STUDY GUIDE AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
TO ACCOMPANY VIDEOTAPE
“FAMILY THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS”
FEATURING WILLIAM DOHERTY

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Introduction

This video is one in a series portraying the leading theories of family therapy and their application. This series presents the predominant theories and how they are practiced. Each video in the series features a leading practitioner and educator in the field of family therapy. The series is unique in that it features real couples and families with real problems. It is also timely because family therapists need to understand and be able to use a variety of approaches in order to effectively serve the diverse families that seek help.

A theory is a framework that helps us understand something or explains how something works. Just as there are many different people and personalities, there are different theories of understanding how couples and families interact and how change occurs, each with its own guidelines for understanding and procedures for operation. Each theory has devotees who think and act as the theory prescribes in order to help people change their lives. Certain theories explain certain phenomena better than others. The individual marriage or family therapist needs to develop his or her own approach to helping couples and families with problems. Specific objectives in family therapy include (1) removing, modifying, or retarding existing symptoms, (2) mediating disturbed patterns of behavior, and (3) promoting positive growth and development within the family system.

The video begins with a brief discussion with the practitioner concerning the theory. We then move to the actual counseling session. After the session, Bill Doherty discusses the session with Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, and an audience made up of counselors, graduate students, and counselor educators.
Because the video series contains actual counseling interviews, professional integrity is required to protect the confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal lives with us.

**Purpose**

The series is designed for pre-professional training in graduate and undergraduate classes in family counseling theory. Students will learn about the theory and watch a leading practitioner work with a couple or family in a “first session” interview.

The series is also appropriate for workshops or individual study for the professional development of practicing family counselors, social workers, clinical psychologists, or psychotherapists. Professionals will learn from the practitioner by gaining new ideas and insights which can be helpful in working with current or future clients.

**How to Use the Video**

1. **As a stand alone activity** for professional development or orientation to Values Based Family Therapy. If you are using the video this way, it might be helpful to first read about Values Based Family Therapy. See page 34 of this guide for a list of suggested readings. Or, you may wish to watch the video, read about the theory, and then watch the video a second time.

   As you watch the video, note the questions included on the enclosed test. This will help you identify key points related to this theory. If you wish continuing education credit, complete the test and submit it as directed.

2. **As an integral part of a course in theories of family therapy** with the textbook, student study guide, and instructor’s guide. The text by Jon Carlson and Diane Kjos (1999), *Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA:
Allyn & Bacon with accompanying *Study Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, and *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, published by Allyn & Bacon of Needham Heights, Massachusetts, are coordinated with the videotapes and can assist in guiding the student through the learning process, including key concepts, application, and techniques.

3. As an **adjunct in classes** to demonstrate a practical application of Values Based Family Therapy or to demonstrate specific interventions and techniques. Guidelines and suggested discussion topics will be included in Carlson and Kjos (1999), *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

4. As a **basis for a series of class sections or a workshop** for either professional development or counselor education. You may choose to use all or parts of the video to support specific teaching objectives. Suggestions for scheduling, discussion questions, and other activities will be included in Carlson and Kjos (1999), *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

**Family Therapy with William Doherty**

William Doherty, Ph.D, is a Professor in the Department of Family Social Science and Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at the University of Minnesota in St Paul, Minnesota. As a young man, he entered a Catholic seminary with the goal of becoming a priest and he holds an M.A. in Theology. He left the seminary in 1970 and began work on a doctorate in Child Development and Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. He taught at the University of Iowa as well as the University of Oklahoma before moving to the University of Minnesota.

In his autobiography, Doherty gives the following description of himself:
I am a Catholic-Paulist-Unitarian/Universalist-Family Scientist-Family Therapist who loves theory, practice, moral exploration, research, cultural exploration and democratic community building, organizational development, and working with students. (http://www.che.umn.edu/fsos/doherty/profautobio.html)

**Learning Objectives**

1. Identify theoretical concepts which are descriptive of Values Based Family Therapy.
2. Recognize specific interventions or techniques related to Values Based Family Therapy.
3. Describe the range of applications of Values Based Family Therapy.

**Abstract of Values Based Family Therapy Video**

This video is approximately 114 minutes long and is divided into three parts:


Part II: An initial therapy session with Bill Doherty and the <couple/family> in which Bill Doherty <more> (## minutes).

Part III: Discussion of the therapy session with Bill Doherty, Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, and a panel of human service professionals and graduate students (## minutes).

**Transcript**

D1 Good afternoon Jan.

CL1 Hello.
D2 I wonder if you could say something about how it feels to be here today in this kind of situation, not your ordinary counseling experience.

CL2 It is a little bit public.

D3 Yeah, with camera and studio and all that around. What would you like to get out of our conversation today? We have about 45 minutes to talk. We haven’t met before.

CL3 Right, we have not met.

D4 And what would you like to get out of our conversation?

CL4 Uh, I think I’d like to learn some things and get maybe an idea of a direction that I’d like to take with some things that I’m working on.

D5 Umhm, OK. A little bit about your family situation. Tell me about your . . . , you’re married.

CL5 I’m married.

D6 OK, how long have you been married?

CL6 19 years.

D7 OK. And children?

