

Description of a Structure

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I will now describe a structure from a recent professional workshop with psychotherapists. There was some question as to who would have the next structure when one of the women in the group raised her hand to say that she wished a turn. I looked about and saw that no one else had raised their hand and I said to her that it was her turn then. She turned red, looked a bit anxious and smiled with a look of surprise and dismay, saying, "I didn't expect to have a turn or that I would be the one to have a turn. I was sure some one else would get it."

Moving directly toward creating the true scene, I said to her, "If there was a witness here now, he or she would say, 'I see how shocked, surprised and unsettled you are that you were the one to get the turn.'"

"Yes", she said. "Things aren't supposed to come so easy."

"That would be the voice of your truth saying that" I said. "It would say, 'Things don't come so easy.'"

"Yes." she said in agreement. "You have to work for what you get in this world."

At my suggestion she enrolled both the witness and the voice of her truth and the scene was created. The witness saw how surprised she was, and she flushed again remembering that feeling.

She said, "I really didn't expect that I would get it."

"That implied a voice of negative prediction," I reminded her, "that would say, 'you won't get what you want.'"

"That's true," she said. "My sister always got there first. My mother preferred her and she was always the favorite."

She said she was an adopted child and her eyes filled with tears when she said that she taken from her biological mother on the day she was born and given to her adoptive mother.

I asked her if she wanted to enroll her adoptive mother in the structure. and she asked one of the group members to do so and placed further her away in the room.

"My mother never really wanted me or liked me," she said.

The adoptive mother was instructed to say that.

Hearing that. she looked forlorn and slumped as she sat on the corduroy covered foam couch. I suggested that the witness could see how forlorn or dejected she felt when she remembered that her mother never really wanted or liked you. She agreed.

"How does that feel in your body to hear that?" I asked.

"It hurts in my chest," she said.

I instructed her to contract the muscles around the feeling and see what movement, sounds or emotions arose from there. She made a sound that gave me the impression of a wounded animal, or a very small injured child calling weakly and hopelessly for help.

"How does it sound to you, hearing that?" I asked.

"I heard it, but it didn't seem like it was coming from me," she said. "It didn't feel like it came from my body."

I suggested to her that the feeling was split away from her or she was split from her feelings and that this might be the time to enroll a voice of dissociation, which would say, "Don't feel what is happening to you."

"Yes," she said, "I often dissociate. It is an old habit and problem of mine."

I suggested to her that it was normal for people to dissociate when encountering too powerful or uncomfortable feelings.

Then she looked at the negative mother and said she was angry, at her for rejecting her and favoring her sister. She spoke forcefully and made gestures emphasizing her aggressive feelings. I asked her if she wanted her negative mother to act as if the anger had struck her. She said yes and the accommodator did so. She was pleased to see the effect of her anger on her and then directed the accommodator to fall as she aimed her blows in her direction. The accommodator fell to the ground.

Seeing that, the client suddenly began to cry. "I feel so alone she said. Now I have nobody."

The witness said that she could see how sad she was now that she had nobody. She wrapped her arms around her body and tightly gripped her own shoulder and leg, her fingers digging into her flesh.

I asked her if she wanted to have someone other than herself that she could hold onto like that, as it appeared she was doing so in the absence of having someone to hang onto.

She chose a group member to enroll as a figure she could hold onto. In my mind I was associating that clutching, finger penetrating, gesture with my understanding of the child wish to be embedded in the flesh of another and was doing it to herself in the absence of having someone to do it with, but at the moment I did not say that to her.

She held on to that figure and began to smile and look happy. The witness duly noted that. Then she began to have motion in her pelvis and I asked her to find a way to move that part of her body in some way that would produce a satisfying interaction with the role figure. She maneuvered her body and the accommodator's body in an interesting fashion. For a moment it even looked like she was about to separate the legs of the accommodator as if to climb into her. Then she began to rock together with the role player and a look of pleasure and delight came over her face.

"It is as if we are on a boat together and sailing. It feels wonderful." She continued rocking for some time with a look on her face that was near ecstatic. I saw a combination of infantile feelings and sensual feelings showing on her body. But mostly I imagined that the water metaphor had to do with the wish to be rocked and safely intimate with a female figure.

All at once she stopped and said, "It can't last. Nothing good lasts." She separated from that figure and lay crumpled on the couch. The voice of negative prediction was instructed to say, "Nothing good lasts."

She agreed with that statement and her body got more and more shrunken. She said, "I feel like I want to shrink until I disappear." I said let yourself follow that feeling and give movement to it. She wound up in a little ball.

Once again she said, "I feel a tension in my throat."

"Tighten the muscles around that tension and see what comes of it," I said. "Make the sounds that would seem to come from there." Once more she made those helpless sounds, this time they escalated until she began to cry with bitter desperation.

"Do you want a contact figure to hold you while you cry?" I asked, softly. This is an intervention I often make when there is deep grief that seems unbounded and without sufficient physical support to handle it.

She said, "No, I have to be alone. I have to take care of myself."

