

Therapy Samples

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Abstract

This article consists of a series of examples of rededecision therapy taken from audiotapes that clients saved from their work with Bob and Mary Goulding. These samples illustrate contract setting, a cotherapy style, and rededecisions.

Psychotherapy is made up of a series of work segments, each piece varying in length from a few minutes in group therapy to the classical 50 minutes of individual therapy. In a lifetime a client may experience only one such segment or hundreds. I think of these therapy segments as pieces of skill-based art, like paintings, tapestries, or poetry.

Bob Goulding and I tried to make these tapestries exciting and unique. I imagine them in vivid colors, bold lines, humorous little squiggles, with results that seem both obvious and startling. They must be engaging to the Child who creates them with us. Each segment stands alone and, as often as possible, is fulfilling to the client. Even when the tapestry depicts grief or terror, there will be an aura of eventual triumph.

"Keep your words simple," Bob said in one of his taped supervisory sessions. "And don't let your client bore you. Make every session interesting and alive for both of you!" This is easier in rededecision therapy than in the types of transactional analysis in which both therapist and client do Adult-Adult analysis or in which a Parental therapist demands adaptation from the client. Rededecision work almost has to have a liveliness and dramatic quality. The tapestries cannot be stodgy.

The following disguised snippets are from audiotapes mailed to me by workshop participants in response to my request for samples of Bob's and my work. Readers will have to fill in the sounds of grief and laughter, the colors and the movement. For those who remember the Western Institute for Group and Family Therapy, it won't be difficult.

Forming the Contract

Participant: I . . . lots of times I feel somehow, well, I have a relationship of four years and I don't know, I'm trying to make a, well, a decision . . . if I want to continue with him or not. Or whether it's better to call it off.

Bob: Put him in that empty chair and tell him that.

P: Well, sometimes I feel you don't give me enough attention, sometimes I wonder if you love me. I don't know. I don't understand the philosophy you sometimes . . .

Bob: Tell him specifically what he doesn't do. What specific attention you want that he doesn't give you.

P: You know. I've told you. I think we have different values perhaps . . .

Bob: Tell him specifically what you want and don't get.

P: You don't tell me you love me. I need you to do that.

Bob: No, you want him to do that. Need is blackmail. Understand?

P: No.

Bob: Need is like a little kid whining, "I need an ice cream cone." You don't need love, you want love.

P: Yeah, I do want love. I want love, and it's not fair. I give you lots of attention, but maybe that's not what you need.

Bob: You are a believer in needs. Ask what he wants.

P: Oh. Well, he always says he doesn't need anything. Huh. OK, I'll ask you what you want. What do you want?

Bob: Switch chairs and answer the way he'd answer.

P: I want time to be alone in our apartment. I don't want you hanging on me and begging. (*Begins to weep.*)

Bob: Switch chairs. Be you.

P (sobbing): That's the problem. I want more than he wants to give. Honestly, I feel needy.

Bob: OK, I'm beginning to understand. For

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now, will you accept a contract to learn to recognize your own wants and then you can figure out clearly whether you want this guy or not. OK?

P: OK. That sounds OK.

A Final Session in "No-Suicide" Work

Participant: I want to finish up with my sadness, my suicidal stuff.

Bob: First, be in touch with your body, your posture. Do you want to do this work from that position?

P: No. I'm holding tight so I won't fly off. . . .

Mary: Maybe flying off would be fun.

P: But not yet. Now I want to be powerful. I woke up this morning thinking that all my work, my decision not to kill myself, is not really my suicidal stuff. It's my husband's.

Bob: He's right over there in that chair. Tell him.

P (to husband in empty chair): I think that's your stuff, and in being nice and sweet and taking care of you, I've taken this on for you. And I'm not willing to do this.

Mary: I doubt if he knows what you mean. I don't.

P: You have a lot of stuff going on. . . . I am scared to tell you what I think, to say, Pete, this is what I think. That it's your suicidal stuff and not mine.

Mary: I still don't know what you mean. It's as if you're talking about a bottle of arsenic and who bought it and who owns it.

P: You stay stuck, for instance.

Mary: He stays stuck in what way? Give a for-instance.

P: You won't diet, you won't stop smoking, you won't see a therapist, you won't, you won't, you won't. And the more you won't, the harder I try. I get angrier and more frustrated and more hopeless and depressed.

Mary: And that's because in the past my happiness depended on you changing.

