







Irvin Yalom önderliğinde organize edilen ve dünyaca ünlü terapistlerin ve terapi kuramı kurucularının, ekollerin en önemli temsilcilerinin psikoterapi seanslarını video olarak izlemek ve seans hakkındaki yorumlarını dinlemek ve bu kursları (American Psychological Association (APA) başta olmak üzere Social Workers (ASWB) New York State Social Workers (NYSED BSW) New York State Mental Health Practitioners (NYSED MHP) Certified Counselors (NBCC) Addiction Counselors (NAADAC) MFTs and LCSW (CA BBS) California Nurses (BRN) Canadian Counsellors kurumlarından CE (Continuing Education-Sürekli Eğitim) akreditasyonlu sertifikayla belgelendirmek isteseniz veritabanımıza bireysel veya kurumsal olarak erişmek için bizimle iletişime geçebilirsiniz.



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Instructor's Manual

THE LEGACY OF UNRESOLVED LOSS

A FAMILY SYSTEMS APPROACH

with Monica McGoldrick, LCSW, PhD

> by Randall C. Wyatt, PhD & Erika L. Seid, MA



The Instructor's Manual accompanies the DVD The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach (Instituional/Instructor's Version). Video available at www.psychotherapy.net.

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Teaching and Training: Instructors, training directors and facilitators

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Instructor's Manual for The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach with Monica McGoldrick, LCSW, PhD

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Instructor's Manual

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A Family Systems Approach

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS

Make notes in the video **Transcript** for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

2. SESSION-BY-SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pause the video after each session to elicit viewers' observations and reactions. The **Discussion Questions** provide ideas about key aspects of the therapeutic work that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. LET IT FLOW

Allow the sessions to play out some so viewers can appreciate the work over time instead of stopping the video too often. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage the viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the sessions? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL

Assign readings from **Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites** prior to viewing. You can also time the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

5. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER

See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

6. ROLE-PLAY

After watching the video, organize participants into groups of four or more. Assign each group to role-play a session of family therapy. Each role-play shall consist of one therapist, two or more family members of different generations, and one observer. After the role-plays, have

the groups come together to discuss their experiences. First have the clients share their experiences, then the therapists, and then ask for the comments from the observers. Open up a general discussion on what was learned about both the practical and the emotional aspects of doing therapy with a family.

Another alternative is to do all of this in front of the group with just a therapist and the family; the entire group can observe before discussing the interaction. After a while, another participant may jump in as the therapist if the therapist gets stuck or reaches an impasse. Follow up

a discussion that explores what works and does not work in working with families.

7. PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND

THE PERSONALITY OF THE

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

Session-by-SessionG roupD iscussionQ uestions

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

SESSION 1

- **1. Ethnicity:** How do you feel about the therapist's quest for details about each family member's ethnic background? How would you react if you were asked these questions early on in therapy?
- 2. **Hypothesis:** What do you think of McGoldrick's initial hypothesis about the case? Do you agree? What other hypotheses are you thinking about?

SESSION 2

- **3. Segmenting:** How do you decide when to meet separately with different segments of the family? How might these decisions backfire?
- **4. Transparency:** Are you comfortable being as transparent with clients as McGoldrick is regarding your ideas and hypotheses? If not, what keeps you from sharing these ideas?

SESSION 3

5. Shared History: How do you react to the amount of time and energy McGoldrick puts into exploring shared family history, especially regarding the life of Michelle's dead mother? Do you think there is a

risk that Michelle will try to get away with more serious acting out if she thinks the therapist is more interested in the past than in her current behavior?

6. Power Imbalance: What do think of McGoldrick's intervention where she supports Michelle to even out the power imbalance with her father?

SESSION 4

7. Being Direct: Why do you think McGoldrick speaks so strongly with David about Michelle's need to connect? Was it effective? Can you see yourself intervening so forthrightly?

SESSION 5

8. Father and Son: What countertransference reactions come up for you as you watch David interact with his son? How do these reactions help you understand the family situation?

SESSION 7

9. Asking Others: How do you feel about McGoldrick's suggestion that David get information from his aunt? Is this intervention too directive? Is it useful?

SESSION 14

10. Taking Responsibility: As clients like David begin to take more responsibility for their own growth and emotional development, how does the therapist's role change?

SESSION 18

11. Hardest Part: If you had been the therapist, what would have been the hardest part of this therapy for you? What would have pushed your buttons?

12. And you?: Would you want to have McGoldrick for a therapist? Why or why not? What worked, what didn't?

Reaction Paper for Classrooms and Training

• Assignment: Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the professor or facilitator.

• Suggestions for viewers: Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards or use the questions as a way to approach discussion. Respond to each question below.

• Length and Style: 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and

concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video–we want your ideas and reactions.

What to Write: Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

- **1. Key points** What important points did you learn about working with families? For example, how does the therapist balance the needs and challenges of the different family members? What stands out in how McGoldrick works?
- 2. What I am resistant to What issues/principles/strategies did you find yourself having resistance to, or what approaches made you feel uncomfortable? Did any techniques or interactions push your buttons? What interventions would you be least likely to apply in your work? Explore these questions.

3. What I found most helpful What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work?

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

5. Other Questions/Reactions What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?

THE LEGACY OF UNRESOLVED LOSS

Suggestions for Further Readings, Websites and Videos

BOOKS

Betty Carter & Monica McGoldrick (2005). The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives, 3rd ed. Allyn & Bacon. Monica McGoldrick (Editor) (2005). *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, Third Edition The Guilford Press. Monica McGoldrick (Editor) (2002). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy:* Race, Culture, and Gender in Clinical Practice, The Guilford Press. Monica McGoldrick, et al (1999). Genograms: Assessment and Intervention, 2nd edition. W W Norton & Co Inc. Monica McGoldrick (1998) You Can Go Home Again: Reconnecting With Your Family. Replica Books Monica McGoldrick (1991). Women in Families: A Framework for Family Therapy, New Edition. W. W. Norton & Company. Derald Wing Sue & Monica McGoldrick (2005). Multicultural Social Work Practice. Wiley.

WEB RESOURCES

www.psychotherapy.net An in-depth interview with Monica McGoldrick

www.multiculturalfamily.org The Multicultural Family Institute www.minuchincenter.org The Minuchin Center for the Family www.mri.org The Mental Research Institute

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Adolescent Family Therapy – Janet Sasson Edgette, PhD

Family Secrets: Implications for Theory and Therapy – with Evan Imber-Black, PhD

Family Systems Therapy with Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD

Making Divorce Work: A Clinical Approach to the Binuclear Family – with Constance Ahrons, PhD

Tools and Techniques for Family Therapy – John Edwards, PhD

Complete Transcript of The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach

with Monica McGoldrick, LCSW, PhD

INTRODUCTION

McGoldrick: *Hi. I'm Monica McGoldrick. When I work with families, I try to place their problems, whether individual, couple, or child-focused, into a broader context that includes extended family, community, gender, class, race, and cultural background. I do this because I believe that we are all connected to all that came before and to all that will come after. It is when these connections are severed, whether through death, divorce, or estrangement, that a part of us also dies, and that deadness can seep into all of our relationships, affecting people long after the loss has occurred. Problems often evolve in a family because of their inability to adapt to or mourn their losses.*

SESSION ONE – MICHELLE, DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick Commentary: This program presents a family in which the intergenerational ghosts of loss are hiding behind the symptoms of the present. Kathleen Rogers, the second wife of David Rogers (not their real names) made the initial appointment for her family. The guidance counselor of her stepdaughter, Michelle, had referred them to me because Michelle had been cutting school and generally acting remote and upset.

McGoldrick: Hi. You must be Michelle.

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: Hi. So, we spoke on the phone. Uh, what I'd like to do is hear a little from each of you what you see as the problem, and then I'm going to ask you some questions. We'll try to put it in some context, if that's okay. So whoever wants to go first?

