

HANDOUTS

Burn-Out Prevention

Ethical and Risk Management Issues for Clinicians

presented by

Dr. David Treadway

AGENDA

Thursday, June 16, 2005

8:15a.m. Registration (continental breakfast)
9:00 ***Understanding Burn-Out***
The nature of therapy and the inherent risks and stresses
Causes of burn-out in one's professional and personal life
10:20 Break (coffee & tea)
10:35 ***Self-Assessment Tools***
Evaluating your risk for burn-out
Your methods for maintaining professional well-being
Noon Lunch (on your own)
1:30 ***Professional and Personal Lives***
How being therapists can **stimulate** personal development
How being therapists can **stunt** our personal development
The overlap of our respective caretaking roles
2:45 Break (snack, soda, coffee & tea)
3:00 ***Therapist Use of Self***
Transference
Boundaries
Creative uses of self-disclosure
Ethical practices
4:30 Adjournment (pick up one day certificates)

Friday, June 17, 2005

8:15a.m. Registration (continental breakfast)
9:00 ***Intimacy of Therapy***
Source of healing and risk
Erotic transference and boundary violations
Discussion of assigned story
10:20 Break (coffee & tea)
10:35 ***Pathways to Spiritual Centeredness***
Therapeutic uses of spirituality
For our clients and ourselves
Noon Lunch (on your own)
1:15 ***Therapist Survival Kit***
Developing one's own self-care program
In one's practice and life at home
7 step approach
2:30 Break (snack, soda, coffee & tea)
2:45 ***Enhance Authenticity and Joy***
How to enrich your professional & personal life
How to follow through with life changes
4:15 Adjournment (pick up certificates)

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Breathing in, I calm my body

Breathing out, I smile

Dwelling in the present moment,

I know this is a wonderful moment

Thict Nat Hanh

Burn-Out Prevention Kit

Six Steps to follow

- Don't go it alone
- Maintain Beginner's Mind
- Prioritize carefully
- Stop for a refill
- Therapist, heal thyself
- You're not it

MARIANNE, A GIFTED, DEDICATED CLINICIAN I've known for 15 years, was sitting in front of me with tears streaming down her face. I'd been her supervisor, colleague and, in

recent years, good friend. Now, we were meeting to go over a messy case we were sharing. I'd never seen her cry before. ■ "I just can't do it anymore," she said, "I don't know why. It isn't just my crazy borderline clients. It's all of them. I'm just all dried up. I feel like I'm becoming a wizened old crone. At the end of the day, all I want to do is sit in front of the tube, sip some chardonnay and never answer the phone again. And every therapist I know is saying the same stuff. They complain about managed care and all the competition, but I don't think that's it. All I know is that I used to love being a therapist; sometimes even more than being a mother. It was certainly easier. But now I just feel spent. I'm ashamed to say this, but I just don't care in the same way anymore."

A THERAPIST'S

GUIDE TO

SURVIVING

BURNOUT

by DAVID TREADWAY

STORM

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES ENDICOTT



She paused and then flashed a wry smile at me and said, "Well, you're the burnout guru. How do you keep the spark alive?"

I chuckled ruefully. She knows I've been traveling around the country giving workshops called "Keeping the Spark Alive." I was tempted to give her my standard pep talk about self-care, but I just couldn't. The truth slipped out.

"I don't know, Marianne. Sometimes, I feel the same way you do. If I wasn't giving those workshops, I'd have to be going to them."

We both laughed and

I said, "Burnout is like an offshore

gale that just won't quit.

Usually, what gets you into the worst trouble in a storm is getting worn down so much by the fear and the lack of sleep that your judgment goes. That's when you take dumb chances."

"Well, I hope you don't think it's dumb to quit my group practice," Marianne interrupted. "All we ever do is sit around talking about marketing and money. If I wanted to be a businesswoman I'd have gotten an M.B.A." I understood all too well what Marianne was describing. Our profession is undergoing enormous, stressful change, and I've been confronting my own burnout for a while now. A few months ago, I dragged out of my office at 8 p.m. feeling like a used tissue after 10 hours of seeing clients. My 12-year-old son greeted me with a smile and said, "Hey, Dad, how about some Dungeons and Dragons?"

"Look, Sam, I just got out of my god-damn office," I snarled, "I can't play D&D. I'm beat. I've had it." His face whitened and his eyes filled with tears. He whispered, "I'm sorry, Dad. Did you have a bad day with your clients?" His words slapped me. I felt like ripping my face off.

That's when I fully acknowledged the obvious: I was in the abyss of the burnout that I've been cheerfully teaching others how to manage. I felt like such a fraud. Okay, teacher, let's see you practice what you preach.

Throughout our careers, we all have times when we become so reactive to the stress of our clinical work that we become exhausted, anxious and agitat-



old-fashioned general practitioner medicines, assist at births a

ed. Burnout is an occupational hazard. In the 26 years I've been practicing, there have been plenty of times that I've hit the proverbial wall the way Marianne had, but what I've experienced recently seems harsher to me. And as I travel across the country, the frustration and vulnerability that I see among other therapists seems qualitatively different as well. More and more people are talking about cutting back, taking sabbaticals or opening a bed and breakfast in Vermont. Our profession seems to have hit some serious heavy weather.

Go to any national conference and take a look around. Or simply take a closer look in the mirror. Many of us have been practicing for 20-plus years. We are sagging boomers with falling

arches, graying hair, sore backs and, most important, tired hearts. Some of us are experiencing profound compassion fatigue. We've discovered that the well-spring of empathy isn't infinite.

Part of getting older and, perhaps, wiser is becoming more aware of the limits of possibility in our lives and in the lives of our clients. Many of us were drawn to the work because our sense of self-worth was defined by our ability to care for others. At the beginning of our careers, most of us would have qualified for that much-maligned diagnosis of codependency. Taking care of others was our own pathway to healing.

Now, after years of practice, we have seen plenty of glorious new therapeutic miracle techniques come and go. We've

utifully learned them, tried them on
rself, practiced them on our clients.
o often, we've seen the appearance of
amatic change fade. Does anyone do
adoxical injunctions anymore?

Once I fancied myself as skillful as a
art surgeon. Now, as the seasons pass
my own life and in the lives of my
ents, I see that I'm more of an old-
shioned general practitioner. I make
y rounds, dispense my limited reper-
ire of medicines and sage advice, assist
births and sit by the bedside of the
dying. It's good work. But as I now
occasionally treat a third generation
of clients from the same family, I no
longer see myself as a rescuer, mir-
acle worker or surgeon.

Another shock of reality that
therapists undergo as the years
pass is a more acute awareness of
life's arc. Confronting our mor-
ality and diminishing physical capaci-
is as important developmentally as

ate school or old hands at the trade, we
are all confronted with the profoundly
destabilizing effect that managed care
has had on our profession. We are feel-
ing a loss of autonomy, economic
security and therapeutic integrity. Our
society has decided to reduce health
care costs by cutting back on the care of
the mentally ill and the walking wound-
ed. More than ever before, we are com-
peting against one another in a shrink-
ing marketplace. Like the auto industry
in the 1980s, we are being downsized.
Our sense of common mission and
mutual support as a professional com-
munity has been shredded by our grow-
ing fear that many of us will be driven
from the field. The whispered words in
conference corridors aren't about diffi-
cult cases anymore, but about managed
care panels; not about treatment plans,
but referral sources.

And as the profession's economic base
has eroded, most of us are working

been swept aside, and we are forced to
look repeatedly at the cruel truth that
serious abuse is not an uncommon event
in children's lives. Gone are Ozzie and
Harriet, as we are increasingly confront-
ed with episodes of little girls and boys
having their bodies violated by parents,
uncles, teachers, priests and babysitters.
Over and over again, therapists working
with these clients find themselves experi-
encing vicarious traumatization. We
are constantly faced with our own help-
lessness and inadequacy as we recognize
the limits of what we can do to help shat-
tered adults bear the unbearable.

The plethora of today's theoretical
and clinical approaches can also leave
many of us bewildered and confused
about the very nature of therapy. How
do we sort out what is truly therapeuti-
cally important on any given case? For
example, one of my supervision groups
was discussing a tangled case involving
an acting-out adolescent. During the

ncied myself as skillful and precise as a heart

. Now, as the seasons pass, I see that I'm more of an
e my rounds, dispense my limited repertoire of
y the bedsides of the dying.

ing through puberty. We feel the grav-
of time as women go through
enopause and men lose hair and, occa-
sionally, their erections. As we help our
rents die and our children leave, we
face the challenge of how to embrace
dwindling future. Sometimes I sound
ittle like Prufrock: "Shall I part my hair
hind? Do I dare to eat a peach?"
ould I roll my Keogh over into a SEP
A? Some of us tremble before the dark
known, while others are seizing the
oment, planning new careers, reprior-
izing their lives. But whether we're
aling with it or not, there's a subtle
ill in the air. You can feel fall coming.
And, of course, any discussion of ther-
apists' struggles can't ignore managed
re. Whether we're fresh out of gradu-

much harder with virtually no institu-
tional support for our supervision or
continuing education. As a new clinician
24 years ago at the Philadelphia Child
Guidance Clinic, each week I had an
hour of individual supervision, two
hours of peer supervision, a two-hour
family therapy seminar, an intake work-
er who scheduled all of my new cases
and a caseload of only 22 clinical hours.
That kind of professional nurturance is
unthinkable today. More than ever
before, we are isolated individuals oper-
ating behind closed doors. And while
resources and support dwindle, clini-
cians are hearing different kinds of sto-
ries in the treatment room than they did
20 years ago. The veils that covered the
ugly secrets of American family life have

heated discussion, we suggested individ-
ual therapy, family therapy, Ritalin,
Prozac, group treatment, an interven-
tion, residential care, EMDR, tutoring,
boarding school, AA and even Outward
Bound. By the end of the conversation,
the poor treating therapist put up her
hands in mock surrender and said, "How
about if we just wait and see if the kid
grows out of it?"