CL7 I have a 16 year old daughter and a 13 year old son.

D8 OK, so you have a busy family?

CL8 Mostly.

D9 Umhm. Ok and, so tell me what specifically you’d like to get some input on from me and talk with me about.

CL9 Well, the dilemma that I have is that in my marriage, it’s more of a marital thing. In my marriage the, I had stopped feeling any passion, and actually I had not had any feelings for my husband for many, many years and so then I have a friend who I knew for a few years who is a musician and we had a pretty close friendship and then I started having a lot of feelings for him and he had a lot of feelings for me and so that
kind of developed into an affair which just began in May and it’s been continuing all summer.

D10 Okay, okay. So this is something you’ve been working on with John in counseling or talking about.

CL10 Right.

D11 Yeah, yeah.

CL11 Right. I’ve seen John for a long time and I guess it was the numbness in my marriage that I was kind of reacting against and the lack of feelings. And this person was very comfortable and a couple years ago we were walking down the street during a lunch hour and he kissed me and that felt pretty wonderful and it was the first time in years and years and years that I can remember feeling physically passionate or, and so I kissed him back. And then, then it was backed off and it was on and off and nothing ever happened beyond kissing and hugging for a couple of years and I would back off and say I can’t do this, I can’t go there. And then in May I decided to follow those feelings and just see where they would lead and that’s where they led. And so it’s been a very intense relationship, very satisfying and more recently, in fact just this past weekend, I think he’s, he’s a 52 year old man and he’s divorced, he was married for 25 years and he’s, I could marry him in an instant if I were to divorce my husband. That would be no question about that. But he’s feeling a little bit like second banana kind of a feeling. So I feel like he kind of broke up with me. He says he didn’t, but, so that’s...

D12 Even more turmoil for you.

CL12 Yeah, it’s even more turmoil but we are still communicating and um, so I was feeling really a lot of pain, like physical pain in the pit of my stomach. It was just so painful to have that end so abruptly. But this
past summer it’s been, all these feelings have come up and it’s been wonderful, intense, passionate, so that’s my situation.

D13 Yeah.

CL13 And I feel like there’s two roads that I can go down and sometimes I feel schizophrenic on a way because one day I feel like I can divorce my husband and leave my family and follow my, follow where I feel I want to go. Follow where I’m getting depth and meaning and then the very next day I’ll wake up and it’ll be no, you can’t do that. There’s too many people you would be hurting, and I don’t really, I get along with my husband, and actually, since, I think he’s noticed that I’m more alive since this had been going on and he has become a little more open and a little more caring and so we’re actually becoming closer through this too. So, but I don’t want to hurt my children and be ostracized and all that so...

D14 So there’s that.

CL14 So that’s the road that I could stay on and this is the road that I could take that would be totally new. And I feel like when I’m with this other person that all the time we have isn’t, is so small. It’s such a limited amount of time and it’s, I don’t know if this really would be true, but it feels like it would be, that what we have is just the tip of the iceberg so it feels like I want to explore all that. And this is predictable. My husband will, he’ll love me for the rest of my life. He’s not the type, he’s salt of the earth kind of a guy and I’m not worried about, I really don’t think he’d divorce me, even if he found this out I think it would be a growing experience. He would be hurt but...

D15 So it feels like the choice is really yours in a way.

CL15 Right.

D16 Yeah. That’s a burden.
CL16 Yeah. And I can’t make it.

D17 Yeah.

CL17 I haven’t made it.

D18 Right, right. Yeah. So your marriage has not been one of a lot of conflict but in recent years not been very joyful or passionate.

CL18 No. It’s not been

D19 Was there a time when it was, more so?

CL19 I don’t remember a time when it was that exciting or anything like that. I don’t remember that. I remember...

D20 Was there excitement at the very beginning of your relationship with your husband?

CL20 Before we were married I think.

D21 Umhm. Okay. And what was the excitement like then?

CL21 Well, I remember we met at a camp up in the upper peninsula and then I, yeah we met up there in the winter and then I went back up ...he was the camp director...and I went back up and worked there that summer and that was the summer we fell in love and it was midnight canoe rides and falling in love under the stars and that was pretty wonderful. And then we had a long distance relationship. We were never, ever in the same place, like physically in the same location. He was up in the U.P. and I was in Chicago and then he moved to Chicago and we broke up, this was after 2 years of a long distance relationship. Then I moved to Richmond, Virginia and we were broken up and. But he didn’t date anybody else. He kept contact with me through those 2 years and then after those 2 years, I had had it with the job that I had, although, those were 2 of the best years of my life as a single person away from my nuclear family. I came back because I quit my job. I was teaching music and it was, I didn’t like that at all. So I came back to Chicago and
went to camp that summer and he, we decided that we would decide marry or not marry by the end of the summer. So by the end of the summer he had asked me to marry him and we got married then 10 weeks later. So the only time we ever lived in a real situation was after we got married and the first year of our marriage was not joyful. It was very difficult. I was seeing a counselor then and I don’t remember a lot of joy. It was comfort and what I remember is that he is an accepting, he accepted me for who I was and I feel like I’ve ...he’s given me a lot just by that acceptance of who I was and so I’m very grateful to him for that. And he’s always been that way. He’s always loved me no matter what I was like. So it was a hard beginning.