David: I guess I'll begin. Well, I think you know that you were

recommended to us by Michelle's guidance counselor. She's been having some difficulty at school. There have been several incidents this year. The last one was her getting caught cutting classes. Additionally, we're very concerned about the group of kids that she's been hanging out with. They're sort of a fast crowd. We're never quite sure where she is, and so forth. Also, she seems to have this big chip on her shoulder. A lot of anger and hostility, and we're really not sure how to deal with it. And that's principally it.

McGoldrick: Okay. So Kathleen, what's your view?

Kathleen: Well, I agree. I mean, there's just a lot of tension in the household and it's not very pleasant to live like that, and... I mean, I've tried to help her deal with her anger.

McGoldrick Commentary: Something about this family's presentation

seems very flat. I'll take the guidance counselor's referral as an indication there's something wrong, but so far, all I've heard is a description of a typical teenager.

McGoldrick: What's your sense of what she's maybe angry about?

Kathleen: Well, I don't know.

McGoldrick: Okay. So, what's your view, Michelle? Would you agree that

there's a lot of tension in the family?

Michelle: I guess so.

McGoldrick: Yeah. Are there some things about what's happening at home that are upsetting you? Want to talk about it?

Michelle: No.

McGoldrick: How about school? You're okay with school? The way things are going?

Michelle: School's fine. School's great.

McGoldrick: Yeah, yeah. So is there anything that you think would be good for us to change about the way things are going, from your point of view?

Michelle: I wouldn't be so angry if they weren't so-

McGoldrick: So what?

Michelle: So wrapped up in their own, like, little world. Everything has to be just so. Everything is, "The baby this," or "The baby that," "The baby needs this."

McGoldrick: Uh-hmm. And how old is the baby?

Kathleen: She just turned two last month.

McGoldrick: She just turned two. I see. You're saying, what, that the family revolves around the baby?

Michelle: Seems so.

McGoldrick: I see. So have things changed since the baby came, since the baby's been born?

Michelle: Yeah. It's like that's the only child in the house.

McGoldrick: Well, you know what, maybe what would be good, if it's okay with you, is, let me get a little background, and ask a little bit, so I kind of know who's who.

McGoldrick Commentary: I like to do a genogram very early in the first session so that as I listen to details of the presenting problem, I have a context in which to put them.

McGoldrick: Now, you were married before?

David: That's right.

McGoldrick: [to Michelle] And you have an older brother. Is that right? [Michelle nods]

David: Julian.

McGoldrick: And how old is he?

David: 21.

McGoldrick: He's 21. And, Michelle, you're 15? What's your birth date, exactly?

Michelle: November 5, 1979.

McGoldrick: Okay. And your first wife's name?

David: Diane.

McGoldrick: Diane. She died when? How long was it?

David: She died August 15, 1991.

McGoldrick: I'll come back to her. But let me understand, now. The two of you were married when?

Kathleen: June 10, 1992.

McGoldrick: Okay. And you, together, have a daughter?

Kathleen: Jade.

McGoldrick: Okay. And she was born when?

David: Excuse me, just a second. Is this really necessary for us to go into

all these dates? Uh, I mean, it seems like we're here because of Michelle's problem, and I'm just wondering whether we're, you know, whether we can use time a little better.

McGoldrick: Right. Well, I'll tell you. From my perspective, you

never know what part of the history may turn out to be relevant to the presenting problem. But very specifically, what your daughter said was that she's been upset since Jade was born. Now that may, you know, I don't know exactly what that means. But surely, the specific time when she was born would make some difference in that you must have had to a lot of family rearranging around her birth, no? Okay. And Julian, by the way, where is he?

David: He's at Colorado College.

McGoldrick: And he's what year? He's been away for how long?

David: He's 21.

McGoldrick: He's 21. But how many years has he been away from-

Michelle: He's a junior.

McGoldrick: He's a junior. Now, let me get a little bit about your background. How many were in your family that you grew up in?

David: Just me, my mother and father.

McGoldrick: I see. You had no brothers or sisters?

David: No.

McGoldrick: Really. They didn't want to have any other children? Do you know anything about that?

David: Well, uh, there was actually a child born before me, about two years before me.

McGoldrick: Really.

McGoldrick Commentary: Asking why a person was an only child can sometimes uncover important family history.

McGoldrick: It was a son or a daughter?

David: A son. And he was born with only a partially formed stomach, and so he couldn't take in nutrients, and, uh—

McGoldrick: What was his name?

David: David.

McGoldrick Commentary: The fact that he was given the same name as

his dead brother suggested that he may have been a replacement child for parents.

McGoldrick: Did that ever seem kind of, I don't know, spooky or something, to have the same name as your brother?

David: [laughing a little] Not really. Why?

McGoldrick Commentary: Although David makes light of this, I wonder if it intensified his role as an only child.

McGoldrick: Now, is your father alive?

David: No.

McGoldrick: When did he die?

David: He died December 30, 1977.

McGoldrick: What did he do for work?

David: Banker.

McGoldrick: I see. And how did he die?

David: Well, uh, complications due to liver disease.

McGoldrick: Really. Was he a drinker?

David: Well, uh, he certainly wasn't an alcoholic, but he enjoyed drinking.

McGoldrick Commentary: Asking about the cause of death, especially if it was premature, can sometimes reveal problems, such as alcoholism or suicide.

David: He could drink quite a bit at a party, but, uh-

McGoldrick: I know this is sort of hard to talk about, sometimes, different things in your family, but did anybody else ever think that he had an alcohol problem?

David: No.

McGoldrick: No.

David: No.

McGoldrick: Not your mother, for example?

David: No.

McGoldrick: Really.

McGoldrick Commentary: Although David rejects the suggestion of alcoholism, I'm not totally convinced. I may revisit this question once we've established a greater level of trust.

McGoldrick: Now, is your mother alive?

David: No.

McGoldrick: When did she die?

David: She died in '87.

McGoldrick: And how old was she?

David: She was... I think she was 65.

McGoldrick: What was her name?

David: Edith.

McGoldrick: Edith. So, they never had any other children, your parents? There were no miscarriages or anything?

David: Yeah, there were a couple, I think, in my early childhood.

McGoldrick: Really.

David: Um, mid-'50s, '54, '55, something like that. I guess they wanted one more child, and it didn't happen.

McGoldrick: I see.

McGoldrick Commentary: I ask about miscarriages and stillbirths because these losses are often glossed over with little resolution, and can be more important than anyone realizes.

McGoldrick: So now, can we talk a little bit about your family?

Kathleen: Um, sure. Yes.

McGoldrick: I appreciate that you may not know exactly where I'm going with this, but to me it's really important to kind of get a sense of who people are and where they're coming from. So how many are in your family?

Kathleen: There's myself, and I have a half-brother named Matthew. My parents are divorced.

McGoldrick Commentary: In contrast to David's rather flat description of

his family, Kathleen was actively uncomfortable talking about her working class, Irish-German background. The first in her family to attend college, she quit after her second year when her father died unexpectedly. She has very little contact with her mother, stepfather, and half-brother, who moved to Florida shortly after the second marriage.

LATER IN SESSION ONE

McGoldrick: What's your family background, ethnically?

David: Ethnically? [laughing] Uh, I don't know. I don't have an ethnic background. Uh, I'm, uh—

McGoldrick: Where did your ancestors come from? Do you know?

David: England.

McGoldrick Commentary: I believe strongly that people's cultural

background plays a profound role in how they see the world and how they define their problems. I try always to help them locate themselves in this context, since our society tries so hard to pretend that culture, like race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, doesn't matter, when in fact these dimensions structure our very existence.

David: I'm a WASP. I'm white bread with the crust removed, you know?

McGoldrick: And where'd you grow up?

David: Westport, Connecticut.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. Were you pretty close to your parents?

David: Reasonably so.

McGoldrick: Who were you closer to?

David: My mother, I guess.

McGoldrick: Really. How would you describe your childhood, in a word?

David: Well, I'd just describe it as a pretty happy upper-middle-class, you know, family.

McGoldrick: Yeah, um-hmm, okay.

