does, to challenge stereotypes, then she should complain only about that. Criticism is gold, and the giver should be sure she is getting back equal coin.

But given a decision that the people on the receiving end are well-intentioned, open to dialogue and willing to work hard, the affected person will get better results if she gives her criticism skillfully. For example, to say that someone is racist (sexist, homophobic, etc.) is to invite discount. Generalizations are not sufficiently helpful, and they invite guilt and defensiveness. Look instead for the concrete: what did the person say or do that made you think she was racist? It is very different to say, "I became worried about racism when you kept interrupting to provide me with the next word while I was speaking just now. My paranoia is that you think I am not sufficiently articulate to say what I mean because I am Black."

In most settings where people share a progressive social agenda, racism may take forms that are subtle and hard to identify, making the task of both the giver and receiver of criticism hard. People will already have worked to overcome more overt forms, because they sincerely desire to be non-racist. But racism can be involved in more complex transactions. Rescue, for instance, can be a carrier

of unhelpful attitudes (see Chapter 7), as the example above suggests. We once realized after the fact that we had urged a lesbian trainee to start leading groups too quickly, and too alone, making an exception to our usual practice in an effort to promote her career. It was a Rescue, and she suffered for it, because she was left out on a limb with insufficient back-up.

3. Once the issue of racism has arisen in a group, it is a very useful technique for those of the dominant group to meet without the affected person(s) present to work on the Pig.

In our Collective, for instance, a long-time colleague who was a gay man insisted we meet without him to fight our homophobia. We protested that, after so many years of working together and sharing frank dialogue, we didn't need to. We knew from old experience, however, that our colleague deserved to be taken seriously, and that in fact we were very likely to benefit from doing so. We met, and for some time made little progress. Then someone asked how we would feel if our sons were gay. The question would probably not have been raised if our gay colleague had been present; it certainly would not have been answered so fully and, as it turned out, usefully. Here was a place we did indeed need to confront our homophobia, and did through heartfelt and honest discussion.

4. When conflicts arise, any person in a minority should have sufficient support.

In the ideal, nobody would ever be a minority of one, or even a minority at all, in a group. But it does commonly happen that people of color, or gay people, or disabled people, or so on, find themselves in the position of being outnumbered by people from a category who are dominant in the culture. Conflicts are bound to arise, just as they might for any other member of the group. When they do, the minority person should have easy access to an advocate: someone to stand by her side, help to support and communicate her position to the group at large, give her encouragement and backing when she feels outnumbered, and so on. Sometimes, an ongoing member of the group can be asked to take the advocacy role by the person affected. He can rise out of his position as a “player” and look at the situation from the point of view of his comrade. Sometimes, however, there is nobody in the group sufficiently trusted by the person in a minority. In that case, she should be encouraged to bring an advocate from outside, a person she trusts and who, at the same time, will be careful to avoid further polarizing the conflict.

To have a method for working on racism can be an enormous relief. None of us wants to be thinking unfair and prejudicial thoughts about our comrades, nor to be acting unwittingly in ways which are oppressive. Most of us do not wish to benefit from racism, and we feel deep pain about the ways in which most of us do. That contradiction, that we do in fact gain from the deprivation of others, whether we be white, male, straight, upper class or able-bodied, while at the same time we deplore these inequalities, is one we must confront whenever possible. We cannot singlehandedly eliminate -isms, but we can expose and correct stereotypic attitudes wherever we find them among ourselves. And in the process we can treat each other with the respect and kindness that is deserved when people of good conscience undertake hard and pioneering work, both in the world and on our attitudes, together.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE:

PUBLIC AGENCIES, MINORITY CLIENTS

Shelby Morgan

For the past seven years, my experience as a Radical Psychiatrist has been working primarily with minority clients through public agencies. My employment has included a half-way house in San Francisco; a Community Mental Health Center in Richmond, California; and a Youth Services Agency in Baltimore, Maryland. In the latter two locations, my “referred clients” have been children and adolescents, but the focus of therapy was with the entire family.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which the theory and practice of Radical Psychiatry have been applicable to my work setting and client population.