We all laughed. Our group had
exhausted itself with the wealth of our
ideas. In the family therapy world of old,
we started with the simplistic, assured
models of treatment that gave us a sense
of mastery and competence. Now we are
so sophisticated that we find ourselves
wading through an endless variety of
possible ways of conceptualizing a case

and designing a treatment plan. How do we choose between family, individual and psychopharmacological approaches? How do we achieve differential diagnosis and treatment, matching the right methodology to each case? Many of us feel both wiser and less self-confident because we are so much more acutely aware of how much we don't know.

Each of us experiences burnout in his or her own way. It is as individual as a fingerprint. Sometimes we don't even rec-

retreat further. None of us should be flying solo. We all need to be in a peer group, maintain supervision and attend conferences in order to have a sense of community and belonging. We need to reach out to one another as we do this work, just like climbers are tethered together as they make their way up the rock face.

I violated this principle last year while treating three severely suicidal clients, until I became totally exhausted. I final-

ly the airport, sat in the cockpit of my instructor's Piper Cub and went over the manual before my lesson. I looked at the schematic of the control panel on the page and the dials and switches in front of me. I closed my eyes and found each instrument by feel. Then I sat there and visualized the runway, the takeoff and being airborne. My clients were as far away as the tiny cars on the road when you look down at them from 3,000 feet."

Too often, as therapists, we're expect-

We need to reach out to one another as we do this work, just like climbers are tethered together as they make their way up the rock face.

ognize the danger signs of burnout. Until the moment I exploded at my son for wanting to play a game, I was unaware of my exhaustion and agitation. Conscious burnout drains us; unconscious burnout is often taken out on the people we love. Our challenge isn't to avoid burnout, but to handle it well when it comes. When the large, rolling swell and the greasy sky warn of heavy weather and you are far from port, the best thing you can do is get ready to ride it out. You reef your sails, lash down everything on deck, heat up some soup and try to rest.

We all have to develop our own survival strategies. As I've begun to confront my own alienation from my work, I've been listening carefully to my clients, students, colleagues and friends. Here are some of the suggestions I've gleaned from them that I'm trying to practice myself.

DON'T GO IT ALONE. When I asked a workshop audience in New Hampshire for their ideas about how to handle burnout, one man said, "Well, everybody knows you don't climb Mount Washington alone. It's no different in this business." He's right. Many of us practice in too much isolation. When burnout hits, we often feel ashamed of feeling inadequate and overwhelmed, and so we

ly surrendered my idiotic pride and went into weekly supervision. As I tried to maintain a grip on these people at the edge of the crevasse, my supervisor held onto me. Why did I wait so long? Well, why does it take a million sperm to fertilize just one egg? Because none of them will stop and ask for directions. Don't climb Mount Washington alone.

MAINTAIN BEGINNER'S MIND. My colleague Sandy is an expert in treating borderlines and clients with eating disorders. It's thoroughly depleting work, yet she seems vibrant and energized. When I asked her secret, she said, "I'm always passionately involved in learning something new: one year it was quilting, last year it was EMDR and—you're not going to believe this—now I'm taking flying lessons. And I love it. All of my difficult cases just disappear from my mind when I'm learning something new. All of a sudden I don't have to be an expert anymore. It's just like being in first grade again. You work hard, follow the directions and then one day you know how to read! Each step of progress gives you a new sense of accomplishment. It doesn't matter whether you're being a student in your clinical work or in a hobby. It's about the freedom not to know the answers and to take in rather than give out. Last Sunday morning, I went out to

ed to know what we don't know, be decisive when we are unsure, be helpful when we feel helpless. The best antidote is to be a student again. No matter how old or established you are, always have a teacher. Being in the student position is a way of being nurtured and staying open.

Maintaining a beginner's mind is not only an antidote for surviving your practice, it's also the basic stance from which to do the best therapy. When I am not lost in my own sense of self-importance and over-responsibility, I remember to let my clients teach me. I remember that they are the experts and I am the student. Holding on to beginner's mind is not just a hobby, it's a way of life.

PRIORITIZE. One of the consequences of our increased economic fear is that we are working harder. Very few of us feel comfortable turning down a referral, and many of us are reducing fees, so our hourly return has dropped. We add more hours at the expense of our spouse, children and friends. How often have I challenged my clients with the comment, "No one has ever said on their deathbed, 'Gee, I wish I had spent more time at the office.'" But my glib wisdom wasn't reflected in my own life. I remember all the times I glanced out the window past my clients and saw my older son



it "to relax," but at the end of several hours, I would feel more jagged and edgy than before. You know you're in trouble when your relaxation techniques leave you more stressed. Whether it's vegging out in front of the TV, overeating or overdrinking, playing solitaire or losing yourself on the Internet, we need to watch out for numbing-out activities that don't provide either genuine escape or comfort. We all need downtime, but we have to be wary of the kind that makes us feel worse. We know exercise, meditation, eating well and hobbies wake us up and are restorative, but we often think we're too tired for energizing activities.

Many of you are much more disciplined and skillful than I am in maintaining good self-care practices. But my work with addictions has taught me that past failure is no excuse to avoid renewed efforts. "One day at a time" really does work. Lately, I've been dragging myself out of bed half an hour early to meditate and write in my journal, and after dinner I force myself out into the cold, dark winter to drive to the pool and swim laps. Is this fun? Most of the time, I grumble about it. Yet, I know that starting the day centering myself prepares me for the onslaught of my clients,

and that plowing through the water releases the day's toxins. And lest you think that good self-care is all work and no play, I also indulge in a full-body massage once a week. The paradox of all this extra time I'm devoting to myself is that I have more energy for my clients and more enthusiasm for playing D&D with Sam.

We wouldn't try to drive across the country without regularly stopping for gas and checking the oil. Treat yourself as well as you do your car. Stop for a refill.

THERAPIST, HEAL THYSELF. One of the most acute manifestations of burnout is loss of confidence in our own work. Yet, it's the nature of our profession that a sense of mastery will be elusive and inconsistent. During burnout, our loss of self-confidence can activate our old, unresolved issues that we have carried from childhood and have dealt with

myself some time in my own home. I'm killing myself most of the year to escape for a few weeks.

That's nuts."

She's right. The consumer culture drives us all insidiously. We never know what is enough success, money or happiness. All of us need to address realistically what we need materially as opposed to what we want. Could I have spared a client hour in the afternoon to play a game of catch with my older son while he was growing up? Fortunately, Sam's only 12: I still have time with him.

STOP FOR A REFILL. It isn't just the exhaustion of working too hard that leads to burnout. When I was most fried, I retreated into clicking through TV channels, watching sports endlessly. I did

when he was little, sitting by himself on the swing set. Now he's 20 and gone. My clients are still in my office. The swings are empty.

My friend Marianne has made another tough decision that challenges me to think about my priorities. She said, "One of the things I'm going to do is give up some of my expensive trips and take a morning off every week instead. I love those trips, but I just can't keep working so hard to pay for them. I've got to give

many times before. Many of us resist recognizing when it is time to go back to our own therapist for a tune-up or even a major overhaul—"Been there, done that." We don't want to face how many unresolved issues we still carry around, especially if we've completed our therapy and have been treating others for a long time.

My colleague Eric wasn't happy to see me when he came back to therapy last fall. "Don't take it personally, but I really didn't want to be here. I'm so bored with my issues. But I feel like everything is kicking me now that I'm taking care of my parents, who are still the same old drunks they always were. I'm the same old me: still fighting with my father and protecting my mother. The house is so empty without the kids that suddenly I feel like all the old demons have just moved back in again. And lately, I've been looking at my clients and wondering if people really change anyway. Maybe I should just skip talking about it and head directly for Prozac, but I hate the idea of taking drugs." I felt the same way when I went back into therapy in my mid-forties to deal, once again, with my mother's suicide and the rest of my family-of-origin mess. How discouraging to discover that the cure didn't last. But as they say in AA, we're never recovered; we're always recovering. And therapy isn't the only answer. Some of us need to confront our ambivalence about taking medication. Many therapists who are quite skillful at persuading their clients to try antidepressants are ashamed of their own use of Prozac. But if it's good enough for them, it should be good enough for us, too. Eric benefited enormously from a combination of therapy and six months of Zoloft.