McGoldrick Commentary: David seems to have little sense of himself as an emotional being. I wonder if this is just a result of his upper-middleclass WASP background, or if something else is inhibiting him. LATER IN SESSION ONE McGoldrick: So. is Matthew married? Kathleen: No. McGoldrick: Does he have any kids? Kathleen: Yes. McGoldrick: How many kids? Kathleen: One. McGoldrick: Um-hmm. And how old? Kathleen: Uh, I think he's three. McGoldrick: And where does he live? Kathleen: Uh, he lives in Florida. McGoldrick: Um-hmm. What's his name? Kathleen: Ethan, I think. McGoldrick: You're not in touch with him?

Kathleen: No.

McGoldrick Commentary: Cutoffs such as this usually indicate something seriously amiss in the family process. I'll explore this later with Kathleen, hoping to encourage her to reconnect.

McGoldrick: Let me go back a little bit now and ask about [to Michelle] your mother. Now, her name was—

David: Diane.

McGoldrick: Diane. And you mentioned before she died in August-

David: Of '91.

McGoldrick: Of '91. Now, tell me a little bit about her background. What was her—

David: She grew up in Puerto Rico.

McGoldrick: So... [to Michelle] You look like you like that. Do you?

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: You think of yourself as part Puerto Rican?

Michelle: Absolutely.

McGoldrick: Yeah?

Michelle: I am, aren't I?

McGoldrick: You sure are. But that's important to you, that part of your identity?

Michelle: Yeah.

McGoldrick: Uh-huh.

McGoldrick Commentary: This was the first sign of life in this session,

and I went right toward it. I was also very interested in the Puerto Rican connection, since this choice of a wife seemed so out of character for David.

McGoldrick: Have you ever been to Puerto Rico?

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: Really. Tell me about that.

Michelle: I went a couple of times during the summer.

McGoldrick: Really. Your whole family went, or what?

Michelle: No, just me.

McGoldrick: Really. How did that happen?

Michelle: Well the first time was to visit family and stuff, and after that my mom got sick and my parents didn't think that it was the best idea for me to stick around, so they sent me down there.

McGoldrick: And how old were you when your mother got sick?

Michelle: Ten, eleven.

McGoldrick: So, you said you had family down there. Who's down there?

Michelle: My grandmother was down there. I used to go visit and stay with her. But I also have cousins and aunts and uncles.

McGoldrick: Really. What's your grandmother's name?

Michelle: Aba.

McGoldrick: Aba.

Michelle: Well, that's what I called her, anyway.

David: Carmen.

McGoldrick: Carmen.

David: Her name is Carmen.

McGoldrick: Okay. So she's still in Puerto Rico?

Michelle: Yeah, but buried.

McGoldrick: You mean she died?

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: Really. How long ago?

Michelle: Three months ago. February 15th.

McGoldrick: Were you close to her?

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: Really. How did she die?

Michelle: She just died.

McGoldrick: Really. How old was she?

Michelle: I don't know.

David: She had been sick for many years. She had Alzheimer's disease. She was in a home—

McGoldrick Commentary: No matter how many genograms I do, I'm still

amazed at the hidden family issues this technique reveals.

McGoldrick: But when you were younger, during the time your mother

was ill, you were very close to her?

Michelle: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: What was your wife's illness?

David: Well, she had a kind of leukemia.

McGoldrick: I see.

David: And so, in the beginning, there was a lot of chemotherapy.

McGoldrick: Really.

David: And, uh, during that period of time, the first year of her illness,

she, uh, she would have periods where she was sort of okay.

McGoldrick: Uh-hmm.

David: But the second year, um, it got very bad.

McGoldrick: So you felt maybe it would be easier if Michelle were-

David: Away from it.

McGoldrick Commentary: David seemed to be going along with this painful discussion of his wife's death, so I was unprepared for his reaction to what I

thought was a rather innocuous question about Michelle's grandmother.

McGoldrick: So it sounds like you were very close to your grandmother. Were you?

David: Uh, excuse me, Monica. Uh, I really have to ask the question again where this is leading. I mean, we've really wasted most of this session going back on this ancient history, and what I'm really afraid of is that we're not going to focus on the problem that we came in here to address, which is Michelle's misbehavior. And I'm very concerned that she's going to take

this as a cue that this is some sort of an excuse.

McGoldrick: Was there something about that that got, I don't know-

David: No, it's just that, you know, she really wasn't very close to her grandmother—that's the point of fact—and I just am afraid that if we just keep harping on this stuff here, we're not going to deal with what's going on with Michelle at school.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

David: Now, I really feel like, if we're going to go on with this, I need to know how long this is going to take. I mean, I'm a lawyer and I work with contracts. And we have to tell clients, we have to tell them, you know, how long something is going to take and what it's going to cost.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. Well, in some ways this is a little bit different situation, you know. It's very hard, until I get a sense of what the story is, to know how to, exactly, help you to figure—

David: Can you give us a ballpark figure?

McGoldrick: Sure, sure, sure. And I feel very strongly about being accountable to you, so I, you know, you're going to have to feel okay with the process. In a general way, that's going to take us a few sessions. You know, what I would say is if, after we've met three or four times, you feel as you do now, that this is, you know, what does this have to do with anything, then I would say, let's really talk about it. But until we get a sense of what the history is, and how that may relate to whatever is happening right now, both in your family and for her at school, I kind of need to get oriented to this.

David: All right, well, I think we have to think about it.

Kathleen: Dear, I think we should do it, all right?

David: Well, let's give it another try.

McGoldrick: Okay.

Kathleen: All right.

McGoldrick: But keep letting me know if this is not, you know... [to Michelle] Now, how are you with this idea? What do you think about coming here?

Michelle: Beats being grounded.

McGoldrick Commentary: In the first session, we dealt primarily with the new nuclear family and the previous nuclear family, as well as with all three families of origin. We'll focus on specific relationships as therapy continues. My hypothesis at this point is that David never really mourned the loss of his first wife, and rushed into a second marriage. I suspect that Michelle has not gotten over her mother's death, and does not feel a part of the new family. Perhaps that pain is resurfacing for her, triggered by her grandmother's death. I also suspect that Kathleen has helped David in the cover up of his losses, a typical female task of protecting the husband and children. The first challenge here is to get David and Michelle to mourn Diane. I'm also concerned that Kathleen's role as caretaker will put her at risk for depression down the road.

SESSION TWO – MICHELLE, DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick: So, how are things?

David: Uh, Monica, I've been thinking a lot about last week, and, um, I still feel that it's important that we focus on the present and not so much on the past.

McGoldrick: Um.

David: Um, I mean, we spent a good deal of the session last week, as an example, talking about Michelle's grandmother, who Michelle saw for all of about four months total in her entire life, and I really think we need to focus on the present and Michelle's behavior, which is continuing to be very difficult.

McGoldrick: I have to tell you that, from my perspective, the past really influences the present in such important ways that we cannot not deal with that.

McGoldrick Commentary: I haven't been able to forge a connection with David yet, so I don't have a strong enough footing to confront his resistance. Instead, I'll go with his concerns and look for ways to connect them with the family history that seems to be the cause of their current distress.

McGoldrick: But I'll tell you what. Let's start with what's happening

now, that, you know, obviously there's something that you wanted me to understand that you think I don't yet understand. So why don't you tell me what that is.

Kathleen: Well, the... May I start?

David: Go ahead, go ahead.

Kathleen: Thank you, dear. Well, this past week Michelle has been listening to this new rap music that goes thug, thug, or something, and it pounds continually. I think it's these kids that she's hanging out with that are—

McGoldrick Commentary: Note how Kathleen jumps in to protect David

from having to express his feelings. It may be that he's so disconnected from the family that he doesn't really know what the trouble is.

David: Kathleen really gets the brunt of it because, you know, I'm at work all day and I come home late and I hear these tales. And it's, it's...

McGoldrick: Well I'm not really clear. What is it, exactly, that bothers you? The music bothers you, and what they wear bothers you.

McGoldrick Commentary: There's something here that just doesn't wash.