D22 A hard beginning?
CL22 A hard beginning.
D23 Okay. Love and acceptance. But what was hard? What was the hardest part?
CL23 Well the hardest part was, he was 30 and I was 26 so I think it was mixing our singleness to be a joint venture and we’re pretty separate. We’re pretty individualistic and like our aloneness so it was hard to mix.
D24 For both of you? Or was it..
CL24 Yeah, I think so. We’re both used to distance and I think the challenge...we’ve worked with John on this...is the challenge has been to have some common things that we like to do. He likes to hunt and fish. I like music, so it was hard to find things that we like to do together.
D25 What was it like after your children, your first child was born?
CL25 That was a lot easier because then we had something to focus on, so...
D26 Okay, Okay.
CL26 And I feel like I got a lot of warmth and feelings from my children. I think that gave me the warmth that I was looking for or the closeness
that I was looking for. I remember being very physical with the children until they finally told me that they didn’t want any hugs anymore, you know when they were teenagers so until then I think it was, I was getting a lot of the physical closeness with the children.

D27 Okay. What happened to your relationship with your husband after the children were born? You said you had more to focus on, but you’re also suggesting that you weren’t as close.

CL27 Yeah, I think we weren’t as close. I think we each focused on the children. We didn’t have a lot of time for ourselves. I was doing music, he was doing camping. We would kind of pass like ships in the night. I would...he would work during the day, come home then I would leave and go to a concert. And that was...

D28 Trade this kids off so the kids got a lot of your parenting.

CL28 Yeah the kids got a lot of us but we didn’t get a lot of each other.

D29 Right. Right. Do you think that had something to do with the decline in closeness and passion?

CL29 Ummm...the decline in closeness...um, yeah, or yeah, definitely.

D30 Do you know other people who have been through this as well? That over time, especially with kids, the couple kind of distances?

CL30 Right. Yeah, I can, I think so. And I think some of those end in divorce and I think some of them work through it and come to another level of closeness. I think that’s what I’ve seen.

D31 Umhm. And so when you started your affair, this really rekindled some embers that had been pretty dormant for a while.

CL31 I would say those embers weren’t felt since the first summer that we were together when we were falling in love.

D32 Okay, okay. And I wonder do you see any connection between you’re first falling in love with your husband and what that time was like, sort
of brief episodic times to be together, and your relationship with this other man, which I imagine are brief episodes...

CL32 They’re brief episodes, right, right.
D33 Do you see any connection between those?
CL33 That they’re brief and then we’re apart. So that’s why they’re more intense maybe?
D34 It could be.
CL34 It could be?
D35 Does that make sense to you? That’s what occurred to me as I was listening to you. That the two times you’ve described of intensity and of feeling alive, were with relationships in the new stage where you couldn’t really fully be together.

CL35 Umhm. That’s true.
D36 And so you have these little islands, you know, flying to some tropical island to have a weekend with somebody and then you go home and you do the laundry. Whatever.

CL36 Right, exactly. There’s been an island or two along the way too with other people. There was a person, oh, years and years ago who I had and infatuation with and so I remember that as an island of this infatuation feeling too.
D37 Okay, it was with a man.

CL37 That wasn’t an affair or anything, it was just that feeling of infatuation.
D38 Right. Okay. So that was a man?
CL38 Yeah, that was a man.
D39 And anybody else?
CL39 And closeness with a girlfriend now and then, with other people besides my husband.
D40 That were these other little islands.
CL40 Yeah, I’d say they are.
D41 They’re quite wonderful when you’re on it.
CL41 Yes, that’s right.
D42 Yeah. I was just thinking about the canoeing and the stars. You know, you were probably on some islands with your husband.
CL42 Right.
D43 And when you go to one of those islands and the stars are out and be with somebody in a fresh way, it’s very compelling.
CL43 Umhm.
D44 It’s very compelling. And there’s nothing at home that can compete with that.
CL44 No, no.
D45 The best marriage in the world cannot compete with that.
CL45 Okay.
D46 Does that make sense?
CL46 Yeah. No, I wonder what, like, marriages that stay together for all these years. There’s gotta be some more passion in those marriages. I think there’s...I’m missing something I’m ready to jump the ship and find it with somebody else. No, I’ve...I don’t know because this is what mine is like. I would think that people who stay together have more passion than I have.
D47 Sure. Many do. Many do. So one way to think of it is, you have where your marriage has gotten to, which is not enough passion, not enough joy and excitement, kind of a blah. Loving, but blah.
CL47 Yeah. Companionship, support, but blah.
D48 And a good place for your kids.
CL48 Right. Yeah. See, it’s a safe place.
D49 And then, so this is one way to be on the mainland, okay.
The way my marriage is...the way my family is.

Yeah. One way to be.

Okay. One way to be. Okay.

And we’ll make them all islands. Okay, that’s one kind of island, big island. Safe and secure, a lot of ports. And then you have the really exotic island, smaller that you can only stay at for brief periods of time, with a new relationship. And the reason you can only stay there a brief period of time is that relationships are only new once. So, you talked about it in terms of tip of the iceberg so I’m putting it as on the island that you can only stay on for a while. So your image was, and it’s also, in terms of depth of the relationship you’re at the tip of the iceberg. But once you drill down into it, you’re in a different place because the newness is over.