In addition to therapy and/or medication, therapists in the midst of burnout have available to them the full range of alternative healing possibilities: daily affirmations, meditation, acupuncture, spiritual direction, massage, journaling, support groups. But we say we don't have the time. For example, we know that regular meditation is beneficial, and yet when I ask my

audiences of therapists what percentage of folks meditate regularly, invariably only a few hands go up. Six months ago, I began a bare-bones meditation technique that only takes three minutes. I call it the soft-boiled-egg meditation. I've been using it for releasing the self-doubts, insecurities and frustration that I've been experiencing. No matter how busy and harried I am, I can always devote three minutes a day. No excuses. Here's how it's done:

MINUTE 1: Breathe slowly and deeply while focusing on the physical experience of breathing. Just notice the breath going in out of your nose and lungs. Let your thoughts float through your mind like soft, puffy clouds across a summer sky, like wind ruffling the leaves in the trees, like waves rolling up a beach. In other words, do the standard meditation for a minute. When your thoughts distract you, gently refocus on your breathing.

MINUTE 2: Continue to deep-breathe and, for one minute, focus on whatever negative thoughts are bothering you. "I'm a fraud. I'm too old. I'm tired of my clients. I'm not that good a therapist. I'm frightened. I failed as a

parent. The readers are going to think this exercise is so gimmicky and superficial." Whatever. If you run out of angry, anxious, insecure thoughts, then just start your list over again.

MINUTE 3: Continue to deep-breathe. Now imagine yourself in a place that is a soothing, comforting sanctuary. It may be sitting by a rushing brook, walking along the beach or hiking in the mountains; any place where you feel calm, relaxed and accepting of who you are, with all of your flaws and strengths. Notice all the details of the place, the sights and the sounds.

That's it. Do it at the same time every day, just like brushing your teeth. Don't expect it to have the same effect as traditional meditation; it's too short. Sometimes it will feel good, sometimes your negative thoughts will stick, sometimes it will be ho-hum. Just let it be.

The reason why such a



short exercise is helpful is quite simple: Always trying to block out our insecurities, fears and frustrations is exhausting. By setting aside a time to give free rein to your negative thoughts while combining them with deep breathing, you release them rather than fight with them. Slowly, over time, you learn how not to run from your own shadows.

Sit still. Breathe. It's only three minutes a day.

YOU'RE NOT IT. Ultimately, the root cause of burnout is losing touch with our spiritual center. We have to find a way to connect our small, insignificant lives to a pattern of purpose and meaning in the universe in whatever way we understand it. This sense of belonging allows us to soldier forth every day, knowing that being responsive to our clients' suffering can make a difference, and that we are not responsible for their lives.

Many of us struggle to reconcile our rational minds with our yearnings for

spiritual beliefs. Years ago, a friend of mine presented a lowest-common-denominator description of the Higher Power that bypasses tangled questions about God and gets to the heart of the matter. We were presenting to a group of freshly minted social work students on the subject of spirituality and A.A. My friend, a talented social worker and a longtime member of A.A., has a tough, blunt speaking style that sometimes belies the twinkle in her eye.

She said to the audience, "When I was an active drunk, I was an atheist and I didn't believe in any of this God crap."

The audience gasped and stared at her expectantly.

She went on, "Now, I've been sober in A.A. for 15 years, and I'm still an atheist and I still don't believe in any of this God crap!"

The startled audience froze as if she had spoken blasphemy.

She glared at them for a long while and then said, "There's only one thing you need to believe to have the healing

you're not it. In the end, beneath the theory, rhetoric and technique, being a therapist challenges us to learn how to let our clients touch our souls as we touch theirs. If we do, then, sometimes, grace happens.

WORKING THROUGH BURNOUT

Working through burnout is like riding out a gale at sea. You can't just bash into the wind and waves. You have to shorten sail, slow the boat down and run before the oncoming seas. You have to accept being driven way off course. Although your tactics will vary depending on the boat you're sailing, the crew needs careful preparation, good teamwork and, most of all, steadfast patience. You have to surrender to the power of the storm.

During my recent period of burnout, there were many days when I was just trying to bull my way through each clinical hour. Finally, I surrendered. I reduced my caseload, went for supervision, asked my friends for support and began to

Working through burnout is like riding out a gale at sea. You can't just bash into the wind and waves. You have to shorten the sail, slow the boat down and run before the oncoming seas.

presence of the Higher Power in your life. The only thing you need to know about the Higher Power is you're not it!"

Time and again, I've walked into my office with my suicidal clients repeating the mantra, "Remember, David, you're not it." And then I ask for help. I don't know if God is on the other end of the line when I pray, but I do know that prayer is good for me. It puts me in a right relationship to the universe. It puts me in touch with how little I am and breaks through my presumption of grandiose self-importance and sense of responsibility. It frees me to do my best and turn over the rest.

What's the nature of your spiritual life? Does it nurture you or burden you?

When in doubt, remind yourself that

practice better self-care. I fantasized about career changes and prayed for help. And I just plain waited.

At sea, when you're miserably cold and wet, tired and scared, you forget that the storm will pass. You have to learn to go with it rather than try to fight through it. You have to wait. However, slowly but surely, the moan in the rigging will diminish, fewer waves will break on deck, the rain will slacken and patches of sunlight will appear in the western sky. ■

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SOFT BOILED EGG MEDITATION

Minute 1: Breathe slowly and deeply while focusing on the physical experience of breathing. Just notice the breath going in and out of your nose and lungs. Let your thoughts float through your mind like soft, puffy clouds across a summer sky, like wind ruffling the leaves in the trees, like waves rolling up a beach. In other words, do the standard meditation for a minute. When your thoughts distract you, **gently** refocus on your breathing.

Deep cleansing breath.

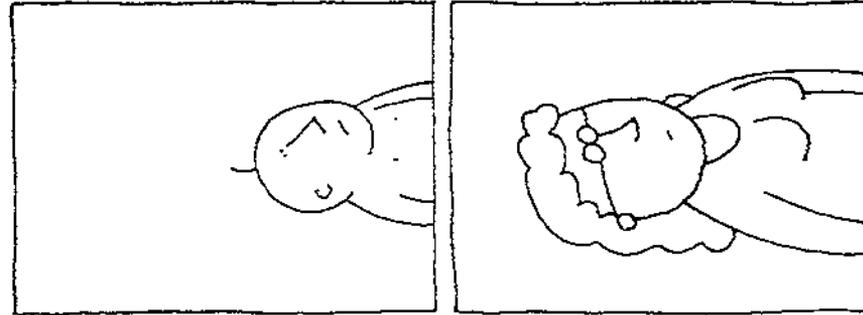
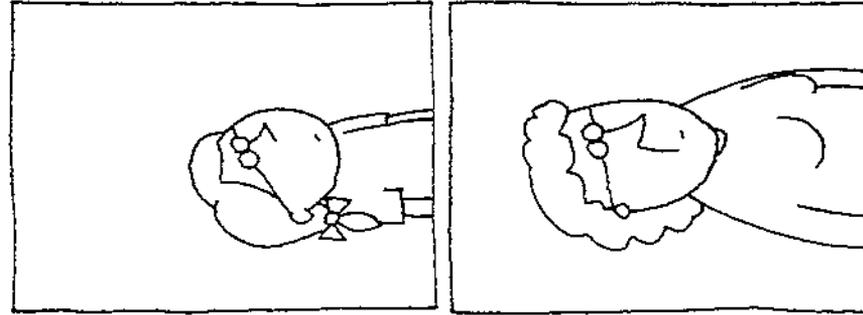
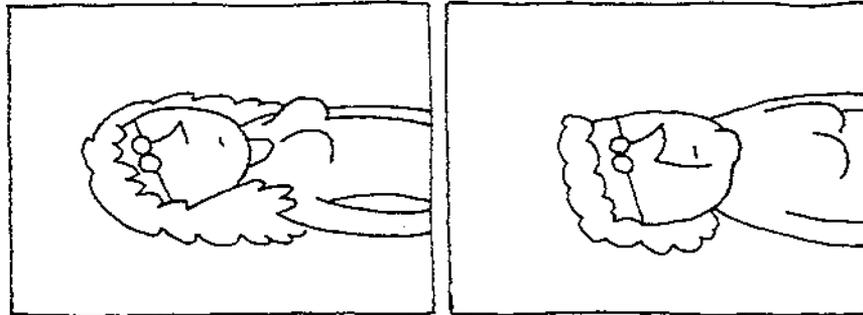
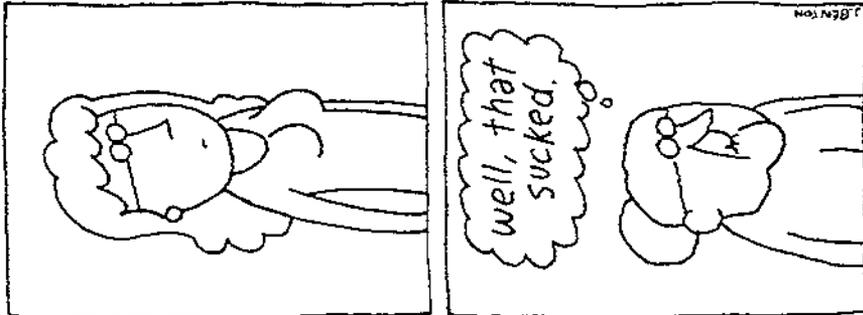
Minute 2: Continue to deep breathe and for one minute run through as many of your negative thoughts that you can, but focus on whatever negative thoughts are bothering you. "I'm a fraud, I'm too old, I'm tired of my clients, I'm not that good a therapist, I'm frightened, I failed as a parent, the readers are going to think this exercise is so gimmicky and superficial," whatever. If you run out of angry, anxious, insecure thoughts, then just start your list over again.