When parents make superficial criticisms of their children's friends, I often find it's a code for class or culture.

Kathleen: They're from an area that I think is really bad for Michelle to go down to.

David: You just feel-

Kathleen: I don't feel... I'm sorry.

David: Go ahead.

Kathleen: I just don't feel that she's safe with these kids.

McGoldrick: Now, is it... I know you're relatively new to the situation, but is it your sense that Michelle has changed the friends she hangs out with? That she used to have a different group of friends?

Michelle: No, they're black and Puerto Rican kids. That's what they don't like.

David: No, that's not it at all.

Michelle: Yeah...

David: It's their behavior. It's got nothing to do with their color or race or anything.

Michelle: [sarcastically] Okay.

Kathleen: Michelle, I grew up with blacks and Puerto Ricans. I'm used to them. No, it's not what they are, it's what they are doing that we're upset about.

David: I mean, these kids-

Kathleen: And we're concerned.

McGoldrick: Tell me a little bit about your friends, what they're like.

Michelle: I met them at this summer theater group that I was in last year, and they're all, they're all into this, you know, really cool stuff.

McGoldrick: Really. Like what?

Michelle: Carlos writes poetry, writes some good stuff, too. It's really, really deep. And Serena's in this Latin folk band, and they mix a lot of different kinds of music styles in it.

McGoldrick: Do you kind of feel connected to them in some way because

it's like part of your heritage we were talking about last time?

Michelle: Yeah, they know where I'm coming from, you know? They're my people.

McGoldrick: And what do you think about your father and Kathleen's

concerns about that? That, um, I mean, obviously they care about you and they care where you're going. And it sounds like they're really worried about your connection to these friends. Should they be?

Michelle: Concerned? I would think that they would want me to be happy.

Hanging out with them makes me happy.

McGoldrick Commentary: I'm reframing the parents' criticism as concern

to see if Michelle sees any validity at all in their comments.

Kathleen: I don't care if you hang out with them, but I'm not happy that

Serena just got a tattoo, and that you think that's very cool.

Michelle: It's one of those ones that washes off in two weeks.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

LATER IN SESSION TWO

McGoldrick Commentary: Adolescents generally don't reveal themselves in front of their parents, so I met with Michelle alone to get to know her better.

McGoldrick: I thought it'd be a good idea for us to get to talk alone a little bit, because I'm not really sure what's happening here with your parents. I talked to your guidance counselor, and she says, you know, she's known you, she thinks you're basically a terrific kid, but you've really been different the past couple of months. So she was sort of worried about it. That's what she said why she referred you, and I don't know what you think about that. I mean, do you think she should be worried?

Michelle: I mean, I'm not really... I'm not really doing anything, you know, major. Yeah, I cut a couple of classes here and there, and yeah, you know—

McGoldrick: But from what she told me, it's different. Because she said, you know, you've always been a good student, uh... You've been really hassling some of your teachers, cutting in ways that you never did before, and her sense is something's happening. Your parents' fantasies are obviously going wild. I think it comes from really caring about you, so you need to know that.

Michelle: I mean, I know that a major thing that we're in conflict with is

that they don't like the friends that I've, you know, that I've been hanging out with lately. But, you know, they think that... they just assume that just because, you know, they're black and they're Puerto Rican that they're, you know, that they're doing all these things, like, that, you know, that that's all that we see in the media and TV and stuff, and it's not like that, you know? They're really cool kids and, you know, there are just so many things that I can do with them that, you know, none of my other friends in the past ever really could understand or could... I feel like I can relate to some of them in ways that I was never able to relate with anybody else.

McGoldrick: So you feel like you share interests, like you were talking

about Carlos and writing poems, and-

Michelle: Yeah.

McGoldrick: and your other friend.

Michelle: Yeah.

McGoldrick: Serena.

Michelle: Serena.

McGoldrick: So why do your parents, do you think, think that these kids are going nowhere? Do they know these kids?

Michelle: No. They haven't even given them a chance.

McGoldrick: Really.

Michelle: They're just going to listen to what, you know, other parents are

saying, or whatever, just because they're not from the same neighborhood. Right away that means that there's something wrong with them.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. But, I mean, you can understand yourself that, because you must see it with other kids, that it's easy to get in with the wrong crowd. It's easy to get into a situation where peer pressure can become a real problem.

Michelle: Yeah, but that's not me. That's not me.

McGoldrick: Okay, well, I'm just asking, because I don't know you, you know.

McGoldrick Commentary: *Her reaction here seems pretty genuine. I don't think that her new friends are the problem.*

McGoldrick: And, because it sounds like there has been a recent change,

and that's what I'm trying to figure out, is what happened recently? I mean, I know last time you were saying that, at home, the focus seems to be on the baby. But the baby's two. I mean, that's not that recent. What do you think is upsetting your parents so much now?

Michelle: Just that I'm hanging out with Puerto Rican kids.

McGoldrick: Why? Why is that so upsetting to them?

Michelle: I don't know why it's so upsetting to them, but you saw yourself. I mean, when my father was talking about my grandmother, it was like she was a non-person.

McGoldrick: He doesn't know how connected you were to her?

Michelle: What did it sound like?

McGoldrick: No, I mean, that's true, but... I don't know. I couldn't really tell what that was about. Have you ever talked to him about what that means to you?

Michelle: No. He wouldn't understand. He wouldn't get it.

McGoldrick: Really. Do you miss your mother?

Michelle: Do I miss my mother? Yeah.

McGoldrick: Was there something that was triggered when your grandmother died?

Michelle: My father, like, wants to ignore that it even, like, had any relevance in my life.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm.

Michelle: But... I was with my grandmother when I found out about my mother dying.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm.

Michelle: She was the one that was there for me, not my father. And it should have been him.

McGoldrick: Have you ever talked to him about that?

Michelle: He wouldn't... No.

McGoldrick: He wouldn't what?

Michelle: It's like he's not there.

McGoldrick: Okay, but maybe that's the issue. I mean, maybe, you know,

maybe you and he just need to get connected in a way that has really been missing for you. I don't know, that's what it sounds like. That he doesn't know where you've been at.

Michelle: He doesn't even take the time to try to find out, either. So how

can he know?

McGoldrick Commentary: This is a real break. So far, I haven't seen

anyway to get David to deal with his grief. Michelle needs to confront him about his being shut down with her. If David sees that this is hurting their relationship, it may motivate him to face up to his own unresolved mourning.

McGoldrick: I think maybe we need to talk about this, and that some of his resistance about the relevance of your history, you can tell him about. I mean, I can't... you know. He's not going to hear it from me, but he's going to hear it from you, and he's going to know that that's what's relevant. Because that's history that you and he share, you know?

Michelle: But he doesn't ever want to talk about it.

McGoldrick: Well, you know, maybe it's time to talk about it.

Michelle: You heard him when he was here. He said why are we even talking about stuff that has to do with the past?

McGoldrick: Okay, but you can help him to understand that, and I'll help vou.

McGoldrick Commentary: Because of the uneven power relationship

between Michelle and her father, I wanted to make it very clear that I would lend my support to her attempt to discuss their shared history. While we were alone, I also checked about her use of drugs and alcohol, and felt reasonably confident that this was not a problem. I then met with David and Kathleen to give them my assessment of Michelle.

LATER IN SESSION TWO – DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick: It's clear to me that she feels not as well connected to you, that she cannot really talk to you, that she has not talked to you. She said that she's never been able to talk to you about her mother's death. When you say to me, "Let's forget the history, we've got to deal with this present problem," the sense I have is that the present problem is related to the history, and the fact that you and she cannot share the history matters. And I think we need to just talk to her about it.

McGoldrick Commentary: This is David and Michelle's history, before

Kathleen's time. I want her to stay out of the discussion, but I want her to be present for two reasons: it's history she should know about, and I don't want her to feel excluded from the therapy.