Okay.

So the third type of island...I’m just making this up as we go here...the third type of island would be one in which you have length and depth of a relationship...you haven’t been able to stay...it’s where you have to leave the other small exotic one. You have to leave there. You only have a visa for a short period of time for that island.

Okay.

Because it’s for new...

Because I can’t stay in a new relationship forever.

By definition.

So, Okay.

Yeah. Now you could go from new relationship to new relationship and try that, but that gets pretty exhausting for most of us. And what we lack is the depth and the commitment and the time. And so in some ways if the choice seems like this blah, plain island where there’s three
meals a day and there’s solidity and all that, and this exotic one that you can only stay...with this one you can stay indefinitely; this one you can only stay temporarily. Another way to think of it is, is it possible to strive for yet a third kind of island which you would be with your husband and your kids, but one with more passion and joy and excitement.

CL55 That sounds good to me but I don’t know how to do it.
D56 Umhm. Why does it sound good to you?
CL56 Well, the passion, I mean, I want the passion and I want the, I want things from both.
D57 Umhm. But it can’t be like...
CL57 It can’t be like that?
D58 ...indefinitely.
CL58 Right, but it has to have some of that...
D59 ...some of that...
CL59 ...in order to keep me there. Otherwise I’m gonna e keeping on going to this other island.
D60 That’s right, yes.
CL60 Right.
D61 Well, that’s the choice you make...to go. I mean, some people choose to stay on the other one...
CL61 Right.
D62 ...and some people...
CL62 And I used to choose, but my whole life I chose to stay on this other island. I was a good girl.
D63 Yeah, yeah.
CL63 And I am not a good girl any more.
D64 Okay.
I chose to leave that and do something else and explore a different part of my psyche. I was like this was a real definite decision to go and explore this. It wasn’t like a flippant thing at all. It was a decision to go and follow this path and so... But I hear you about this island thing.

Yeah. What do you hear?

That, well, that this has to improve. That the big island has to improve. That it’s not satisfying to me, that’s what I’m hearing. But that this is gonna end. Now, I could take this, and move that over here. And I could make a family here and, but that would turn into this.

Well it would turn into something different.

But this person, this person to me right now in my infatuation stage, this person is like the most wonderful person in the world. Like my husband was when we first

Yeah, everybody on that island is wonderful.

Is wonderful. And so I think that I could just make a life with this person and we would have this passion the rest of our lives. That’s my...I know that’s not right, but that’s what I think. Some days. And then other days I know that’s not true.

Okay. So there are two parts of this. One part is where might you have your best chance to, for personal happiness and to live your life in a relationship, the next part of your life that may give you more joy. And then the other part of it is the consequences to different people.

Yes, I know, I know.

So let’s talk about that part of it.

The consequences.

And maybe we can put them back together at some place. But, how do you think it would affect your children.

Oh, the consequences would be devastating.
D71  Yeah?

CL71  Yes. I mean all this over here is like entangled with family, extended family, there’s just way entanglements, enmeshments, community. If I were to do this, go here, and stay on this other island, I would be breaking a lot of things, even career things I would be putting in jeopardy. And the relationships with my children...I think they would be hurt. I mean this, they would be hurt, devastated. My children...

D72  Okay, your children would be hurt.

CL72  Yeah. But I think, I mean I think they would survive.

D73  Sure. But how would they be hurt?

CL73  Well, it just would change the family dynamics and I think their lives would get a lot more complicated going back and forth between mom and dad. And I’m sure they could cope with that. I think they would be hurt by my actions, that I had done something bad. And I think they might be labeled that oh, their mother went off with this other guy. So I think, and they’re both teenagers and very sensitive, especially my daughter so that would not be good.

D74  Yeah. How would it affect your husband?

CL74  Well, believe it or not, we’ve talked about this. He doesn’t know about this, but we’ve talked theoretically about it and we, I also am pretty open with him about not feeling any passion for him and not having any feelings so he knows this. And he knows that I’m an up and down person. I’m the emotional up and down and he’s the solid and, so he’s there for me. So when I’m up, he’s there for me and when I’m down he’s there for me. And we said now if I were to divorce you and break up the marriage, how would that affect you? He said to me I would be devastated but I would become more of a machine. That’s what he said,
he would become more of a machine and more of a automaton. So we have to talk about that a little bit.

D75 Well, I’m glad you’ve told him that you’re not feeling satisfied.

CL75 Yes, I did tell him that.

D76 That’s really important. Yeah. Who else would it affect? If you...

CL76 Oh, it would affect my parents, his mother, his siblings, my siblings. It would affect my, a couple of the jobs that I do in the schools that are pretty public jobs.

D77 So there are a lot of people kinda who are stakeholders in your marriage.

CL77 Yeah. And the more I think about it, I think back to our wedding and it was a big wedding. We were members of a small church denomination and there were, . . . there’s a lot of people that he knows. He teaches at this denominational college and so it’s pretty widespread.

D78 Yeah.

CL78 The people that know him and know us.