Deep cleansing breath.

Minute 3: Continue to deep breathe. No imagine yourself in a place that is a soothing and comforting sanctuary. It may be sitting by a rushing brook, walking along the beach or hiking in the mountains; anyplace where you feel calm, relaxed and accepting of who you are with all of your flaws and strengths. Notice all the details of the place, the sights and the sounds.

Deep cleansing breath. Finish with considering something that you feel grateful for.

That's it. Do it at the same time every day just like brushing your teeth. Don't expect it to have the same effect as traditional meditation. It's too short. Sometimes it will feel good, sometimes your negative thoughts will stick, sometimes it will just be ho-hum. Just let it be.



Small Steps to Big Changes

I) Letting go of the past in order to embrace the present and create the future.

II) Assessment process: What's working and what's not spiritually, personally, relationally, socially, and then professionally

III) Brainstorming possibilities

IV) Visualization (the miracle question)

V) Cost benefit/analysis: Risks to self and others

VI) Business Plan with time lines and baby steps

VII: Mastering Resistance

VIII: Staying goal directed while making course adjustments

Life is short;
And we do not have too much time
To gladden the hearts of those
Who travel the way with us.
So be quick to love
And make haste to be kind.

Heart to Heart

“You know it’s not just therapy when you go in there wondering about your choice of underwear,” Sally said with a brittle smile, and then she started to cry again. “Harold’s never going to understand. He’ll kill me. I’m just not ready to tell him.” Sally kept twisting her thick gold wedding band as she talked.

“I know this is hard,” Jack Evans replied, “But I feel you’re really putting your marriage at risk by not letting him in on it.”

“You don’t know my husband. I’m just frightened of him. I wish you could explain it to him. I’m sure he would listen to you”

Sally looked at Jack for reassurance. She was sitting on her hands, her knees were pressed together, and her feet were turned toward each other so the tips of her shoes were touching. She looked like a frightened schoolgirl.

“Maybe he can come in for a session after you tell him. We’ll help Harold understand what happened. Fran Cohen has a colleague who runs a group for spouses of victims. That might be helpful.”

“I can’t imagine Harold doing that. But I’ll make myself tell him. I really will. Promise. But, you know, Harold is actually the least of my worries. I don’t feel ready for any of this. It’s all going too fast.”

“What’s going too fast?” Jack asked. But he knew perfectly well. Jack felt the process was already out of his hands. He had referred her to a group run by Fran Cohen, a social worker who specialized in working with women who have been abused by therapists. Jack felt the group had pushed her prematurely to prosecute. When he discussed it with Fran, she stated flatly that it was an absolutely necessary part of the healing process for the victim to confront the perpetrator. “You do think it’s critical that people like Arnold be stripped of their license, don’t you?”

“Of course, I do,” said Jack, but he wasn’t so sure. Fran was a gifted clinician, but in recent years she had become intensely single-minded in her pursuit of sexually abusive therapists. Jack wondered whether she was putting her need to see justice done ahead of Sally.

Confronting the perpetrator might be healing for some women, but sometimes the legal process could be just as abusive as the original events. Jack didn’t know what the Medical Licensing Board was like, but psychiatrists were not noted for policing themselves well. Particularly since it might be a case of his word against hers.

He looked at Sally, who seemed so lost, and frankly, innocent. She was still having a hard time even understanding Sam Arnold’s behavior as abuse.

“Sally, you have to remember this isn’t your fault, and just because I’ve said I’m willing to testify doesn’t mean that you have to go through with it.”

“It means so much to me, Dr. Evans, that you offered to testify.” She smiled at him as if he were her knight in shining armor. “I wouldn’t be able to do this without your help. I do want to do it. It’s not that I’m a feminist or anything like that. I do believe it’s the right thing to do. I’m just scared, that’s all.”

“You and the group have all said that I shouldn’t think of this as an affair, but sometimes I don’t know what to think.” Sally stared down at her hands, and her voice dropped to a whisper. “I mean, I’ve already told you, the main reason I went to him was my problems, you know, about not being able to have an orgasm. Not that I really minded that much, but Harold made such a big deal about it. I had asked him to come with me, but he thinks ‘shrinks’ are for the birds. Obviously, I should have gone to see a woman therapist, but I thought I would learn more about men from a man.”

Sally hesitated, “I went there to work on sex right from the start. Can that be held against me, Dr. Evans?” Sally looked at him pleadingly as if with the wave of a hand he might grant her absolution.

“I can’t imagine it could be. But that would be a good question to ask Fran. I’m sorry that I don’t know more about the technicalities of this, but as you know, this is my first time through this sort of proceeding myself.”

Sally burst into tears again, “I’ve heard they ask really specific questions like what we did and how many times. God, it makes my skin crawl. And what am I going to do if he denies it all. My lawyer says he might claim that I’m acting out some kind of psychotic transference or that I have a ‘borderline personality disorder’. I don’t know what any of that means, but he says it can be worse than a rape case, because the typical defense is to claim the patient is insane. Do you think they’ll believe me?”

“I’m sure they will, Sally. All you have to do is tell the truth.” Jack tried to sound confident and convincing. He had his own doubts about whether Sally was ready to go before the board, but the hearing was scheduled and he didn’t want to undermine her with his doubts. She was right to be worried, and she hadn’t even told her husband yet.

“And besides,” she continued, “Four of the five on the panel are men and they’re all psychiatrists like Sam. So who are they going to believe? And how do I explain that this all happened four years ago and that I kept going back of my own free will and”

“Whoa there, Sally, slow down, now you’re going a little fast. This isn’t a witch hunt. But it is frightening. Of course, you’re scared. Remember, you don’t have to do this unless it’s right for you.”

I know I don’t want to go through this mess, Jack said to himself as he glanced at the clock on his desk. He was dreading the whole process. It looked as if his testimony might be critical. He didn’t want to be cross-examined by the Board. It is the nature of therapy that much of what is done is open to challenge because there is so little agreement about methodology. Suppose they decided to challenge his work with Sally?

Jack also didn’t want to confront the defendant, Sam Arnold, whom he personally liked. He hadn’t talked with Sam in several years, but Sam had been an enthusiastic member of one of his supervision groups. Sam clearly cared deeply about his clients. Jack remembered Sam presenting the case of the suicidal woman he had hospitalized. After several alarming phone messages, he had gone to her house and pleaded with her for several hours until she consented to letting him drive her to the hospital. He was the kind of guy willing to go the extra mile, but did this kind of caring become over-involvement and a lack of boundaries? Maybe the same co-dependent characteristics were part of what also led to his behavior with Sally.

Remembering Sam’s case made Jack wince as he considered what he might have done differently to help him. He had known that Sam’s personal life had been quite difficult. Sam had mentioned to the group that he and his wife were having to institutionalize their ten year old

son. Timmy was severely retarded and they couldn't adequately care for him anymore. Sam choked up as he talked about it with the group.

Jack wished he had pulled Sam aside and found out if he and his wife were getting help. He's involvement with Sally must have started around the same time.

Still Jack couldn't imagine how Sam let himself get into this nightmare. He wondered about his side of the story. Of course, he reminded himself that explanations are never an excuse. But what if he had reached out to Sam a little more back then?

But now, Sally was Jack's main concern. How would she handle the pressure? Would her marriage survive this crisis? Should it? He felt uncomfortable pushing her so hard to tell Harold, but he felt deeply that her avoiding that confrontation was undermining the chances that the marriage could be salvaged. He was undoubtedly going to find out sooner or later, and maybe not directly from her. That would really be a disaster. Sometimes you just have to go with your hunches.

Jack was tempted to talk her into postponing the case, but he wasn't sure about his motives. Whose interests was he protecting? He felt cowardly and ambivalent at the same moment he was trying to project confidence and commitment.

"Listen, Sally, there's no excuse for a therapist being sexual with his patients. It's basically the same as incest. Patients are too vulnerable and too dependent to be able to resist."

"I keep needing you to say that." Sally reached for the tissue. "I feel like it was me. Why did I keep going back? I even kept paying his fee, week after week. Towards the end, we didn't even talk about my problems. I would just walk in, he'd lock the door behind me, and we'd fall into each other's arms."

"People do blame themselves. I remember sitting with a woman whose father had abused her when she was seven years old and she was sure that it was her fault because he'd only done it to her and not her sisters. She thought she was to blame because she used to like to sit in his lap for bedtime stories."

"Dr. Evans, I wasn't seven."

Jack was silenced. She was right. She wasn't seven.