In thinking about the differences in working in the Public Sector with minority clients, I realize that many of the same issues emerge as do in any therapist/client relationship: for example, trust, motivation, and communication. However, due to some of the specific characteristics and circumstances of work within agency settings, these issues become intensified.

Frequently, my clients are referred by another party such as a spouse, parent, school, or other agency like Juvenile Services. As a result, they are often ambivalent (at best) about their involvement in counseling. In addition, they may see the agency as part of an oppressive system at large, based on a history of poor treatment at other “helping” agencies such as hospitals or Social Services. Furthermore, poor communities frequently view mental health agencies as a coercive institution. Indeed, the ability of psychiatrists to either drug or incarcerate individuals who are seen as “acting out” lends a great deal of reality to this perspective.

Another key factor affecting treatment is the client's poverty and class status. This has many repercussions and implications. The client will often be focused on survival issues like employment, housing, and transportation. Not only the content of therapy but also the client's ability to keep appointments, to follow through on assignments such as meetings with teachers, etc., will be affected. In other words, the client's involvement in counseling may suffer. Another result of poverty is the feeling of powerlessness regarding one's ability to change either oneself, the family system, or other relevant institutions. For example, a single mother may have difficulty in spending more time with her children because she has to work two jobs. Similarly, she may have problems being involved in the school, or in having a say about how her child is being treated at school.

Further, many possible issues emerge in a biracial client/therapist relationship. Although these vary depending on the individuals and their background, three common problems are *language*, *class*, and *style of communicating* (i.e., verbal vs. non-verbal communication). In my own experience, these issues arise in interactions between a professional, white woman and a largely Afro-American clientele.

Since race and class are so intimately connected in this society, many of the aforementioned remarks about class are relevant also to race. For example, there is a lack of resources within the Black community due to systematic institutionalized racism. In addition, the Afro-American client has been a victim of individualized racism and chauvinism, the latter being the more subtle differentiated treatment that comes from well-intentioned white people most often in the form of patronizing and/or Rescue. To quote a Black female therapist friend: “The problem with most white therapists is either assuming you know everything or assuming the client can do very little, thus having lowered expectations.” Other assumptions and generalizations are made due to the therapist's lack of exposure to the Afro-American culture.

The purpose of this paper is not to address each of these problems specifically — which would be an immense and complex task — but rather to show how Radical Psychiatry has helped me deal with some of the consequences of these contradictions, which, I repeat, surface in the age-old therapeutic issues of trust, motivation, and content of “treatment.”

TWO HISTORIES

Larry, a thirteen-year-old black male, was brought to the clinic by his mother due to school failure. He had a long history of school problems, barely passing each year, due to being “playful and unproductive” in class. According to his mother, Larry tested well above average. He had been in therapy four years ago but with little progress. His father was reportedly too disgusted to come to sessions. His younger sister was doing well in school.

It became clear from this first session that the mother, Lena, and reportedly the father, James, were very angry and judgmental towards Larry. She repeatedly called him lazy and ornery, while maintaining her demand that he “just be successful.” Larry was very quiet and made no effort to defend himself. He did communicate clearly that he had no desire to be in counseling, but felt coerced by his mother to attend.

I saw the mother's rigid expectations and her lack of nurturing as a significant part of the problem made more severe by the apparently withdrawn attitude of the father. My guess was that Larry's school failure was his end of the power struggle — while overtly being a “good boy” at home, he played his script of being a “bad boy” in the area in which his parents were most invested — his being “successful”. At the same time, his behavior could be seen as a reflection of the extent to which he believed or colluded with his parent's Pigs about him. That he felt bad about himself could be surmised from his isolation from his peers, his body posture, and his overall depressed demeanor.

Because Larry seemed in many ways overpowered by his parents’ negativity and because the school year was coming to an end, I decided to meet with Larry individually to determine his goals around school. I first attempted to empower Larry by asking him what he wanted for himself. In an effort to separate myself from the power struggle between him and his parents, I was clear about being non-critical and nonjudgmental about his attitude towards school. He then admitted that he wanted to pass. We had thereby made a contract.