McGoldrick: I think this relates to a history that's before your time, you

know? If you were God, I don't think you could get it right with Michelle until she feels better connected to her father, and better able to deal with the loss of her mother. So I think that some of what you're very irritated

about with her in terms—I mean, some of it is just being a teenager, let's face it—but some of it is that she is struggling to put together a history that was before your time, you know? And I think she needs to work it out with her father, and that it's not, it's not your problem. You know what I mean?

Kathleen: Um-hmm.

SESSION THREE – DAVID, MICHELLE

McGoldrick: Do you remember how you first found out that she was ill?

Michelle: She called me and Julian into her bedroom and-

McGoldrick: Your father wasn't there?

Michelle: No. He was working.

McGoldrick: Really. And what did she say?

Michelle: She just said that she was, she said, "Mommy's sick," and not to worry, that everything was going to be fine, but, um, if she wasn't able to do some of the things that she, you know, sometime in the near future, that—

McGoldrick: Have you ever talked to your father about this?

David: You know, I was concerned about, uh, you know, upsetting them too much. I thought that it might actually be counterproductive in terms of Diane's wellbeing.

McGoldrick: Hmm. Um, before, you made reference to how hard it was.

She had a lot of pain in the last period?

David: She lost a great deal of weight and, um... Do we really have to talk about this?

McGoldrick: You know, I think it matters a lot for you and your daughter to share. I know that it's hard.

David: She lost a great deal of weight, uh-

McGoldrick: Are you okay with that? Do you see why it matters for her? [David nods]

David: She, uh... In the end she was in the hospital for about three months, total, and, um, she, um, gradually became weaker and, um, of

course, she was, she was connected up to an IV most of the time.

McGoldrick: Now you said before, Michelle, that you had actually been with your grandmother at the time your mother actually died. How did that happen?

Michelle: Well, they sent me to Puerto Rico, so I was down there when I found out that she died.

McGoldrick: Really. How long had you been there?

Michelle: I was... at that point I was probably there already for almost two months, a month and a half.

McGoldrick: Do you remember when you found out that she had died?

Michelle: Like it was yesterday.

McGoldrick: Really. What do you remember?

McGoldrick Commentary: I often find that asking a client to recall specific details of a painful event elicits a more genuine emotional response.

Michelle: I was in Aba's kitchen and I was cutting up the peppers for the

sofrito, because she was going to make some rice and beans, and the phone rang in the living room. But I could see, I could see her. It's like the kitchen [gesturing], and then there was the living room, and I think I almost knew even when the phone rang, but she picked up the phone, and she stood there, and she just, she dropped the phone and she started screaming, "Oh my god, oh my god! Not my baby! Not my baby!" And I knew.

McGoldrick Commentary: *I find it's very important to give people the time to work through moments like this.*

McGoldrick: And then what? Did you and you grandmother come up

together for the funeral, or how did that happen?

Michelle: I stayed down there.

McGoldrick: What do you mean you stayed down there?

Michelle: My father called me later on that day and said, um, "You might

as well just stay the month and wait until your flight at the end of the month to come home."

David: See, I thought that, um, I gave some thought to whether she should

come back for the funeral, and for awhile I thought that would be a good idea, but then, after thinking about it some more, I thought, well, she's going to be hanging around a funeral home for a few hours, and, uh, going through all that—

McGoldrick: Can I interrupt you? Can I ask you, what are you feeling now about this?

McGoldrick Commentary: I didn't want David to distance himself from

these feelings, so I tried to bring him back into the moment. His response came as a complete surprise.

David: I really had no idea, Michelle, that you felt so strongly.

Michelle: She was my mother!

David: Not about your mother, of course, but the whole thing with your grandmother. I had somehow put that behind me, and it seems so long ago, and I feel very guilty that I didn't tell you about your grandmother's death.

McGoldrick: What do you mean?

David: Well, I just... Frankly, I just didn't think it was important at the time.

McGoldrick: I don't know what you're referring... You didn't know your grandmother died?

Michelle: Well, I sort of found out.

McGoldrick: What do you mean?

David: Well, there was this phone message, apparently, that Alicia, my

wife's sister, called from Puerto Rico telling us about Carmen's death, and, uh—

Michelle: And I came home from school and heard it.

McGoldrick: Now this is just recently, right? This is just a few months ago.

Michelle: Yeah.

McGoldrick: Yeah?

Michelle: I came home from school. I heard it.

McGoldrick: Yeah?

Michelle: And I just, I went to my room, and then Kathleen came home later on, and she played the messages, and I heard her play the messages, and, um, I expected that afterward she was going to, you know, come say something to me, or come to my room.

David: It wasn't her fault. She talked to me about it.

Michelle: And nothing. Nobody said nothin'.

McGoldrick: So, so when did you talk about it?

Michelle: We didn't.

David: Well, I was so busy that week, and I just thought about Carmen

as someone that Michelle had very little, you know, connection with anymore. We don't talk about Carmen. And, uh, I remembered it later in the week. And we did talk briefly about it then.

Michelle: We talked about it? You said, "Oh, by the way, remember

Carmen from Puerto Rico? Well, she died."

David: I understand.

Michelle: We really talked about it. I said, yeah, thanks for telling me.

McGoldrick: So the two of you have really never talked about any of this, it sounds like.

McGoldrick Commentary: I was impressed, and I have to say astonished,

at how much David seemed to be connecting with his daughter and her emotional experience. You can never be too sure you know how another person will react. I would have thought it would have taken a lot more for David to open up like that.

McGoldrick: I mean, you know, this is making me think that maybe some of what's gotten you upset, Michelle, the past few months, is really that Carmen's death just kind of brought this whole thing back, and that maybe the lack of connection between the two of you has just, you know, it has just gotten too big. And that you really, I mean, she really needs you, obviously. And maybe some, some of what you've said about your Puerto Rican friends is a part of, you know, something very natural, really: that you didn't get to have your mother as long as you needed her. And so, it's

part of finding out who you are, you know? What did your mother do? I mean, did she work or something?

Michelle: She used to write plays.

David: Actually, uh, Diane and I met, uh, when I was in graduate school. I was a bit of a rebel in those days and, uh, she was in a writing program at Columbia, and, uh—

McGoldrick: Really?

David: Yeah, and she wrote this political piece that I got involved in.

McGoldrick: No kidding.

David: I did a couple of plays back then.

McGoldrick: Really. You don't seem like the type, if you don't mind my saying so.

Michelle: You were in plays, Dad?

David: Yeah, I did a couple of plays.

Michelle: Go figure.

McGoldrick Commentary: When people disconnect because of the pain of their losses, they often bury important parts of themselves, as well.

McGoldrick: Well, you know, I think this is really important, that there's a lot that matters to share, you know? That we all carry our history with us, you know? And that probably there is a lot of what you know about Diane that matters. Now let me ask you something. I'm very conscious that Julian is not here, you know? And, of course, he's a part of this history, too. When... is there some possibility that we could get him in, too?

David: I don't think that's possible. He's in Colorado, so-

McGoldrick: See, to me, this is the same point. Just as she needs you to be her father, maybe this is important for him, too. She needs her brother, and he needs to be a part of this. You know, it was his mother, too.

David: I suppose. That's a very expensive weekend.

McGoldrick: But it's a very valuable family, isn't it? A part of you knows this is really crucial, but I still think it really matters, you know?

SESSION FOUR - MICHELLE, DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick Commentary: Focusing on David and Michelle's shared memories of Diane would, of course, disrupt the new family balance, and it was predictable that Kathleen would react. Although I tried to prepare her for this, she still came in very agitated the next week.

McGoldrick: So what's happening here?

Kathleen: Well, I'll tell you what's happening here. This one, two nights ago, traipsed in at 3:00 in the morning. She was supposed to stay and baby sit for me while I go shopping. She bolts out of the door and runs down the street. I have to stay because I've got Jade in my hands. I can't reach her.

Michelle: You're kidding, right?

Kathleen: Wait a second. She never even calls to let me know. I'm up all night worrying about her, not knowing where the hell she is. He comes in, he just sits there and says, "Well, we'll just wait, see what happens." I'm thinking, what is wrong?

David: I didn't just sit there.