"I know, Sally," he hesitated, trying to find the right words. "I'm not sure anything I can say will really help right now. But in a therapy relationship, you're supposed to be able to totally trust the therapist so that you can risk exposing yourself. That's how it works. You do become almost as powerless as a child. Naturally, you want the love and approval of your therapist. Just like all of us want it from our own parents. If the therapist uses that yearning to consummate his own sexual needs, that's criminal."

Jack wasn't connecting with her. It sounded more like he was hiding behind his therapist role; more talking at her, not with her.

"Dr. Evans, I know you want me to see myself as an innocent victim. I appreciate that." Sally paused. Her face was mottled and her eyes puffy. She looked him straight in the eye for the first time in the meeting. "But, you don't get it."

Her voice rose. "I went to his office for a year after it started. We made love every Thursday at three o'clock. I looked forward to it. I had an orgasm every time. It was the best sex I ever

had. I liked it. No, I loved it!" Sally almost shouted, and then she began to moan. "And what's worse, I loved him. I really did."

Jack sat back in his chair. Sally's outburst surprised him. Gone was the "little girl" routine. She sounded like a strong woman, trying to take responsibility for her own adult actions.

"It's okay, Sally," Jack said. He moved his chair closer to her. "Going through this is all part of it. Just let it happen. This takes time. It takes a long time."

Jack sat still while Sally wept. He knew she had to go through this pain and there were no words to soften it. He just leaned forward.

After a while, she blew her nose, grabbed more tissue, and wiped her eyes. She gave him a slight smile. "I must look like a mess."

"Not to worry," he said lightly though he was still very worried himself. He still hadn't found a way of helping her get beyond heaping all the blame on herself. He decided to switch tactics.

"By the way, Sally, we're almost out of time, but I have a question for you. You're daughter's named Cynthia, right? How old is she?"

"She's fourteen."

"Can you imagine her being a grown woman?"

"Sure, she seems pretty grown-up already. What are you getting at?"

"Well, think about her for a second. Suppose fifteen years from now Cynthia went into therapy because she felt terrible about herself. Her marriage was in trouble and she felt the problems were all her fault. Suppose instead of helping her, the therapist took advantage of her desperate need for reassurance and started an affair with her? Would you blame her for that?"

Sally sat up straighter on the sofa. Her jaw hardened. "Of course not. I'd be furious."

Then she suddenly smiled, "Ok, Doc, you made your point."

"Well, try to remember it, will you."

*

Sam Arnold tilted back in his leather chair with his feet up on his desk and looked around his office as if he were seeing it for the last time. It was decorated in a colorful pastiche of Native American rugs, wall hangings, and big comfortable stuffed chairs. Behind the brown sofa, there was a large portrait of Sitting Bull. On the opposite wall, there hung a colorful framed weaving that supposedly had belonged to a Navajo medicine man. On top of his bookcase, he had a collection of Indian peace pipes that he had collected on Meg's and his annual trip to the Southwest. The only obvious exception to the Native American theme was an abstract silver sculpture on a chrome and glass coffee table in front of the sofa. The sculpture was heavy and full in the base and seemed to flow upward to rounded and asymmetrical points. Some of his clients thought it was flickering fire. Others described it as a silver tulip. One female medical student saw it as an ovary about to release an egg.

Sam was a big, balding man. He had just turned forty. His wife, Martha, had pulled off a surprise square dance with a caller and band for his birthday. Although Sam was considerably overweight with a big lumbering bearish body, he was a square dancing enthusiast. He and

Martha were co-founders of a square dancing group call the Square Pegs Society. Sam couldn't help wondering what would happen to the group once the word was out about him. He shook his head. It was a little premature to think about the group's response, when he hadn't even figured out what to tell Martha.

It was easier for Sam to think about the square dancing group than to pick up the phone and call his lawyer. He wasn't ready to find out the date of the hearing. Once the date was known and duly marked down in the appointments book, just as if it were a client hour, then there was no longer any hope of escape. Each day, each hour shoved him toward it. Up to this point, Sam had fended off his anxiety with fantasies about the charges being dropped and Sally forgiving him. He even considered just disappearing. One day he called the Bureau of Indian Affairs to see if there was a need for psychiatrists in the Health Service. He suspected they might take anyone, even a psychiatrist with a ruined reputation and a suspended license.

Instead of calling Beasley, Sam twiddled over his alternatives. He still hadn't decided whether to acknowledge everything and throw himself on the mercy of the Board or to try to stonewall his way through it with a "her word against mine" defense. Protecting himself by denying Sally seemed truly criminal. But, his lawyer had told him it was a sure bet. Beasley had said in their meeting, with a harsh chuckle, "we call it 'The woman scorned defense'." We just say that you properly rejected her inappropriate advances and now she's trying to punish you."

Sam sighed heavily. He couldn't be such a shit to Sally. He was still in love with her.

The therapy had been rewarding right from the beginning. At the end of the first meeting, she got up to leave and said, "This feels like it will be really helpful." She paused, "What do I call you? Dr. Arnold?"

"No, most of my clients just call me, Sam."

"Well, then," she said with a bright smile, "Thank-you, Sam."

By the third session, Sally was making her first tentative steps to opening up. She was terribly shy about talking about sexual issues. Actually, he was, too. Talking about sex had never been his forte. He probably should have referred her to a woman or a sex therapist right then. He had never treated a woman for specifically sexual issues before. But she seemed so earnest, eager and trusting. She said she wanted him to help her understand men better.

"My husband wants to do it almost every day! I can't imagine it. Is that typical?"

"No, Sally, men have a wide variety of sexual needs, just like women. Most couples have to learn how to negotiate their different sexual drives."

"But, I don't know what I want. I don't think I've ever- you know." She glanced out the window, took a deep breath, and pressed on, "You know, had an orgasm. At least I don't think I have. But, I'm not sure. It's always over so quickly anyway. I know that sounds dumb, and I've read that women are always complaining about its going too fast. But, it does go too fast for me. Is there any way that I can encourage him to go more slowly? Harold gets very offended if I try to talk with him about this. He says that it's my problem, and that's why I need a shrink."

Sam smiled and reached for his pipe, "Well, Sally when it comes to creating problems in the bedroom, it usually takes two to not tango."

Sally actually laughed out loud. She was clearly relieved.

Sam was quite taken with her full, deep laughter. She seemed very appreciative.

In the sessions that followed, they made rapid progress. He introduced Sally to the Nancy Friday books on women's sexual fantasies and encouraged her to explore masturbation. He encouraged her to keep a journal of her sexual feelings that she called her "Purple Passion" book. They role-played her learning how to talk with Harold about her needs as well as how to say no comfortably to him. Sometimes Sam would play Harold's role. Other times, he would play Sally and she would demonstrate how Harold usually responded.

Sally blossomed right before his eyes. She was still not orgasmic with her husband, but she was much more comfortable with her own sexuality and had even ventured out and bought a vibrator.

"Right after our last session," she had reported with a triumphant smile. "I hid it in the back of my lingerie drawer. Harold would be shocked."

Sam was a faithful husband and had never even considered crossing the line with a client and he was confident that he wouldn't with Sally. He cared too much about her. But, he could feel his attraction grow. He liked her simple elegance. She wore long flowing skirts with ivory silk blouses. He liked her soft brown hair that fell to her shoulders and her long dangling earrings, especially the silver Indian feather ones. She wore silver and turquoise necklaces and belts that seemed to just blend into his office motif. Like she belonged there.

It shocked him the first time he caught himself imagining making love to Sally in the middle of his regular Saturday night session with his wife, Martha. She would never be adventuresome enough to go out and buy a vibrator. Martha was an eyes-closed, lights-out, missionary position kind of wife. Sam tried to stimulate a little variety in their sex life by giving her some of the Nancy Friday books, but as far as he could tell, she had never taken a peek at them. After they had to put Timmy in Green Hills, Martha had just given up on even pretending to care about sex. Their Saturday nights were painfully perfunctory. Sam tried to be as gentle and as understanding as possible, but he still felt he was just an annoyance.

In his work with Sally, Sam began to use his own experiences to teach her about men. He convinced himself that it would help her not idealize him. Perhaps it would even make her more accepting of her husband's limitations.

"You know, Sally, speaking as a man here. I think I can understand how your husband feels. All of us grow up feeling like we're responsible for pleasing women. Men have a big ego investment in being good lovers. And we have a lot of anxiety no matter how confident we appear to be."

"I'm sure your wife appreciates how open and honest you are. Not many men are able to talk about these things."

"Well, I have my flaws like any other man. Certainly my wife could tell you that. But, getting back to your husband, I suspect he feels like you're disappointed in him."

"I wouldn't be if he would just talk to me. That's more important than sex. It's so easy to talk to you. I never thought I could be this open with a man. I feel so lonely sometimes with Harold. When he's done, he just turns his back and goes to sleep. It's like I don't matter to him at all. It's awful. I'm left lying there with his stuff dripping out of me."

Then Sally began to cry hard, "I just feel like a used tissue."

Sam moved his chair next to her and took her hand. "You need to be appreciated for who you are. You're a very special lady, Sally Bainbridge, and don't you forget it."

Sally squeezed his hand and looked him in the eyes with deep gratitude.