Larry's first work on his contract was to blame his teachers for the problem. I validated his perceptions and feelings by saying that teachers can over-generalize and pick on one person. However, I did not want to Rescue him by seeing him totally as a Victim. His Pigs told him that he was powerless to do anything about his situation, and that he was a bad kid anyway. Furthermore, some part of him was Persecuting his parents. My job was not to collude with his Pigs but rather to show him some other choices. I thereby told him that he could choose to fail, choose to ignore that there was a problem and thereby indirectly choose to fail, or choose to pass. He took responsibility for his behavior by admitting that he had been indirectly deciding to fail. I then gave him the task of finding out what specifically he need to do in order to pass. He then reaffirmed his commitment to his contract based on complete information about the situation. He was thereby learning the problem-solving skills of defining the problem and a course of action to solve it. In the following session, he developed a specific plan around homework, tutoring, etc. The final two sessions simply concerned follow-through. He did pass the year.

In the meantime, sessions with his parents revealed a general lack of nurturing in the family as evidenced by James and Lena's critical stance towards one another as well as towards Larry. In order to break this pattern, I sent them to a parents' group at the Center which focused on the difference between criticism and nurturing support. At the same time, I had to remain sensitive to the class issue: that their lack of educational advantages and their successful yet difficult effort to rise above the poverty level gave intensity to their desire for Larry to be more, to do better. I was aware that many Black families stress education for just these reasons. Therefore, I did much validation of their needs and desires while suggesting that Larry perceived their support as pressure. Furthermore, I emphasized their

right to have demands by helping them negotiate contracts with Larry around household chores. Larry, in the meantime, enrolled in our summer camp program which increased his involvement with his peers.

As James's involvement in counseling waxed and waned, Lena attended some individual sessions where she vented intense anger towards both her husband and her son. While validating her feelings, I also noted that she did not express feelings of being hurt. She then talked about an early decision to be invulnerable to men in reaction to her mother's constant humiliation by her father. As we discussed the differences in their situations, she was able to express other feelings and needs of her husband. He responded by admitting his competitive struggle with her. The last few sessions focused on expressing strokes, resentments, and paranoias.

Angela, a sixteen year old Black female was brought to the clinic by her mother, Mary, for truancy. Although Angela had various physical complaints, her doctor could not substantiate them. Mary, who did all the talking during the session, admitted that she enjoyed Angela's company during the day. Mary also stated that she, Mary, had left her husband soon after Angela's birth: "It was like she was all I really wanted."

My assessment was that Mary's needs were being partially met by Angela's school problem. I therefore met with them individually, and helped Mary develop outside interests and other support systems. She was quick to admit her role in the family process and to take my "permission" to have wants and needs beyond Angela. She took a part-time job and began going back to church.

Not being nearly as open and verbal as Mary, Angela was more difficult. My questions regarding her needs and desires were met with repeated "I don't know(s)." On a hunch, I took her to the library to introduce her to Judith Blume novels. She became very involved in them, and willing and able to communicate her reactions to the novels' characters. I then gave her "homework" to daydream about a perfect school setting. This not only engaged her, and moved her to a more active role, but also dealt with her needs and desires. She was able to say that she wanted to finish school; she was making a contract to do her 50%.

In the following sessions, she revealed her real problem with school; she was terrified when people stared at her, which she claimed happened frequently. I validated her perception, noting that she was extremely pretty which was probably the cause of the attention. This validation increased her trust in me. She was then able to reveal the extent of her fear of crowds, of people. As she responded specifically to my questions, she acknowledged her belief that she was crazy, that her mother had been hospitalized for a nervous breakdown, and that she had "inherited" this tendency. As a result, she constantly watched her shadow to monitor her movements and behavior. I explained the concept of Pigs. She began to understand that she had internalized a fear rather than a disease. We met together with her mother who explained the circumstances of her "nervous breakdown" which I reframed as an understandable reaction to a stressful time in her life.