P: No! Not any more! (Pause.) But I'm afraid that if I stop taking care of you, you will be suicidal. So I stay stuck. (Pause.) I'm not going to sacrifice myself.

Bob: And I'm not going to kill myself.

P: No matter how sad you are, I'm not going

to kill myself.

Mary: Be a little girl and tell your mother that.

P: No matter how sad you are, I won't kill myself. (Pause.) You know, she has asthma and she says I cause her attacks.

Mary: So even if you have asthma, even if you die of asthma, I won't kill myself?

P: That's right. I didn't cause your asthma and I won't kill myself even if you die of your attacks.

Mary: Or even if I'd like to kill you sometimes, I won't kill myself?

P: YEAH! Even if I am so angry at you that I wish you were dead. . . . I'm scared she might die. Even if I wish you were dead, I won't kill myself.

Bob: Wishes won't kill her.

(P mumbles something.)

Bob: If you can kill people by wishing them dead, you are pretty damned powerful. The most powerful person who ever lived!

P: (Laughs.)

Bob: So I won't kill myself for wishing you dead or causing your asthma or any other reason.

P: I won't kill myself for any reason.

Bob: Now tell this to your father.

(P does, easily.)

Bob: And now tell this to your husband.

P: I am not going to kill myself because of anything you do or refuse to do. I am not going to kill myself for any reason.

Mary: Fine. Now, another thing, will you decide not to make life choices about your marriage while you're here at the workshop? Instead, go home and teach yourself to be happy. Then from a happy position decide whether or not to get a divorce. Don't decide that until you've practiced happiness.

A Tiny Piece of Cotherapy Fun

Bob: What's the scene?

Participant: I'm ten years old. . . .

Bob: And what are you like?

P: I'm scrawny and ugly.

Bob: It's hard to believe a 10-year-old girl is ever ugly.

Mary: No it is ugly. It's a disease.

P: (Laughs.)

Bob: (laughing)

Type Three In

Participant: I believe in myself

Bob: And test

P: That I'm v

Bob: I know.

P: (Pause.) I c

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Bob: Say it ag

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P: Let me out

Bob: You've

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P: A gold cag

Bob: You've

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P: I don't see

Bob: It's your

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P: (Pause.) A

Bob: Then stop

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P: I am getting

Bob: Say more

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Mary: No it isn't. Lots of 10-year-old girls are
ugly. It's a disease of age 10.

P: (Laughs.)

Bob (laughing): Mary, you're impossible.

Type Three Impasse: I'm Not Worthwhile

Participant: I am not worthwhile. I don't
believe in myself. I don't find myself worthy.

Bob: And test out the other side.

P: That I'm worthwhile? I don't believe that.

Bob: I know. Take that side anyway.

P: (Pause.) I deserve a chance to feel lovable.

Bob: Because . . .

P: Because . . . because . . . there may be a
core of me that's worthy.

Bob: Say that again.

P: I want to believe that.

Bob: Say it again. And be the part of you that
is worthy.

P: I'm worthy. (Pause.) That part of me is
buried under everybody's opinion of me. Every-
body's expectations. (Pause.) It's like I'm in a
jail. I want to be let out!

Bob: Say, "Let me out."

P: Let me out!

Bob: You've got a fantasy going. Fantasize
the jail.

P: A gold cage, circular, heavy gold bars.

Bob: You've fantasized your golden cage.

Now fantasize a way to get out.

P: I don't see any openings. No way out.

Bob: It's your fantasy. You can fantasize a
cage so you can fantasy a way to get out.

P: (Pause.) A little gold saw.

Bob: Then stop saying, "Let me out" and say,
"I'm getting out."

P: I am getting out.

Bob: Say more.

P: I'm sawing. I'm at the last piece. When I
saw through this last piece, I can swing open the
door. I swing open the door. (Pause.) Why is it
so scary to get out?

Bob: Because you'll have to find a new role,
a new way of being. Now notice how quickly
you did this work. Gold was your color. You
imagined it. You're a Golden Girl. And you
fantasized getting yourself out. Stay with that for
now.

Type Two Impasse: Don't Be Happy

Participant: I want to celebrate life. June
used those words yesterday. It's such a lovely
concept. I'd like to celebrate life.

Bob: Go ahead.

P: I don't know how.

Bob: Sure you do.

P: OK. I don't let myself. I . . . um . . .

Bob: I'm interested in what you just did with
your pant leg.

P: I twisted it. Made it tight.

Bob: And now . . .