D79 They care about your marriage. Yeah.

CL79 Well, I wouldn’t say they care. They would gossip about it. It would be...I don’t know that they’d care about it...it would be grist for the gossip mills, that would be for sure.

D80 This would be very public.

CL80 It would be very public, yeah.

D81 Because you’re entrenched in a pretty broad community.

CL81 Yeah, yeah.

D82 Umhm. Umhm. So those are some pretty big consequences.

CL82 Yes, they are. And most days I know that. Most days, I’m OK with that. And I’m committed to staying in that situation and not breaking
that up. But then there are days, and that’s what’s driving me nuts, is because, I can go, there will be a day that’s it, I’m leaving, that’s it.

D83 Well, tell me about those days. What are those days like?

CL83 When I can’t get any sharing with Al, I can’t get any like honest communication. I can’t get any feelings for him and I’m having this intense feelings thing with Joe...it’s usually after Joe and I have been together for a long time or for in an intense way.

D84 Okay. Is that surprising to you then? That you would have this...you’d be on the island.

CL84 No it’s not surprising.

D85 A week on the island, then you’re back...

CL85 Yeah.

D86 ...with a guy who doesn’t know that this threat is there.

CL86 Ummm.

D87 And he’s doing ordinary life. And he sounds like he’s kind of a calm sea kind of guy.

CL87 Ummhmmmm.

D88 And so he’s doing his calm sea. Meanwhile the turbulent seas and the passions and all that are over there. You come back, whoa.

CL88 Yeah. I come back to this and I’m riled up and he’s still just as calm and I’m still riled up and he notices something.

D89 And you’re holding a big secret.

CL89 Yes, I am.

D90 Huge secret. How does that feel to be holding that secret?

CL90 It’s difficult, it’s difficult. The person that I’d really like to tell is, like, my daughter. Because that feels really weird to me because she knows this person. She has had conversations with him when she’s been down
at the hall. And, she likes him. In fact, there was a, well, never mind.
But I would like to be able to share...

D91 Because, why would you want to share it with her?
CL9 Because she likes him, and they had a...
D92 How do you think she’d respond if you said it?
CL92 She wouldn’t be real happy, but...no I wouldn’t really like to tell her,
OK. That’s right, I’ll back off on that. No, but I, sometimes, I feel...

Here’s the situation. I wanted to go to the Paul Simon concert this
summer and I, my daughter and I were at a tape store or something. We
were shopping and there was a CD store and we went in there and the
guy at the desk, I just asked if he had any Paul Simon tapes and he says,
oh, you know I have 2 tickets for the concert and Katie says to me, what
are you...? I said I’ll buy them right now, I really want to go. And
Katie says, what are you nuts, mom? Who are you gonna go with? Dad
won’t go with you. And she says, why don’t you just go with Joe. So
here she says this, so she knows, I think she knows something. She may
have some suspicions that something’s going on.

D93 But maybe one of the reasons why you have that fantasy of telling her is
that you’d like to unburden yourself of this secret in your family.
CL93 Yeah, right. I have one friend that I can, that I talk to about this, and
that’s all.
D94 Yeah, yeah. So it’s almost like a time bomb that’s been clicking, Huh?
CL94 Yeah, yeah.
D95 Ticking, yeah, yeah. And it’s coming to a head now more because the
man you’re having the affair with has sort of called your hand on this.
CL95 Yeah, he has a little bit.
D96 Okay. Because you’re, you know, you spend most of your time with
your family.
Yeah, yeah. He wants a little more all or nothing. He wants me all to himself or he’s gonna find somebody else.

Right.

And he needs to.

That sounds fair.

It’s what he wants. It sounds fair, yeah.

And so, but it propels you more into a dilemma.

A dilemma, oh, a churning dilemma. Right. And a painful place.

Right, right. And I guess one of the things I’m suggesting, and I know you’ve been thinking about this, is that there may be a third way between going back to your marriage as is, and leaving your marriage, leaving a husband who is a good man...

Yes, he is.

...and a loving man.

Yes, he is. That’s why I have to love him, he’s a good man.

And the two of you, it sounds like you’ve been doing a really good job with parenting. You know, you’ve...

We communicate about it a lot.

Yeah, and your kids are relying on your relationship in some way.

Umhm, they do.

For some amount of stability in their lives. So there are all those reasons to, perhaps, to try a third way that, although it can’t ever compare with this new one, that’s the thing I’m adding to our conversation.

Okay, that’s what you’re telling me.

Yeah, that’s what I’m saying.

Okay, I believe you. I realize that. This is what I want in the marriage, but you’re telling me no.
Well, no, I’m not saying no. Of course, I can’t make any predictions, but I’ve been around a while...

Right, because it’s not a new...

Yeah, but newness...

It’s not going to be a new relationship.

...right, we know that.

It’s not new.

That’s right. What we know is that all relationships that have a new, exciting phase move into a different phase. There are even differences in brain chemicals, you know that.

Yes, I know that. What are they, pheremones? I’ve been high on pheremones for 2 years, so I know all about this, yeah.

Okay, okay. And, but what happens in most marriages, just my observation, and there’s research on this as well, is that over time, unless a couple finds ways to put more gas in the boat...