Individual sessions with Angela continued, and we obtained more information on how and when her Pig worked. She learned to talk to her Pig, to make it go away. Simultaneously, we found a different school for her to attend on a half day schedule. We also built her confidence in her own movements through dance therapy. Her school attendance and her grades remained good. Our sessions ended after a month or so of additional counseling, at her request, about boys and sex.

RADICAL PSYCHIATRY IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC AGENCIES

I have obviously chosen success stories. What about the times when counseling was to no avail? And to what extent were any successes based on Radical Psychiatry?

In his book about cross-cultural counseling, Derrall Sue discusses several common barriers to effective counseling in a biracial context: a belief in the value of insight, the desirability of self-disclosure, the ambiguous and unstructured aspect of counseling, the definition of mental health, and the rational verbal model of counseling. The latter aspect, the rational verbal mode, calls for creativity on the part of the Radical Psychiatrist, it being a common

criticism that we are in fact too cerebral. More will be said about this later. The other potential problems listed I believe are support and explanation for the applicability of Radical Psychiatry theory and techniques in a cross-cultural setting. Its use of contracts as well as its problem-solving orientation provide definition and structure. Its behavioral aspect with its focus on action, on making concrete changes, de-emphasizes the value of insight. Our analysis of power which includes a critique of traditional therapeutic theory and practice, particularly that of the definition of mental illness, speaks to the restricting labels and ideas about mental health. Our analysis of power also provides for the potential for self-disclosure when the client so desires or when the therapist deems it relevant to the session. Furthermore, our analysis and awareness of class issues are an important and necessary tool for decreasing the potential distance that may occur when such a difference exists between the therapist and client. As important as these qualities may be, I have found in my experience that the three principles or tools of Radical Psychiatry that have been most useful are those of *validation* (which is rooted in our analysis of power) *Rescue Triangle*, and *Pig*.

When Larry came unwillingly to therapy, he had very good reasons for his “resistance.” His parents and his school had decided that he was ornery. He had learned that those who had power over him were apt to be critical or, even worse, to try to force him into behavior that was not compatible with his perspective. So here he was at the hands of yet another adult in another institution who would be blaming him for his predicament. Similarly his father was not interested in another woman who didn't understand his needs telling him how to raise his son. And most likely my being white lent grounds to his suspicion that he would not be properly heard. While there was no overt indication from Lena that she was not open to counseling, chances are that she would not have discussed her own history or revealed the depth of her anger had she not already experienced empathy from me. Even more dramatically, in the case of Angela, her openness about her own “crazy Pigs” came with the certainty that I could and would understand. But are we not discussing the issue of trust and empathy? If so, what claim does Radical Psychiatry have to these ideas? I believe its claim is profound. Radical Psychiatry politicizes the concept of trust through its analysis of power. And validation is the concrete practice which grew out of that analysis. It makes explicit the belief that the client knows what she is perceiving. It is taking the client at her word. It is saying to the client in its most profound sense that she is OK. All of which flies in the face of the traditional one-up view that the therapist knows better than the client what she is about and what is good for her. And I maintain that this is particularly important for minorities and the poor who are daily having their needs discounted, their abilities undermined, their power robbed from them.

But there is a necessary dialectic to this concept of validation which lies in the use of the Rescue Triangle. When I gave a presentation on Radical Psychiatry to my fellow staff members at Youth Services, all of whom are Afro-American, I was struck by their extremely enthusiastic response to it. Their explanation: the Rescue Triangle enables a therapist to take seriously the reality of the clients without seeing them as helpless Victims. Going back to my friend's complaint about white therapists having lowered expectations, the Rescue Triangle is a way of understanding oppression without the frequent, accompanying, patronizing behavior. To summarize my coworkers' attitude towards their clients; “Yes, you have had a rotten time, things are not fair, and what are we going to do about it?” When Angela was unable (whether out of lack of skill or trust) to articulate her own needs and fears, I could have felt bad for her, and then Rescued her (done more than 50% of the work) by continuing to ask probing questions in order to get her to feel comfortable. Even more likely, I could have Persecuted her by deciding she was yet another rebellious teenager, or perhaps even a little crazy. Instead, I attempted a new approach to involve her.