This attitude was underlined by the voice of her truth.

She stretched out on the couch. She was limp and looked helplessly upwards as if to an absent god. Once again her pelvic movements began and she reached up helplessly.

I said, "What do you need that would bring some satisfying interaction?" She said, "There is nothing and no one that I can turn to."

When people make that kind of statement I assume that somewhere they have projected satisfaction and I asked her if she had such thoughts. After some time, she said that in the afterlife she knew she would be happy, but not in this one.

I said, "Create a place in the room where that afterlife condition would be and then place someone there to be the voice or the spokes-person of that place." She chose another woman in the group to enroll as that figure.

She said that there she knew would find peace. The accommodator was instructed to say, "Here you can find peace."

On hearing that she began to cry, saying, "There I wouldn't have to do anything to get things, I would just have to be myself." The role player said back to her, "Here you wouldn't have to do anything to get things, you would just have to be yourself."

I asked her if she wanted to be in contact with that figure. She said yes, but looked puzzled. She said, "Does this mean that I am suicidal or that I want to be dead?"

I reassured her saying that she could be in contact with that figure, knowing that she had projected peace and relief there, and that it would be a symbolic process and not an expression of a wish for literal death.

She asked the role player to sit on the couch and then moved her and herself until she found a way to climb into her lap pulling the arms of the accommodator around her.

Being held in that position brought up a great well of sadness, longing and relief and she began to cry deeply in a way that was very moving to the group as several members began to weep.

While sobbing, she began to clutch desperately at the figure and at an appropriate moment I suggested that perhaps the wish that had shown up before was again being expressed and that she should try to squeeze that figure as tightly as she wished. She said she was afraid to do that thinking it would hurt the role-player. It was not that she wished to hurt her but she felt the wish to clutch was so great she was certain it would be too much to bear.

The voice of her truth could then say, "Your need to clutch someone so tightly is too much for anyone to bear."

She cried desperately at that and buried her head in the shoulder of the accommodator.

I asked her if she wanted that figure to say that she could bear how much she was clutching her. On hearing that she dared to hold her tighter and her crying this time included the relief that bespoke the possibility of having the new license.

Here, I thought it useful to point out to her that this was no longer merely a figure from the next life but was functioning more in the style of an ideal mother. I suggested that we change the enrollment of that figure into an ideal mother category, for that was what was wished for in the first place but she had not expected to be experienced until the next life.

She agreed and then began to feel the beginning of pleasure and relief that had surfaced with the earlier figure of contact, but this time she was not holding her as if to ride on the waves but clearly as a little child holds onto a mother.

After some time she said, "This won't last either."

Here was the latest expression of the pattern established early in her history was that all good things came swiftly to an end. The voice of negative prediction said, "This won't last either.", and she agreed with it.

Now I thought would be the appropriate time to provide an antidote, I felt sure that her life had been one long continuous series of losses after another. The root of which was the first loss of being too early plucked from her biological mother.

Therefore I suggested that she construct this figure as an ideal biological mother who would not have given her up for adoption as her original mother had, but would have raised her herself.

The remembrance of the pleasure of a few moments before, coupled with the possibility that it could last with this ideal mother who would never have given her up, lit up her face. Clearly, this new thought presented hope and she began to return to the peace and satisfaction she had felt when she first contacted that figure as someone representing the next world.

To cement the connection between the two images, I asked her if she would like to hear her ideal mother say, "I would make you feel as wonderful as you expected to feel in the next world." She agreed and thus linked the two experiences.

Now she settled into the embrace of the mother, her breathing becoming deeper and slower and her body visibly relaxed.

She said, "I could stay here forever."

I asked her if she wanted to hear from her ideal mother that she could stay there forever, meaning that on the feeling level that she need never leave this state of bliss with the mother.

The ideal mother said, "You can stay here forever."

I asked her to make an image of herself at that age, with all the blissful feelings that she was having included in it. And then to make another image of the ideal mother providing those feelings around her. That way, she could internalize that composite image within herself so that when the structure was over it was not as if the ideal mother was leaving. Her adult mind could note that the structure had come to an end.

She stayed some time in the arms of the ideal mother, consciously establishing and recording the feeling of acceptance and bliss. She wanted one more things, she said. She wanted to hear the ideal mother say that she didn't have to do anything special to have attention or have her needs met but that she would be there for her just as she was. The ideal mother said that and she smiled with her

eyes closed nodded her head as if saying yes as she included that feeling in the image she created. After some moments she opened her eyes, having the look that people have when they are at the end of the structure. I asked her if she had the images firmly in place. She said yes, and I asked her if she was ready to de-role the figures. She said she was. She first de-rolled all the negative figures and ended with the derolling of the ideal mother.

The accommodators returned to their places and thus the structure came to an end.

Afterward the client spoke to me and told me how much she appreciated the work. Although it was only one structure, it did give her new perspective and the healing reconditioning nature of the antidote gave her some of the means as well as the hope that she could effect positive changes.

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