Right, right.

...they gradually, they spring little leaks and they get depleted. And then sometimes something comes along like what happened with this man kissing you where you sort of get thrown on the boat, or you jump on the boat. And a lot of it is, can be, that you and your husband didn’t find ways to have the kind of energy and passion that is possible and quite fulfilling, not the new one, but the one that after 10 years or 15 years or 20 years, you say, wow, this is good.

Yeah, see I can’t believe that. It’s unbelievable to me that that’s possible.

In your marriage?

In my marriage, right, so. So keep talking so you can tell me more how to do that.
Well, it would start with a very hard thing. Two very hard things.

What?

You’d have to decide to let go of the other man.

Right.

And you’d have to tell your husband that you had the affair.

Yeah, but they say you should never tell, if you have an affair you should not tell. I’ve heard, I’ve...

Okay, you just asked me my opinion.

Okay, okay, alright.

Okay? In this situation, there would be no more powerful message to your husband to communicate that you want things to be different than to say that you did something that you never thought you would do that is not, hasn’t been consistent with the kind of person that you have been in your life.

Okay.

And that it was a wake up call to you. You accept full responsibility for it, of course. But that you are recommitting and wanting to recommit. You’re not testing him to see how he responds and then go back to the other guy if he doesn’t respond well enough.

Uh huh.

Okay, this is a scenario. You don’t have to do this.

Okay, okay.

But you asked me what would be the path. What would be the possible path towards a reviving of your marriage. So I’m just saying this would be a path. That you definitively end the other relationship. You tell your husband, of course, you get John’s help. You know, you need some assistance in this process.

That’s right, definitely.
D121 That you accept responsibility for having had the affair, for the
deception, and all those things that were involved. And you say I want
to work with you and I really want you to work with me on making this
relationship, making the next 15 years or whatever, be better for both of
us. That news, that his marriage, your marriage, was at the edge of the
cliff will be a wake up call. It gives him a lot of information that he
doesn’t have now. He just thinks you’re kind of up and down, or you
know. He doesn’t have the information that his marriage to you, and his
life with you, and your family together, is in grave danger. It’s in grave
danger.

CL121 No, he doesn’t think that. He thinks it’s fine. Everything’s fine.

D122 Yeah. And so, naturally, he’s not gonna, under these circumstances,
show, he’s not gonna wake up one morning and say, you know, let’s do
marriage differently. You know, you have to put something in there
cause he’s moving along. Okay, he’s moving along. And so I’m not
sure it would work as well if you were to end the other relationship,
recommit, do it all in your mind, and then say I’m gonna figure out a
way. What you might do, because I’ve worked with people who’ve
done it, they’ve said goodbye to what they think is the love of their life,
the island that they can never return to. And then they are irritable,
picky...

CL122 Yeah, that’s how I would be, right.

D123 Yeah. And then, of course, you bring out the worst in your husband...

CL123 Right.

D124 ...which then proves that you should have, you know.

CL124 Yeah, I shouldn’t have ended that.
Then you call him back a month later having told yourself, I gave this an all out effort. Well, the all out effort was not involved in telling the other person what happened.

Right, right. Well, why do some psychologists say to not tell. I mean, it was, there was this thing on infidelity on one of the morning shows and the last thing that she said, I watched that very carefully because I was really fascinated, and she says whatever you do, don’t tell. And why do they say that? Just that’s one idea.

That’s one idea.

Okay, that’s one idea.

And I don’t have any magic rules for all situations. I’m really, I’m consulting with you about you’re situation.

Right, right that was just her rules.

I don’t have 100% for anything. But you want to chose a third way. You want that option anyway. Okay, the option to have a third way to be married to this man with more love and commitment and passion and excitement.

Umhm.

You know, you’d like to think that’s possible. That’s what I’m hearing. I’d like to think it’s possible, right.

And so then you said to me well, what are some ideas about making it possible. That’s why. So I don’t have any magic rule about all of this for everybody in all situations.

Right.

But in your situation, I think that gives your husband the best chance, again with counseling together, to say wow, okay? That’s like, sometimes people can make major changes when they realize they almost died of, you know, of what they were, of their smoking or, that
they were going along with something and then the doctor says we’ve got to get an x-ray.

CL131 Umhm.
D132 And then for 24 hours you think you have lung cancer. And then it’s not.
CL132 Umhm.
D133 A lot of people make a shift at that point. And at least it gives them the chance to quit. Or in your husband’s case to join you in an effort to make it better.

CL133 One of the scary things to me is if we keep going in the marriage the way it is going that, and I’ll tell him this, that I’m going to leave him when the kids are in college. I said that’s when I’m going to get divorced. Then, our, the purpose of our marriage will be over.

D134 You said that?
CL134 Yes.
D135 Wow.

CL135 Yeah. And so we can go back and forth and he’s, I don’t think he’s really worried about that because I’ve said it lots of times. But I, you know, in joking I’ll say I’m leaving you in 5 years, you know, that’s it, I’m out of here in 5 years. So I’m planning on what I’m going to do in 5 years and we’ll just kind of joke about it. But, that’s been on the table.

D136 You know that makes me think?

CL136 What?