Kathleen: Oh, you didn't? Well what did you do? Did you try-

David: I told her that we were going to talk about it with her the next day.

Kathleen: We were going to talk about it like it was like something, like she went out to have a cup of tea!

David: I wasn't going to have a long, drawn out conversation at 3:00 in the morning.

Michelle: I went to-

Kathleen: She's 15 years old!

McGoldrick Commentary: I think Michelle's staying out until three a.m.,

and David's withdrawing, are reactions to last week's session. But not surprisingly, it's Kathleen who acts as the lightning rod.

Michelle: Why were you asking me to baby sit for Jade?

Kathleen: Excuse me, I'm sorry, that concert is not as important as this family, and even though I am not part of the original family, I seem to be the only one that's taking that as the priority instead of the two of you,

who have your brother coming in.

Michelle: How is babysitting for Jade more the pri-

Kathleen: Because I was going shopping to get ready for Julian.

David: Michelle, you acted very irresponsibly, all right?

Kathleen: Oh, David, you sound like a priest.

David: Oh come on, come on.

McGoldrick: I know you're upset, I know you're upset, and I know you've been trying to solve this. We talked about it since before you guys came here.

Michelle: She's like this all the time.

Kathleen: You know, excuse me. Why do I feel all of a sudden that I am being picked on? I am the mother, now, in charge. I mean, the other mother is gone.

McGoldrick: You know, you know why, I think? You know what I-

Michelle: You're not my mother, okay?

Kathleen: Excuse me, I'm not your mother, but I'm your stepmother.

McGoldrick: Excuse me a sec. Kathleen, you know what I think? I think you've been trying to solve a problem that you can't solve, which is, you're the one who's on the line, because you're the one there. You know? It's like, you're in the role of mother, and mothers are expected to take care of their children. But as we discussed before, you're not the mother, you don't have the leverage here, and you can't do it.

Kathleen: But you're not getting David to do anything about it.

David: I'm doing the ab-

Kathleen: Things are getting worse. They're not getting better.

David: I am doing the absolute best I can right now, all right?

McGoldrick Commentary: *My priority here was to get David to make a firm commitment to his parenting responsibilities. But first I wanted to talk with Michelle to make sure that her staying out late wasn't a sign of more serious trouble. After seeing her alone for a few minutes, I met with David and Kathleen.*

LATER IN SESSION FOUR – DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick: Listen, I think we need to get this whole situation into some kind of perspective, you know? If you think about Michelle in terms of what's happening, she really is a good kid, you know? There is a lot to worry about, and she's like, terrific, actually.

McGoldrick Commentary: When I'm trying to get a parent to change

behavior toward a child, I don't want the child present because I don't want the parent to lose face.

McGoldrick: Let me just finish my thought here. For her to stay out until 3:00 by herself is serious, because whatever kind of a good kid she is, it's dangerous. So believe me, I'm not saying, "Hey, yo! Let her decide her own curfew. That's fine." I'm not saying that at all. She needs to know from you that you really mean it. That you're going to know when she doesn't come in at 11:00 at night. That you really mean it when you say, "Call,"—no ifs, ands, or buts—and that there really are consequences. She loves you. She needs you. And I don't think you really get that. And honestly, that's why I think you're flipping out about this, because I think emotionally you're much more in touch with the real dangers, with what's really going on with teenagers, with what's really going on around, and that you're the one who's going to be able to reassure her, not me, by making sure you really follow through.

David: You know, I think I understand you, but I just feel like I can only do this within limits. I mean, I feel in some ways that I'm being drawn and quartered, because I have a very, very stressful job right now and, uh—

McGoldrick: But you can't just do it to a certain extent. Because Kathleen is right, she could be lost if you do not connect with her. She could well get lost. She's not lost now; she's terrific. I'm saying this because I'm trying to really get through to you, but I don't think you understand this. The fact that she connected with me as well as she has in so few sessions is remarkable. She is really seeking to be connected, but you've got to take the opportunity. She really needs you. She needs you to do more than just, sort of, when you're around, sort of say half-heartedly, you're grounded, or something.

David: I'm under a lot of pressure too, you know. You know, when you

think about what's happened over the last four years, you're talking about the death of a wife, you're talking about remarrying. We've just had another child.

McGoldrick: But what are you saying, really? Where are you going to go? You know, she's 15. At 18, she's going to be gone. You have three years, and she's going to be gone. You can either do it or not do it. Those are the only two options that I can see.

McGoldrick Commentary: Some therapists would take exception to my

urging David like this, but I've found that many clients are receptive to this kind of direct verbal intervention.

David: Well, all I can say is, I can try to do it to the best of my ability. That's all I can say.

McGoldrick: You know, work is a good excuse, and it's also, frankly, an excuse that a lot of men use to avoid very painful things that men in our society are not socialized to be able to deal with easily. You can use that. I'm urging you to think about doing it a different way. And I think you can do it. I was actually very struck at how emotionally present you were last week. That you, I mean, when you were able to recognize what not dealing with Carmen meant for your daughter, I mean, I was really astonished, actually, at your being able to be that in touch with her emotionally to realize that. But it matters.

David: It was very upsetting to me because I thought we were making some progress.

McGoldrick: What I actually think happened this week—which, it's very common to have, you know, people begin to move with something that's important, and then they get scared and back off—what I think happened is for what reasons, I'm not sure, something triggered Michelle to do something which it is worse than any of the acting out we've talked about before. I suspect it's in reaction to what happened here last week: that she somehow got scared. Now what reason, I don't exactly know, but I think it's very much in relation to what we were talking about: that she really needs to deal with who her mother was for her, that a lot of who she is is tied up with all of that history that she's got to be able to deal with.

SESSION FIVE - DAVID, JULIAN, MICHELLE

McGoldrick: Can we talk about the period when your mother was ill?

McGoldrick Commentary: Julian came from Colorado for the next session. He was understandably uncomfortable, especially when talking about his mother's death. Julian: I knew she was really sick, very, very sick, kind of in and out of the hospital.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. Julian: And so, like, we were alone a lot of the

time, I mean...

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. Julian: You know?

McGoldrick: Do you remember when she died? Julian: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: Where were you? How did you find out? Julian: Um, this is,

our... the lady who sort of took care of the house and everything. Jackie.

McGoldrick: So your father called her or something? Julian: I guess. Yeah.

David: I called Jackie, and she was at the house, and I told her to tell Julian, and that I would be home as soon as possible.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. And do you remember what happened when you saw Julian?

David: I don't, uh, I don't remember that.

McGoldrick: You said before, Julian, that you've never discussed a lot of this with him and you don't know what his feelings were. Are there things you'd like to know that you'd like to ask him about? Julian: Yeah, yeah, I think it's, uh... I just want to know, you know, you never, there was never... you never communicated anything to us. I mean, it's like, even when we were kids, I mean, I know you were there, but I never felt like you really were there.

McGoldrick Commentary: Bringing young adult children who have left

home into therapy can be very powerful, giving them a safe place to express difficult feelings. Julian: You know, I mean, I love you because you're my father, you know? And sometimes I just think, I don't know, did you really... I mean, I know you loved us, but... like, were we a burden to you? Did we—

David: No. Julian: Did we... what... you know, am I... do I make you

proud of who I am? Do I, you know, I mean, sometimes I just don't know what to think anymore. I mean, I know you loved Mom, but, god, you remarried so quickly. I mean, it's all of these things. I just don't understand it. You know, it's like, I want to come home, but I don't want to come home. I don't feel comfortable in my own house. I don't know, I don't...

McGoldrick Commentary: Note how effectively these thoughts, coming

from Julian, get through David's defenses. I could work with David for weeks without eliciting such a deep response. Julian: I'm sorry. I don't mean to make you feel bad or anything, but—

McGoldrick: Try to express it.

David: Of course I love you. I feel... I feel like you're talking about someone else. I hear what you say, and some of it must be true, but I feel like you're talking about someone else. Of course I love you both. Julian: I didn't mean that. I mean, I know you love us, but, I mean...[to Michelle] I don't know. What do you think?