At the end of that session, Sally asked shyly if she could have a hug. It seemed natural and appropriate given how intense the session had been and how needy Sally seemed to be. But, when Sam embraced her, he noticed that he had to lean forward from the waist so that she wouldn't inadvertently press against his erection.

Somehow, in the sessions that followed, the end-of-the-meeting hugs became full body embraces. He couldn't remember who initiated them. It seemed mutual. Making love became inevitable.

It was wonderful.

Sam smacked his desk with his fist. Thinking like this was just made it worse. He was horrified by what he had done. How he could he have been so stupid? Not only had he probably destroyed his career, he had also potentially wrecked Sally's life. He felt like such a shit.

His hand picked up the phone and dialed Beasley's number. The hearing date would be January 15th, same day his quarterly taxes were due.

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Sally sat in her car with both hands on the wheel. She was in the parking lot next to the soccer field where Cynthia's team was practicing. Although she rarely came to watch Cynthia play, she couldn't stand sitting in the house anymore waiting for Harold. Surprising Cyn with a girl's night out invitation seemed like an excellent plan.

Sally watched Cyn challenge another girl for the ball. She was so tall and lithe, she could be a ballerina, but she played soccer like she was a linebacker. Sally couldn't really see Cyn being dumb enough and weak enough to let herself get caught in a situation like hers. Cyn was much more independent and assertive than Sally had been when she was a teenager. Not a wimp like her mother: she's tough, more like Harold.

Sally remembered the white water canoe trip she had taken with Harold shortly after they first started going out. She was nauseated with fear: afraid of the water ever since childhood. But she feigned enthusiasm for his carefully planned trip down the Kennebec River in Maine. Harold had made it clear that being outdoorsy was a necessary ingredient in a future Mrs. Bainbridge and Sally had already set her sights on being the one to fill that role. She borrowed the appropriate outfit from her roommate, took a Dramamine just in case, and greeted Harold with an enthusiastic grin at six o'clock that Saturday morning.

On the car ride up, Harold regaled Sally with his vast knowledge of white water technique. When he asked her about her experience on rivers, she managed to parlay her one Girl Scout canoeing trip across a placid pond into sounding like a major adventure. She didn't share that just that trip had been scary for her too.

Slowly over the course of that endless day, Sally could feel her perky girl scout smile deteriorate into a frozen grimace. Fortunately Harold never noticed. She was in the bow of the canoe and he was preoccupied with his various steering maneuvers. He barked out orders from the stern about which side of the canoe to paddle on. She would take furtive stabs at the water. The canoe paddle felt as foreign as a baseball bat. The rocks seemed to come hurtling towards her out of the surging water. There was a steady roar of noise. She was soaked to the skin. Her

hair was wet, stringy, and stuck to her face like overcooked spaghetti. She regretted that she had bothered to get up at four thirty to wash and set it.

Her session with the Board and the confrontation with Harold were rushing at her just like the rocks on the Kennebec. She was being swept along. Evans, Cohen, the group, and her lawyer were all telling her what to do. It made her feel even more helplessly out of control.

Sally was unsure which she dreaded most: giving her deposition to the Board or telling Harold. He wasn't going to take it well. Dr. Evans had advised her to bring Harold in for a session. Fat chance. Harold believed in a pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps approach to life that didn't leave much room for therapists. The very thought about how he would respond to her story about Sam Arnold made her shudder.

Sally caught herself wishing that she could call Sam, just to hear his gentle comforting voice. It had been over a year since they had talked, but she still missed him. She didn't know love could feel the way it did with him. Her whole week revolved around what they called "our time". She gave up drinking, lost ten pounds, and was even much sweeter to Harold. It was a delicious time.

Then she wrecked it. She told Sam that she was going to leave Harold and take an apartment near his office and was completely blindsided by the horror stricken look on his face.

"But Sally, you can't turn your life up side down for us. I can't even consider leaving Martha. Not after everything she's been through. I'm so sorry."

He reached for her but she slipped away from his embrace and ran out of his office. He called her and begged her to come back, but everything had changed. The next session he told her that he had made a terrible mistake with her and that he couldn't allow her to put her life in jeopardy. Finally, he said that they had to stop meeting for her sake, no matter how desperately hard it might be for him.

The last time, they held each other and cried for almost the whole hour. It was the right thing to do, but she couldn't imagine living without him: his gentleness and acceptance. She could still feel the transcendent moment of their first embrace. How tender it was, how safe she felt.

She never should have told Evans or even gone to see him. It was Sam's last suggestion. "I trust him," Sam had said.

But telling Evans was what set this whole mess in motion. He sent her to that Cohen woman and.....

"Mom, what are you doing here?" Cynthia yelled through the closed window.

Sally rolled down the window. "Hi honey, I just wanted to see how you're doing. I thought we might have a bite at Papa Gino's and hit the Mall."

"Oh, Mom, don't you remember, I'm supposed to go over to Mary's house to work on our term paper? Her mother's picking us up any minute."

Sally smiled, hiding her disappointment. "That's right. I forgot. You run along then. I'll see you at home later."

Sally watched enviously as Cynthia ran over to Mary and a gaggle of girls. What she would give to be one of them fretting over term papers, cute boys, and soccer scores.

She started the car. Somehow she'd tell Harold before they went to bed that night.

After she finished the dishes, Sally found Harold holed up in his office in front of his computer and plunged awkwardly into the topic.

“I’ve got some very upsetting things I have to talk to you about. Please let me just blurt it all out without interrupting me, okay?”

Harold glowered throughout her description of the events with Arnold.

“He kept encouraging me to be more and more open about my sexuality. And I figured that I needed to do that because you were always complaining about how uptight I was. One session he massaged my neck to help me release tension. I wanted so badly for it to work between you and I. It seemed supportive and appropriate when he started hugging me at the end of sessions. He said he hugged all of his clients. Then he started talking about himself and his marriage. Before too long, the hugs became more insistent, but I didn’t know what to say or what was happening.

Sally was appalled at how self-serving her story sounded, but she couldn’t stop. “Anyway, I didn’t know if I was just being uptight about it all. Dr. Evans says it’s normal for clients to be unable to resist when these situations start happening.”

Harold was clenching his fists and on the verge of exploding. She continued, “Evans says that the victim is just so ashamed that they can’t tell anyone, least of all their husbands and...”

“As well they should be goddamn ashamed,” Harold cut in. His face for contorted. “You fucked this shrink or yours for over a year, and you’re claiming this was abuse! What is this bullshit! You pay a fucking shrink every week out of my checkbook and you want me to believe that you’re a victim? This new idiot, what’s-his-name, Evans, says it’s like incest. It’s the biggest pile of manure I ever heard of!”

Harold was out of his seat and standing over her raging, “You used to come home and tell me what a wonderful man Arnold was. How he made you feel so much better about yourself. I don’t believe this. I want you out of here!”

“Please Harold, I’m sorry. Don’t shout. Cynthia will be home any minute. Please, you don’t understand. It wasn’t like you think.”

“Oh, really,” Harold said in a low cold voice. “Am I talking quietly enough for you? After all we wouldn’t want Cynthia to come in and find out that her mother bought sex from her psychiatrist. I’m sure your daughter would be impressed.”

Sally buried her face in her hands and whispered, “I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry.”

“Sorry, my ass!”

Sally looked up at him with tears streaming down her face. “Please just come with me one time to Dr. Evans’. He can explain this to....”

“So I can pay him to tell me that my wife is just a poor innocent victim? Get real. I don’t want anything to do with any of those assholes!”

Then Harold turned his back to her. There was a moment of silence. Then in an even tone, he said, “Get the fuck out of here.”

*

Jack Evans stared at the computer screen. The title of his article “Heart to Heart: New Pathways to Intimacy” loomed over the blank page. Jack was tired and annoyed. Intimacy was the farthest thing from his mind. He was preoccupied with this business about Sally and the Board and feeling a little guilty about leaving Ellen with the kids’ homework duties.

He felt torn about Sally. In a way, it was good for her to take some responsibility for her behavior in the relationship with Arnold. She was right. She wasn’t seven. Her accepting the consequences of her own actions seemed actually like a step forward for her. On the other hand, he genuinely believed that she had been criminally abused. She should no more be blaming herself than a rape victim should be blamed for not resisting aggressively enough or for wearing a short skirt.

But, he had an uneasy feeling that having been manipulated by Arnold, Sally was now being manipulated by Fran, the group, and himself. His job was to help Sally find her own voice.

He wondered if he was going to have to testify in front of Sam. The poor bastard had really screwed up. He had taken advantage of Sally and frankly deserved to get burned. Yet Jack hated to see anyone go through the humiliation that Sam would have to face. What if.....

The phone rang. Jack didn’t pick it up.

Ellen called upstairs. “Jack, the phone. It’s for you.”

“Shit,” muttered Jack out loud as he reached for the extension.

“Oh, Dr. Evans, this is Sally. I’m so glad to be able to reach you. I’m sorry to bother you at home, but I just had to talk with you. My husband is furious. I tried to tell him what you’ve explained to me and I just couldn’t get through to him. He’s threatening divorce.”

“Did you suggest to him that the three of us meet?”

“I did, but he said no. I don’t know.... I’m so confused. Tell me what should I do?”