P: I do this (mumbles) and without thinking
of what I (continues to mumble) . . .

Bob: Blaa, blaa, blaa, blaa. . . So loosen up
your pant leg and celebrate.

P: (Long pause.) I do look for what's rotten.
Always.

Bob and Mary: Not always!

Mary: For instance, in spite of the dreariness
in your household when you were little (refer-
ring to earlier work), you must have had some
moments of enjoyment.

P: Yes.

Mary: Got a scene?

P: (Pause.) I used to go on a huge rock. That
was my land. And I had my subjects and my
friends.

Mary: So you were a very creative child,
finding an imaginary world to celebrate life. Be
there on your rock.

P: It's fun. It's beautiful.

Bob: I'm beautiful and I'm fun.

P: The sun is shining. And I'm beautiful and
I'm fun (said in matter-of-fact tone).

Bob: Want to celebrate or not?

P: Yeah.

Bob: Then let your voice celebrate!

P: That's right! (With enthusiasm): I am
beautiful and I am fun!

(Later participant explores this theme again
and becomes aware that when he is sad, in
childhood as well as in his present family,
people in the family care about him, and when
he is happy he is an outcast.)

Bob: Good work! How will you celebrate
your life, your new awareness, today?

P: By having a party tonight and inviting
everyone to be happy with me.

Type Two Impasse: Take Care of Us and Don't Be a Child

Participant's contract is to have fun and stop saddling himself with responsibility for others. In the childhood scene he attempts to rescue his mother from his alcoholic father. In his current life he tries to rescue his sister from her alcoholism.

Bob: So be there in the house. Your father is drunk and you and mother are there, and what's happening?

P: Pop's yelling . . . he's calling her a lazy slut . . . and she's trying to get the bottle away from him and crying. And I get between them so he won't hurt her.

Bob: So you're the hero. Is that true?

P: Well, not really. He keeps yelling, she keeps yelling, they don't really hurt each other, and finally they go off to bed. And I'm wiped out. *(Begins to sob and cries for a long time.)* I never cried about this before. I just felt angry and burdened.

Mary: So now you know your sadness. It is sad that a boy has to spend his years like that, trying to change what is beyond his power to change. *(Long pause.)* I bet they were doing that same scene before you were born and after you finally left home.

P: Well, after I left home, he stopped drinking.

Bob: Ha! Isn't that interesting! So father changed. Now are you willing to change?

P: I sure am.

Bob: Be there, you're a kid. They're fighting. You there? OK, now look out the window. I'll bet there are interesting things you could be doing, if you'd unglue yourself from the family drama.

P: I can't leave. I'd feel guilty.

Bob: Guilty-schmilty.

P: I really wanted to play basketball.

Bob: Well?

P (voice becomes lively): I'm going to leave. They won't even notice. I'm going to the school yard and shoot baskets!

Bob: Take some guys with you. . . .

P: Hey, who wants to come?

(Workshop participants all shout that they'll play with him.)

Bob: The ball's outside. Have fun! It's break time!

(They leave the barn, laughing and shouting.) After the break:

Bob: Satisfied?

P: Yeah, sure. That was great!

Bob: You were great.

P: Yeah. I was great!

Bob: Now see your sister. Is she at home, at a bar, where is she?

P: She's on the telephone, crying and drunk, and I am trying to get her to go to AA. I know it's hopeless, because by morning she won't even remember that she called me.

Bob: Here's the telephone. *(Bob hands him an unconnected telephone that we kept in the group room for scenes such as this.)* Now tell her, "Can't talk now, sis. I'm on my way to shoot baskets!"

P: Wow! I can do that! Hey, I don't have to listen to your drunkalogs. I don't! I won't! *(He hangs up the telephone and the group cheers loudly.)*

A rededication scene does not produce magical results. Some people do change self-concepts and implement important rededications after a single session. Others need many sessions and much support. All will have a better chance at successful living if their therapists are optimistic and help them believe in themselves.

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Abstract
The magic know and ur to the needs, and to do al caring.

Psychother people are c fact, we have ever, we are psychotherapy change. Curre the mechanism tells us that o period of tim there needs to therapy (curr feelings, (2) current diffic emotions must riences to bre some cognitive ground the wo work from the need for a co therapy, and g have repeated insight and aff successful oute

Bob Gouldi together, taugh long before rese In his/their me environment in established rul group work, and people felt safe want to change it did then. The client was prep

The process about so regu "What do you