McGoldrick Commentary: For the rest of the session, David and his

children shared memories of Diane and of her death.

McGoldrick: I mean, I think that's one of the worst things you could ever

go through is to lose your spouse and have young children.

David: It's certainly the worst thing I ever had to go through.

McGoldrick Commentary: Shared rituals can help reinforce family connectedness. This was especially important in this case because Michelle hadn't even been at her mother's funeral.

LATER IN SESSION FIVE

McGoldrick: But you know what I'm thinking, that you never talked about this. I mean, we're saying that you've never shared it. But also, the fact that Michelle wasn't even here when you had the funeral. Maybe, even though that's that many years ago, it would help if you would take your children to the grave now.

David: Um, do you think that would be helpful? Julian: Well, yeah.

McGoldrick: You know what, David? I don't think... I think he's been

left too responsible here, that maybe it's not for him to have to decide if it would be helpful. Maybe it's for you to decide if it would be helpful. You know what I mean? Because he was the kid. I'm not... I'm saying this because I think they need you to be their father more than you realize.

David: Right, right. Uh, so, tomorrow? Okay? Julian: Yeah.

David: All right? Julian: [to Michelle] Is that all right? [Michelle nods]

McGoldrick Commentary: It wasn't surprising that things kept coming up all weekend that prevented the visit to Diane's grave, but they did finally manage the trip just before Julian left.

SESSION SEVEN – DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick Commentary: It had a considerable impact on both father and daughter. Michelle was more connected to her parents, and she even joked with Kathleen. David was quite moved by the experience, and he also remarked on how shutdown he felt, and expressed a desire to be more open for the sake of his children.

McGoldrick: Tell me something. I've several times wondered: How did your family feel when you got together with Diane? I can't imagine they were too enthusiastic.

McGoldrick Commentary: *I* decided to meet with David and Kathleen alone, to work on David's emotional distance.

David: What do you mean?

McGoldrick: I mean, you know, you've described yourself as coming from this sort of somewhat upper class, old New England...

David: WASPy.

McGoldrick: WASPy family. I can't imagine they would be too enthusiastic about your marrying somebody who was Puerto Rican. Was that an issue?

David: Well, um, what you have to understand about my parents is that they were very polite people.

McGoldrick: Yes?

David: And they did not, uh-

McGoldrick: David, we're trying to go a little underneath that-

David: Okay.

McGoldrick: -- the politeness. We know they were polite. You're polite.

David: Right. Well, there was a problem.

McGoldrick Commentary: At this point, I felt I had enough bond with David to push him a little, especially since he's asking me to help him penetrate his defenses.

McGoldrick: So let's talk about it. How did they react?

David: Well, they really didn't approve of Diane.

McGoldrick: Really. How did the wedding go?

David: Well, I have very mixed feelings about the wedding, because it wasn't exactly the wedding that she had in mind.

McGoldrick: Oh, really?

David: I really, uh, I never had thought much about exactly how I wanted to get married, but she really sort of wanted the traditional, you know, wedding with the big white gown and the church and, you know, the whole nine yards. And her mother couldn't have afforded that, and my parents weren't, you know, particularly forthcoming with support, and they—

McGoldrick: So you didn't do that?

David: No. What we did is we did sort of a Justice of the Peace thing, and we had a nice little dinner afterward, and it was just us and four of our friends.

McGoldrick: Really.

David: Um-hmm.

McGoldrick: So your parents really disapproved?

David: Right. Again, it was nothing stated overtly. There were no confrontations. They never actually pointblank said, "We don't want you to marry this woman." But there was no support.

McGoldrick Commentary: Note how utterly understated David is here. He

describes his parents as polite and says they weren't particularly forthcoming

with support, when the truth is they didn't even attend their only child's wedding.

McGoldrick: But, let me push another side of this. Because we've talked about the kind of sense of deadness that sometimes comes through with you. I mean, Kathleen's complained about it a good deal. Julian talked about it and Michelle talked about it, and I've told you that I sometimes experience it. That, you know, you're polite, you do the right thing, but it's sort of like hey, is anybody home, really? You know?

David: Right, right.

McGoldrick: And the way you've talked about your family seems similar, you know. I mean, from the first time we talked about Diane, I could picture her. It's like, the juice was there, you know; that she came alive.

David: Right.

McGoldrick: But in the several conversations we've had about your mother and your father, I never really can picture them.

McGoldrick Commentary: It's a sign of real progress that David is able to hear these things from me, but he's so passive and shut down about his history that I'm not able to get any traction with him.

McGoldrick: And, I mean, maybe some part of your attraction to Diane was an attraction to—

David: Right. I'm not sure how to answer that. I'm not sure how I feel about it. I just, uh, I remember my childhood as a, as a, you know, a happy, pleasant childhood. I was very well provided for.

McGoldrick: You know, that's what you always say, and everything... I mean, it's really, it's like, as many times as we've been over this—

David: Well, that's what I remember.

McGoldrick Commentary: Perhaps we both left awkwardly here because of the uselessness of my confrontation. I was seeking a way to get past his pat answers. Perhaps a better way would have been to join with him and say something like, "Can we together look behind that happy childhood?"

David: You know, I don't, uh... It's hard for me to remember. I mean, I, I...

McGoldrick: Who's around now that you could ask? You don't... no, let's see. You're—

Kathleen: Your aunt. Your aunt.

McGoldrick: Oh yeah, your mother's-

McGoldrick Commentary: When a person is stuck like this, I find it useful to get new information from other family members instead of just pressing him to try to push his way through his block.

Kathleen: -every year for you.

McGoldrick: This is Aunt Nell?

David: Well I don't know about that. See, I haven't seen her for many years. In fact, I think the last time I saw her was at my mother's funeral.

McGoldrick: Really?

David: And we just, you know. I mean, we were never really close. Uh...

McGoldrick: But I mean, come on now. She was your mother's twin sister.

David: I know, but I'm not sure that they were close. I just don't remember that. I certainly wasn't close to her, and I just think that at this late date it just would be pressing the issue to make contact with her.

McGoldrick: Really? See, here's the thing. You've made good efforts. But still I get the feeling that there's a kind of "stuckness" about this, that... I mean, I think men in our society are raised, in a way, to be, to a certain degree, shut down. So I think it's also a gender issue. But beyond that, 'cause I think you're very well intentioned, that you have been trying here, there's something that's keeping you from getting in touch with yourself.

David: The thing is, Monica, I have no idea of her state-of-mind at all,

so I don't know if she wants me there. I don't know whether she's even mentally all there at this point.

McGoldrick: Well, you know, I don't know either. And that's possible that she'll just act like, you know, sort of, who are you and why did you come? But I kind of doubt that, you know? And I even think it's very possible that it's maybe just a hole in her heart that she doesn't have any contact with you. Because she has no children other than you, you know?

McGoldrick: I mean, it's possible, if you try, to talk to her.

David: Right. Well, I'll call and see what happens.

McGoldrick: Okay. Great.

McGoldrick Commentary: Although he said he'd call, I had my doubts, and weeks went by with no movement. When Kathleen began to express frustration about David's resistance, I shifted our focus to the cutoff relationships in her own family, with her mother, brother, and stepfather, and she began to work on them. While the spotlight was on Kathleen, David quietly went to see his Aunt Nell.

SESSION 14 – DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick: So, it took you three months, but you finally got to see Aunt Nell, eh?

David: [laughter] Yes, I finally saw her, and it was absolutely amazing.

McGoldrick: Really?

David: Yeah, I came back with this photo album-family photo album-

McGoldrick: Really?

David: -- and also my mother's diaries we found, and I've got to tell you-

McGoldrick: Oh my god. No kidding.

David: And I've got to tell you, it was-

McGoldrick: You knew about that?

David: –it was not easy getting these things.

McGoldrick: Did you know your mother-

David: Yeah, I knew she had them.

McGoldrick Commentary: After experiencing David's flatness for so long, it was wonderful to see him so energized.