Dammit, Jack thought, he should have prepared her better for this. “Give him some time to come around, Sally. You’ve been wrestling with this horrible mess for a while now. He’s only just found out. It’s going to take time for the shock to wear off. Just hang in there and I’ll see you on Thursday. And you know that if you need to, you can call again.”

“Thank you, Dr. Evans, I don’t know what I would do without you. I couldn’t get through this alone.”

“Okay, Sally, Take care.”

As he hung up the phone, Jack felt a sour taste of irritation. Something about her breathy desperation annoyed him. He hoped she couldn’t pick it up in his tone of voice. Beside it was completely appropriate for her to be leaning on him during this crisis. Still, her slightly seductive, little girl quality made him acutely uncomfortable. “Oh, Dr. Evans, I couldn’t be doing this without you.” Careful, Jack, he chided himself. Let’s not get into blaming the victim here.

He clicked off the computer and headed downstairs to the TV room. The hell with the article.

*

Jack decided to call first thing in the morning before he had a chance to change his mind.

“Hi, Sam, this is Jack Evans.”

There was a long pause.

Although they weren't friends or colleagues, Jack felt Sam deserved to know that he was going to testify even though he was sure that Ms. Enright, Sally's lawyer, wouldn't have approved. Besides Sam had referred Sally. Sam must have assumed that Jack would collude in keeping the situation under wraps in some way.

“Hello, Dr. Evans,” said Sam softly.

“This is really awkward, Sam. I'm calling about the Board hearings coming up next week.”

“I figured that.” His voice was lifeless.

“I guess you know that I've been treating Sally Bainbridge, and I will be testifying in front of the Board.”

“I've been informed to that effect.”

“Well, listen, I wanted to tell you personally, because of our having worked together. I feel very badly about the whole situation. I don't know how this mess really occurred, but any one of us in this business is capable of making serious mistakes. We're all human. I'm very sorry, but I do have to go through with this.”

Another long pause. What was he saying, Jack wondered, hearing himself almost apologizing to Sam? He felt excruciatingly stupid to have made the call.

“This call might not even be appropriate, Sam. I just wanted to let you know personally. The other thing is that I honestly hope you'll be able to acknowledge what happened. There's treatment for this kind of thing, and....”

“I don't think I should be having this conversation with you, Dr. Evans. My lawyer has advised me not to discuss the particulars of these charges with anyone.”

After the phone call, Jack stared out the window of his office. He looked at his lawn littered with the red and gold of dead leaves. The weekend of raking seemed like a vast improvement over this situation. He knew he was doing the right thing, but he felt like a snitch. Maybe he should have contacted Sam much earlier and encouraged a meeting between him and Sally. Perhaps this could have been resolvable in a less destructive manner. After all, Sam wasn't an evil predator.

On the other hand, the guy should have kept it buttoned.

*

It was ten after ten. All but two of the Board members had arrived. The members of the Board sat behind a long mahogany table. Dr. Jerome Leavit, head of the New England Psychoanalytic Institute, was chatting amiably with his protégé, Dr. James Goodwin. Dr. Frank Gutcheon was leafing through the sports page. The lone woman on the Board, Dr. Harriet Denby, sat off by herself and was making notes. So far none of them had looked directly at Jack.

To Jack's right at a small desk was a stenographer, Sally was to his left. She was conservatively dressed in a black wool suit. She sat demurely with her ankles crossed and her hands folded in front of her. She was sitting between her husband, Harold, and her lawyer. Judy

Enright. Harold Bainbridge was a small, wiry man with slicked back black hair and wire-rimmed glasses. He had on a three-piece suit. Their heads were bent toward each other as he and the lawyer whispered together.

Jack looked out the big picture window at the Boston skyline. In the distance, he could see the crew sculls plowing along the Charles. They looked as delicate as water bugs. Then he glimpsed over at Harold, and remembered his only meeting with the guy. Jack had opened the session with a self-deprecating joke about shrinks, but Harold didn't betray even a hint of a smile. Instead he launched in about how grossly Sally had betrayed him. Finally, after making no headway explaining how these things can happen, Jack declared, "Mr. Bainbridge, you know, it wasn't just Sally who was abused by Dr. Arnold. You and your marriage have also been profoundly harmed by his unethical behavior. That's why you have every right to sue him yourself."

Harold latched onto this idea and began firing questions at Jack about the legal process. Jack instantly regretted mentioning them pursuing their own suit. It wasn't meant as a literal suggestion so much as a way of being supportive. It turned out to be throwing out chum to a shark.

Jack recommended a support group for spouses and Harold said, "I'm not going to sit around with a bunch of hand-wringing whiners. We'll take care of this matter in court."

Jack looked around the hearing room. This was supposed to be only an informal hearing but the scene in the room looked like a set for a TV courtroom melodrama.

At least Sam Arnold wasn't there. Jack didn't want to face him. Knowing that his testimony would have a strong impact on the Board's deliberations, it would have been difficult to administer the coup de grace in front of Sam.

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The Chairman of the Board called the meeting to order. Sally spoke almost in a whisper. She had rehearsed her presentation with Judy and Fran, but she was still nervous. She also felt guilty about the way her reconstruction of events had become more one-sided. Judy had told her that it was necessary for her to present the matter in a pretty black and white way because of the Board's potential bias in favor of Arnold, but Sally was worried about being fair.

"...Then he began offering to massage the tension out of my neck. He said he had learned this in his bio-energetics training. It was about that time that he suggested we hug at the end of the sessions. I was unsure about this, but he reassured me that it was perfectly normal."

Sally paused and reached into her purse for a handkerchief, just in case. Sally wished she hadn't lied about that first hug, but having told Harold that Sam had initiated the hugs, now she was stuck with it. She reminded herself that the rest of the story was basically true and that regardless of how the hugs started, Evans had reassured her there was still no excuse for Arnold to take advantage of her.

"In the next session when it really started, we were role playing." Sally continued. "He said he wanted to teach me how to give 'encouraging feedback' (that's what he called it), so that I could communicate better with Harold. We sat on the sofa. He pretended that he was Harold and was making overtures, and I was to tell him how I wanted to be touched and then he started touching me...."

Sally began to cry. "Do I have to tell every detail of this?"

Dr. Leavit emptied his pipe in the ashtray, "No, Mrs. Bainbridge, we just need to know when the actual sexual acts began and the length of time you and Dr. Arnold continued to have relations."

"You mean, how long did it last? It was only a fifty-minute hour."

The solemnity of the occasion imperceptibly cracked. Some of the Board members swallowed a smile. "No, Mrs. Bainbridge, I'm just asking approximately how many times you and Dr. Arnold had relations."

"I'd like to object." Judy Enright stood up. "The use of the phrase, 'had relations' implies a consensual involvement. My client was truly under the sway of Dr. Arnold, and was literally unable to say no to him. This is not the same as 'having relations' with him."

"Your objection is duly noted, Ms. Enright. But, this isn't a courtroom. We're all just doing the best we can. As you know, it's quite difficult to find the right language to describe these sorts of events."

After Sally finished her story, members of the Board were free to ask questions.

Dr. Denby was the toughest questioner.

"Tell us, Mrs. Bainbridge, after Dr. Arnold began this sexual abuse, who did you tell?"

"I didn't tell anybody."

"And how long did you say this abuse happened?"

"As I said, I think it was almost a full year, but I'm not sure."

"And after it was over, who did you tell?"

"I didn't tell anyone until I told Dr. Evans."

"And that was how long after you stopped seeing Dr. Arnold?"

"A year."

"How long after seeing Dr. Evans was it before you told your husband?"

"About six months."

"Just a minute," Enright jumped in. "It sounds like you're suggesting that my client's difficulty in acknowledging this abuse to anyone implies some culpability on her part."

"No, Ms. Enright, I'm just aware that apparently your client terminated the therapy without ever complaining to Dr. Arnold. She says she never confided in a friend or a relative. And if I heard her correctly, she only recently told her husband. I'm just trying to understand the process that's unfolded here, that's all." Dr. Denby folded her hands in front of her primly and smiled.

*

During the break, Jack headed for the men's room. He was confused. He thought that Sally had initiated the first hug. Not that it really made a difference but... Then Harold stood beside him at the next urinal.

“Except for maybe that lady shrink, I think we got them all,” he said facing the wall in front of them both. “Sally was great. And you’re going to be the icing on the cake, Doc. I can just feel it.”

Jack zipped up and smiled wanly back at him. Clearly he smelled blood in the water.

Jack’s testimony went next. When he began to explain the effects of therapist abuse, Dr. Denby interrupted him and said, “Dr. Evans, the Board appreciates your willingness to educate us on the nature of therapist abuse, but we feel adequately knowledgeable on this topic, and if you would simply confine your remarks to the specific discussion of Mrs. Bainbridge’s case.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

Mrs. Bainbridge came to you because she was still upset about her therapy with Dr. Arnold, is that right?”

“Yes, that’s true.”

“You’ve said that you learned about the sexual abuse within the first few sessions. And yet, as I understand it, the Board was not notified about these serious charges for six months. Mrs. Bainbridge said in her testimony that it was Ms. Cohen who encouraged her to notify the Board, not yourself. Would you favor us with your thinking on this issue, Dr. Evans?”