D137 That you’ve not been putting a lot of passion into this marriage. Because that’s a pretty, that sounds like somebody talking about their job. You know?

CL137 That’s what it is, it’s like a job to me.
D138  You know, I’ll stay until I get vested in my retirement plan.

CL138 That’s right, it’s a job. That’s what it is, it’s a job.

D139  Okay, so it’s not just, but it’s not just your husband’s lack of passionate interest. That doesn’t sound very passionately interested yourself.

CL139  You’re right, I haven’t put a lot of passion in because I can’t feel it. I haven’t had any feeling of passion. So...

D140  Okay.

CL140  So, it seems fake to me. And John has said you have to do the actions and then the feelings will come. But I have a really hard time with that. Doing the actions if I don’t feel that those actions, that I don’t have the feelings.

D141  Okay, here’s some input I could give you about that. If you decided together, if you and your husband decided together to put something into action, it has a better chance to lead to the feelings than if you decided on your own.

CL141  Ummm.

D142  Okay. If you decide to go away together to a romantic place, maybe even an island. If you decide to do something special for your anniversary, if you decide, whatever that is, to go out on dates together, and you decide together, it feels more romantic and passionate than if you decide. It often doesn’t work as well in a marriage if one person decides they’re going to start initiating and the other person doesn’t even notice.

CL142  Right. Well see that’s what happened 2 years ago. I was reading all the books, the Harbil Hendricks books and I read all those. And then I asked Al to read them with me and he, we even started answering some of the questions together. It was one time he did that and then it was
over. So I, then I was totally, then, forget it, that’s it, I’m leaving you buddy.

D143 That’s right.

CL143 And I’m going over here with this other relationship. I’m not getting...

D144 He’ll read.

CL144 Yeah, right, exactly.

D145 Guys always read on the island, on that island. They always read there.

CL145 But most men, have to deal in general, are not as integrated as most women in those books. And a garden variety problem in marriages is a woman comes home and says read this, read this and this is like an assignment, you know? And he’s not all right.

D146 No he doesn’t care about it. He’s interested in your marriage, but not reading about it, OK?

CL147 No, he didn’t care about that at all.

D147 And so it becomes sort of a test. It becomes a test of his real...

CL148 Right, so I tested him for that.

D148 And he flunked.

CL149 And I probably did it on purpose because I wanted to go with Joe.

D149 Yeah, yeah.

CL150 OK, so I’ll admit that.

D150 And most men will flunk it, and the other guy will probably flunk it in 3 years.

CL151 Probably, probably.

D151 Okay? Because he’ll be interested in other things as well. So yeah, that’s a good insight you had.

CL152 So that is, I put him to the test and he failed and that gave me like an excuse to go and do what I wanted to do anyway.

D152 Yeah, and he didn’t know it was a test.
He didn’t know, he didn’t know, no. I can see it.

Yeah. Where as people know it’s a test. Now, the other problem with that is that it’s you being the initiator of that. Here, I’ve already pre screened this. This is good, you read it and report back to me about what you learned. And so you’re sort of one out. Okay?

Right, yeah.

What I would recommend you think about doing, you know, with John’s help is to try to create what I call rituals of connection.

Umhm.

Things that you agree on together, like dates, like trips, like times that you would just talk personally with each other, okay. Not about logistics and other sorts of things that you would negotiate together and both commit to. And don’t put you in the position of being the one that says, you know, read this or do that. And that then gives you a chance to put something in to be more personal. See, what sounds like you’ve lacked is the personal part of it, the openness, the what’s on your mind, what are you feeling, what are your dreams?

That I haven’t shared that?

No, no. In your marriage, it sounds like you haven’t been very personal with each other. You kind of run the family together.

Right, right.

With this other relationship, you’re highly personal.

Well, what happens is, I’ll say things like that and he says I don’t know or, I don’t know. So we haven’t...so I am more the one who initiates that kind of stuff but it’s probably more on a testing him basis. So it’s not really that fair.
Yeah. And you haven’t, you know, what I’m saying too, is that it would be most fair to him to have maximum information now, that his marriage was on the edge of the cliff.

Totally.

Okay. And this is a wake up call. It’s not you blaming him for it or anything like that because you have to take responsibility for your own behavior, but that gives him... it’s scary to do... and we precipitate a crisis, but it then, you could jump start that. Jump start from that energy that will come to seeing if it’s possible and that you’ve a lot of changes to make because you’ve got, you’re pretty low key, hum drum and rational about all this, okay? You know, once I get by retirement investiture, I’ll be out of this job.

Uh huh.

You know, saying that to your husband is not a terribly romantic thing to say, okay. For a relationship you’re looking for more romance, you know.

Okay.

So you’d have a fair amount to learn because you haven’t learned the skills yet I’m suggesting in a long-term relationship on the big island of how to keep the joy and the excitement going. You know how to do it on the small island, you’ve proven, you’ve done it twice.

Right.

But the real challenge is on the big island where you stay and you raise kids and you learn to really work it out together.

What happens when the kids are not there.

That’s when the payoff comes because it gets better. Because you have each other. That’s the payoff.
That’s the payoff. I can’t visualize that. I can’t even imagine that. I just think that’s not gonna, that’s not possible.