The last principle or tool I want to discuss is that of Pig. These learned internalized negative messages play a critical role in influencing our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Because these messages are an incomplete, distorted, or generalized interpretation of reality, yet at the same time, often a reflection of the dominant society's values, they can be devastating, even deadly, to individuals and groups, especially when that group is exploited and therefore the target of racial and class stereotypes. Thus, the common image of urban black youth as drug-ridden and criminal becomes internalized as “I am bad, that's just how it is, there's nothing to be done about it.” The consequent behavior fulfills this script. By the time a teen is referred to counseling, there is ample evidence to support the view of the parents, teachers, and society. An analysis of Pig prevents the therapist from sharing this opinion. That is, we can understand that his learned negative self messages are affecting his behavior. And after learning the content of those messages, we can help the client develop strategies to defeat the negative messages and replace them with positive

messages and behavior. This is of course a simplified version of that process. It is explained in detail in the chapter on Pig. Suffice it to say here that having an analysis of Pig enables one to see one's negative self-defeating behavior as only part of one's repertoire of behavior (coming from the parent ego state). More importantly, it can be changed, relearned. Thus I can feel hopeful. Furthermore I can give the client direct, honest feedback in the knowledge that his behavior is a reflection of distorted views rather than innate enduring qualities. So that even when counseling doesn't last long enough to include the teaching of this concept, as in the case of Larry, I can steer him in the direction of alternative choices of behavior. My confidence in his ability and my nonjudgmental non-Piggy assessment of his current behavior increases the chances of his considering these alternatives. However, the actual incorporation of this concept enables a client to develop ongoing strategies for defeating its occurrence in different situations and forms. Thus Angela was able to recognize her Pig as the source of her fear. She came to understand how and when it worked. She was therefore able to develop direct techniques for fighting it.

LIMITATIONS OF THE APPROACH

Unfortunately, the limitations of doing Radical Psychiatry in a Public Agency are fairly profound. At the core of our theory and practice is group therapy. Within this mode, it becomes possible to have a support system to overcome isolation which we believe is a critical factor in feeling bad. Furthermore, group is usually necessary in order to be able to change one's Pig messages. Many supportive choices, analyses, and strategies are qualitatively more effective than a single voice (that of the therapist). Especially when the therapist comes from such a different background, the presence of a group of peers can make a critical difference. However, due to the same survival issues mentioned previously, the maintenance of a group in a Public Agency is very difficult. In addition, there is often a reluctance to be open in a group which may likely consist of one's neighbors and friends-of-friends.

Another frequent problem of Radical Psychiatry (at least in my practice of it) is a tendency to be overly structured and didactic. Due to the immediacy of their problems, people are sometimes reluctant to "be taught" ideas and tools. Furthermore, many poor and minorities are not as comfortable with a teaching mode having had less experience in a classroom. However, these are definitely problems which can be overcome, given a little creativity on the part of the therapist. It is true, however, that certain tools such as the regular or even semi-regular exchange of resentments and paranoid among family members require a certain amount of stability within the family, such as a scheduled time when all members are present. Similarly, I have not had a stable group for a sufficient time for members to trust enough to exchange resentment or, for that matter, to do very personal problem solving. My groups within agencies and within a public school setting in Baltimore have remained more issue- or topic- or situation-oriented, such as: "What do you do when a guy wants to have sex on a first date; how would you deal with that situation?" However, it's not that I believe a personal problem-solving group is impossible. Rather, it is rendered more difficult by factors previously mentioned, and by the politics and practicalities of an agency setting.

Considering the above, it is obvious, I think, that the recruitment and training of Third World Radical Psychiatrists is critical to the development of our theory and practice. In light of this well-known fact we should examine the reasons for our current scarcity and develop a program to remedy the situation.