“Well, I felt strongly,” Jack squirmed in his chair. “That my first responsibility was to Sal-I mean, Mrs. Bainbridge. I wanted to make sure she was ready to go through this painful process without incurring further damage.”

“So you took it upon yourself to decide for Mrs. Bainbridge when she’s be able to handle reporting this? Do you feel that you had a responsibility to report this immediately yourself?”

“Look, Dr. Denby, it’s my job to take care of my clients the best way I know how.” Jack’s voice began to rise, “I don’t mean to sound defensive here, but I feel like I moved as quickly as it was appropriate for my client. I’m sorry if you don’t think so?”

“Now, Dr. Evans, nobody is suggesting an error on your part,” chimed Dr. Leavitt with a smile. “We’re just trying to understand your thinking about the case.”

Jack stumbled through the rest of his testimony.

*

Sam was hoping to slip out of the house without seeing Martha, but she came into their bedroom while he was knotting his tie.

“Sam, why are you wearing a suit,” she asked?

“I have that review meeting this afternoon with the licensing Board about the complaint I told you about.”

“You mean the woman who’s accusing you of making sexual overtures because you decided to refer her to a mental hospital?”

“That’s the one. I’m pretty sure this will be a formality. It’s her word against mine and she’s obviously psychotic.”

“You don’t seem very worried.”

“It’s just one of the risks of the trade.” Sam smiled at Meg. “Wish me luck,” he said.

“Are you going to be back in time for dinner tonight?”

“I don’t think so. I don’t know when I’ll be home.”

Sam almost vomited up his lunch on the way downtown. His thoughts raced in his head as he drove blindly along. He couldn’t see any way out. He kept going over and over it. How did it happen? How could he have been so stupid?

Then the memory of holding Sally came back to him. Whatever anyone thought, he loved Sally. It had been so hard to break it off with her and since the whole process had started, he had been thinking of her more and more often. He knew she’d testified this morning and he almost wished he could have been there just to see her. He just wanted to talk with her. Tell her how sorry he was. He yearned to take her in his arms one more time.

“Jesus, get a grip.” He squeezed the steering wheel of his car. Storrow Drive had slowed to a stop and he surveyed the other drivers around him, each in their own world. Here he was in his elegant forest green Saab. Certainly to the rest of his rush hour companions, he didn’t look like he was going to his own funeral.

A couple of days ago, Sam had decided to tell the truth. At first he felt relieved as he contemplated having his license revoked, and voluntarily offering to go into treatment for his problem. The current trend in the mental health field to accept many “acting-out” behaviors as manifestations of a “disease” like sex addiction, work-aholism, etc. would perhaps allow him to go through a purgatory period and then re-emerge, hopefully with his family and profession intact.

I just have to get through the humiliation, he told himself.

He remembered being seven. He just finished his bath and was feeling lonely and bored as usual. He decided to try out his father’s razor. He lathered up carefully and then ran his thumb along the razor’s edge to see if there was a blade in there.

Blood spurted.

Panicking, Sam ran downstairs into the living room, calling for his mother, “Mom, Mom, look.” He held up his dripping thumb.

His mother was having one of her formal tea parties. All the ladies in the room turned and stared at the naked, and chubby little boy, his face covered in shaving cream. There was a moment of absolute silence.

His Mother frowned, then flashed one of her best hostess smiles and said, “Now Samuel, is this the way you’ve been taught to enter a room?”

The ladies burst out laughing.

Mrs. Arnold, obviously pleased with herself, continued, “Do run along, put on some clothes and a band aide. And, by all means, don’t drip on the rug.”

Sam ran out of the room to the sound of the ladies tittering. In his room later, he thought he would die.

His marriage to Martha, his professional success, and his expansive social life seemed to have carried him light years away from his lonely boyhood. Now his life seemed as fragile as one of his intricate Nauset Beach sand castles faced with a rising tide. In the next hour, it would all be swept away. He felt a wave of bitterness.

He looked at his watch. It was 1:30. The meeting was scheduled from 2 to 4. No matter what happened, it would be over in three hours. That thought gave him a tidbit of comfort.

Sam walked into the hearing feeling like that naked little boy. He sat down in front of them with Beasley next to him. In a slow monotone, he told his side of the story, tried to explain how inadvertently it had all begun and how sorry he was, and that he would do whatever was necessary to make amends.

The Board listened impassively.

Dr Denby leaned forward and pulled her reading glasses down to the tip of her nose. "In your recollection, Dr. Arnold, did you initiate physical contact with your patient?"

Sam hesitated and then said, "Well, I certainly took her hand and held it when she was upset. I don't really remember how the rest of it got started." He wasn't about to start finger pointing. "I just know this is all my fault."

"I suppose it wouldn't be in your notes.....?"

Dr. Leavit jumped in, "I don't think we need to go back over all the details, Dr Denby. Dr. Arnold is accepting full responsibility, I believe."

"Yes, I am, Dr. Leavit," whispered Sam.

"Well, thank you, Dr. Arnold, for your candor. We will let you know the results of these deliberations as expeditiously as possible."

Dr. Denby sniffed and pursed her lips.

Sam just nodded.

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Sally stirred her drink idly while she watched Harold pace back and forth in front of the phone in their kitchen. He had been trying to reach their lawyer all night, desperately wanting to find out how Dr. Arnold's part of the hearing had gone. She wished it were over. She hated Harold's blood lust and she hated herself for going along. She knew she was using it. The way she fawned over him as if he were a noble savior, rescuing her from the savage rapist, disgusted her. But she felt she had no choice. She couldn't defend Sam. Harold would kill her.

She remembered the kindness in Sam's eyes; how they laughed together. She could almost hear his gentle and encouraging words. She remembered his touch. She wished they could talk just one more time.

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Beasley had waited until the end of the hearing to inform Sam about the civil suit and that the Bainbridges weren't interested in negotiating. Any hope that he could get out of this was dashed.

"Mr. Bainbridge wants you tarred and feathered and run out of town on a rail. He's a real son of a bitch." Beasley had said.

Walking out of the building, Sam couldn't face going home. Thoughts of the stories in the paper, confessing it all to Martha and then his children, and parents horrified him. He could imagine his mother's rage at him for embarrassing her. Undoubtedly they lose the house and he have to file for bankruptcy.

Sam spent a couple of hours sitting by the Esplanade as joggers, cyclists, and lovers holding hands swept by him. He felt like he'd just been told he had terminal cancer. The milling people around him felt miles away as if he were looking at them through the wrong end of binoculars.

It was past eight thirty by the time Sam got home.

"Honey, is that you?" Martha called out from the kitchen.

"Yep, it's me."

"Come on in here. I saved you a bite to eat."

Sam walked into the kitchen. "I'm not hungry. I'm going to have a drink"

"Did the hearing go all right? You look dead tired."

"I think it will all be fine, but it was harder than I expected. Nowadays, any charges people want to sling are taken seriously. I couldn't believe it."

"Don't you think they'll be able to see that she's crazy?"

Sam looked at Martha with her pinched frown, the one she wore when they were talking about Timmy. "Don't worry, hon, I'm sure they will. But you can never tell about how the politics of it might work. But it will be okay. It's nothing to worry about."

"I'm going up to bed soon. Are you coming up?"

"Sure, I just have to make a few phone calls in my office."

Sam sat in his office. He stared at the portrait of Sitting Bull. The grim old warrior stared back at him. Then he went into his bathroom to get the bottle of Valium he had been using for his nerves the past few weeks. He had enough.

I should write a note, he thought and took out a piece of his business stationary. He stared at the blank page and imagined Martha waking up in the middle of the night, noting the empty side of the bed and padding down here in her slippers. He could see her terror, her frantic call to 911, and the sound of sirens roaring up their street. Maybe the ambulance would get there in time. Then what. Maybe he'd be brain damaged like Timmy. The image of his poor sweet son with his crooked, goofy smile and his innocent wide eyes yanked at him.

He knew he couldn't do it. He crumpled up the page and threw it and the pills into his wastebasket. Was he just chickening out or was doing it more the coward's way out? He decided he would just have to go through whatever he had to go through.

He turned off the light, tilted back in his easy chair, and closed his eyes.

The phone rang.

"Sam?" whispered the voice on the other end of the line. "It's me, Sally."

"Oh, Sally," he sighed and his face broke into a smile.

Questions for Discussion

- How did you feel about the way this case was being handled by Sam and Sally, by Jack Evans, the Board? Were there any viable alternatives? Should Jack have tried to handle it privately between Sam and Sally?
- How are your responses to Sam and Sally similar and/or different?
- This is a story of therapist abuse. Is it also a love story?
- What do you imagine happens with Sam and Sally after she calls him?
- How do we assess the responsibility of both client and therapist when they have consensual sexual relationship? Is it 100% the therapist's fault in all cases? Or are there mitigating circumstances in some instances?
- Have you ever had romantic/erotic feelings as either a client or a therapist? Is that normal? What should either a client or a therapist do if they have these kinds of feelings in a therapeutic relationship?

Burn-out Grief and Spirituality in Clinical Practice and Everyday Life Bio

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