David: You know, she would smile, she would just sort of shrug her

shoulders, and then she'd just offer me some more iced tea. But the thing is, you know, like every other member of my family, she is very polite, so she really couldn't refuse me when I asked, you know, to see these diaries

and the photo album. So, anyway, I got them.

McGoldrick: Hmm. Wow. So what's in them?

David: Well, the thing that's really amazing is—and it took a little bit of detective work, see, because my mother's writing style is very indirect, you know; she sort of beats around the bush. And so, really, I sort of perceived this more from indirection, from what she didn't say, than what she said. But it appeared to me that my mother actually had an affair—

McGoldrick: Wow.

David: --with my father's best friend. See, my parents had these two friends. Bob and Sara, and, uh, they were like, you know, they did everything together. They practically went out every Saturday night to the club. They were members of this golf club. They golfed together. We went on a couple vacations together. They had a son who was about my age. We were very close, too. Anyway, we did all these things together, and in these diaries, up until. I don't know. I can't remember, June, July of like 1956, over and over again there are things in the diary about, you know, Bob and Sara. We did this with Bob and Sara, that with Bob and Sara, and so forth. Then all of a sudden it sort of just stops, but at the same time, what I saw in the diary were these mysterious entries where my mother would say things like, "I met 'B' today," uh, "I shouldn't be doing this with 'B'," and so forth, and at first I was kind of mystified, and then it hit me. I remembered that when I was a kid, around the time... You know, I was going over to their son's house all the time. We played together all the time. And all of a sudden I wasn't allowed to go over there, and he wasn't allowed to come to our place. And my parents, like, they never mentioned him ever again. And it was such a strange thing, you know, as a kid to experience this because I thought there is something strange going on here but I don't know what it is. Nobody's talking.

McGoldrick: Wow. Didn't you say that your mother had a couple of

miscarriages just around that... I mean, didn't you say that was around that same... You were eight or nine?

David: What, you think there was a connection?

McGoldrick: I don't know, uh... But it is a common thing for people to have affairs and to fall in love in the wake of a loss, you know. That maybe

it sort of reminds you that you're alive? I mean, I don't know, but the timing seems striking to me. I don't know, what do you think?

David: I think it's possible. I don't know. I just don't know. But the thing I kept going back to is I never really had much feeling for my father, and, you know, he was kind of... well, he was this cold guy. And actually I had two simultaneous feelings: On the one hand I felt kind of, um, I actually felt sort of like compassion for myself as a little boy, you know what I mean? I mean, can you imagine living in a house where no one is expressing their feelings or anything like that? Huh. The other thing...

McGoldrick: What were you going to say?

David: Well in a funny way, you know, I feel sorry for him now because I think that this, you know... He did not have a lot of friends, I'll tell you. He had, uh... Well, as a matter of fact, Bob may have been his only real friend, and all of a sudden he's having an affair with my mother, and I think that must have been really hard for my father. And in a way it sort of explains how he drank himself to death, which, you know, is the other thing. I think you may have been right. He may have been an alcoholic.

McGoldrick: What do you think about that?

David: Well, it's very sad, firstly. And I just want to make sure that that doesn't happen... I mean, I'm not going to become an alcoholic, but I want to make sure that, when my kids look back on me, you know, I want to make sure it's not, first of all, through many, many more years of therapy, and that they can look at me, you know, and not think, "Gee, what a sad figure," you know, "my father was."

SESSION 18 - MICHELLE, DAVID, KATHLEEN

McGoldrick Commentary: Four sessions later, the family and I felt that things were going well for all of them, and that we would stop meeting for awhile. I suggested that we review the therapy to date, and then look toward the future.

David: I think for me, uh, the hardest problem was to see that the difficulties that we were having, and what brought us to you in the first place, were not all of Michelle's making, but that to a very large degree, they were my problems.

McGoldrick: Uh-hmm.

David: And, uh, obviously I didn't see that at all when I came in here. So, that's what I'd say.

McGoldrick: Hmm. Not an easy thing for a man, especially, to say.

David: No. Not easy to admit.

Michelle: Way to go, Dad.

McGoldrick: No, I see that as a great strength to be able, also, to acknowledge your vulnerabilities, you know? That's good. [to Kathleen] How about you?

Kathleen: Well, I was just sitting here thinking back that there was a time

when I actually think I hated you [McGoldrick]. I hated you [David], too, and you [Michelle], too. I think I was just going to take Jade and maybe leave.

David: Huh.

McGoldrick: The moment I thought you probably hated me the most was the day when I told you that, if it was okay with you, I wanted to meet with Julian, Michelle, and David without you. Was I right?

Kathleen: Yeah, that was terrible.

McGoldrick: [to Michelle] How about you?

Michelle: How about me? Um, the hardest thing?

McGoldrick: Um-hmm.

Michelle: I just, you know, talking about... talking about my mom's death.

Talking about my grandmother's death, because, you know, it was kind of hard. It still is.

McGoldrick: Um-hmm. And that's because it's hard. It is hard, you know? So now, what about things down the road, because, you know, therapy is just, hopefully, a very small part of a very large story, your set of stories. What may happen that, where you might get stuck that you need to be prepared for?

McGoldrick Commentary: *I* think it's a good idea to help people anticipate problems down the road so that they're not caught off guard if things do go

wrong.

Michelle: —homework assignment, and I know for me, when school's out, I'll say yeah, we'll have a.... the English teacher will give us a summer reading lesson, and I'll say, "Yeah, I'll read them all." But if there's no teacher there to say, "Read your books," I'll start page one, some good TV show will come up, and then I'll put it down.

McGoldrick: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

Michelle: So maybe I'm kind of afraid that something like that will happen, too, you know?

McGoldrick: Uh-hmm. Well, now supposing that happens? Would you

feel okay about saying, "Okay, let's go back and see Monica?"

Michelle: I think so.

McGoldrick: Yeah? That's good.

Kathleen: Oh, Monica, by the way, I forgot to tell you: We're going to

Florida!

McGoldrick: Oh, you're kidding!

Kathleen: Yes, the whole family is going, and we're going to see Matthew, and we're going to see Ethan.

McGoldrick: Whoa, that's great! That was on my wish list for you. I was going to just tell you now my wish list, though my wish list is that you would go from Florida over to Puerto Rico— David and

Kathleen: Oh...

McGoldrick: -- and check out that part of the heritage.

David: I think we could do that.

McGoldrick: Yeah?

Kathleen: That would be great.

McGoldrick: And secondly, that you would find a way to include your Aunt Nell so that your kids can meet her and hear her stories and see who she is, and they can know her.

David: Right. Well that I don't think we can do. No, I'm kidding.

[laughter]

McGoldrick: I knew you wouldn't be that easy. And then that you [Michelle] will become a playwright and live out your mother's dream.

David: Ah-

McGoldrick: And that your mother's spirit is watching us. She's been watching over this whole therapy.

Michelle: And how about I'm going to NYU? I'm going to NYU.

McGoldrick: And that's good, too. That's good too.

Kathleen: And I'm looking at you wearing a dress.

McGoldrick Commentary: When I met with the family six months later, it was clear that they were continuing the work they had done in therapy. Their trip to Puerto Rico and Florida had been very meaningful for all of them, especially Kathleen, who had found with her brother a special affinity that she never realized she was missing or was possible between the two of them. Michelle was continuing to do well in school. David was continuing to participate in setting limits on her, even though Kathleen felt he could do a better job at that. Interestingly, Kathleen seems to be beginning to find her own voice. She's been thinking about taking a real estate course, and not surprisingly, David is less than enthusiastic about this. I kind of jokingly suggested at some point they may want to come in and discuss that, especially so that David could get a booster shot about that, because I think that's going to be a really hard time for him. I think that kind of serious renegotiation of the gender balance of marriage is a very hard time for all couples. What I do think is that the work that they've done in therapy—to really think who they are and what their connections to their pasts mean to them—is going to make it easier, because it's that getting in touch with the connectedness, to the losses, to those who've come before, that really make us able to love each other. All of these connections are sacred, and it's really that which gets us through life.

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