And that’s your hopelessness. And what I’m saying is that until you have put out towards that goal and gotten off your own kind of ho-humness, you don’t know what’s possible. So you can’t tell me that he won’t change, unless you have really worked at changing in the relationship. And if you do all that and he doesn’t change, then there’s new information. But you’re waiting for him to change.

Right. I mean, I have changed. I have gone through changes in the time that we’ve been married.

What I meant was the...

Changing in my attitude and my behavior towards him.

Oh I’m sure you’ve changed and grown in a lot of ways. But I meant...

Yeah, but you mean different kind of changing.

Yeah, I meant...

I don’t even know what that really means.

Yeah, putting the passion, the energy, the intensity into the relationship.

How do you do that if you don’t feel it? You know, you can’t read a book to tell you how to do it, which I tried to do and it didn’t work.

Sure. No, you can use some help from John and the big thing is, you’d be working on it together. There’s energy that comes from two people trying at once. So, I don’t know. You know, you have a number of decisions to make but I’m just trying to paint some sort of, offer some sort of map of how it might be possible to get to a third island. And I don’t know if, you know, it is possible. It’s not for me to decide you should do it.

Right. Right.

But I’m trying to offer that kind of vision.
CL170  Right, right. Because where I am right now, it’s too divergent. It’s two roads that are definitely separate.

D171  Yeah. And this other one’s temporary.

CL171  It’s temporary?

D172  The other island, or the other road.

CL172  Yeah, right. I didn’t understand it that way. I don’t, you know when you’re in the midst of an intense, it doesn’t seem like it’s temporary. It seems like it’s going to go on forever.

D173  Right, right.

CL173  But it will not.

D174  Not in that way.

CL174  It will not.

D175  And you will have to do the same kind of looking inside to keep that other relationship alive at some point, that you’d have to in your marriage.

CL175  So I might as well do it in my marriage since we’ve got history in the marriage and it would be hurting so many people.

D176  That’s for you to decide.

CL176  That’s for me to decide, yeah.

D177  But that sure makes sense to me. They’re giving me the sign that we’re almost out of time. So do you want to say anything? So we started this 45 minutes ago and we didn’t know each other. So we’ve had a fairly intense discussion.

CL177  I’d say it’s been intense.

D178  You’ve been very open, which I really appreciate. What do you want to say to kind of bring this to a conclusion? What are you taking away from our conversation?
CL178 Well, I think what I’m taking away from it is that there’s a third choice. I was pretty locked into there were two choices, two separate roads to take and I think you helped me see that there might be a third and that also that I have some work to do myself in the marriage, that it’s not just all somebody else’s fault.

D179 And I think the third choice, just to reiterate this in case I didn’t make it clear, the third one doesn’t become a viable choice unless the second one is no longer in the picture.

CL179 Um hm, um hm. Unless the passion...

D180 Unless the affair is over permanently, not in the wings, because then it doesn’t become a third choice because you’re always back there. You know, you’re setting up tests, okay?

CL180 Yeah, right. That’s going to be a major decision to make.

D181 It will be a major decision to make.

CL181 Yeah, major.

D182 But the only way to really move to the other island, the third island, is to leave the others behind.

CL182 Right, it’s to close the back door, which I’ve never done in my whole marriage. It’s never, there’s always been a back door, an escape hatch. So I have to close that door. That’s very difficult to me. That’s very difficult.

D183 Sure.

CL183 Is it easier for some people than other people or is it hard for everybody?

D184 It differs, it differs for people. You know, and you know it’s not closed forever, you know. It’s a matter of...

CL184 I feel like it’s a jail sentence to close the back door, it just...
When I work with people in your situation and if you were making a
decision to work with me and your husband, what I look for is not a
forever decision. What I look for is a commitment to let the other
options go, okay. And to put in a good hunk of time to put energy into
seeing if you can find a new way to be married. Not with ambivalence
like, oh, we had a fight tonight and I’ll call my friend, okay? An all out
effort because it’s worth doing. It would be very hard in your situation
to decide that you will be married to your husband the rest of your life.
That can seem like too big a decision.

Yeah, I can’t, yeah right.

So the smaller, but nevertheless big, decision is whether you’re going to
end your affair, tell your husband, and go for the third island. You
know, that’s the only realistic way to think about that choice because to
think about 30 years out is just too much.

Right, I can’t make that kind of a commitment, right.

So it’s not a short term, like there’s a time limit...

Like 3 weeks, or 3 years, like 5 years? I mean you’re not talking 6
weeks. You’re talking, this is not a short fix, this is a major...

That’s right. This is a major...

Okay.

This is a major...

You don’t even know how long.

That’s right, yeah. That’s right. Well,...

Okay. Well, thank you.

Yeah. So how do you feel at the end of our discussion?

Um, sad. I feel sad. I feel very sad because I’m so emotionally involved
with this person. Right now it’s so...and I don’t really want it to end. I
feel sad.
D192 Yeah, yeah.
CL192 But I kind of know deep down that that’s what’s going to happen and I think I’ve pretty much told him that I’m not leaving the marriage so he knows that and I don’t know why I say that because I could, I mean that road is open.
D193 Sure it is.
CL193 But to him it’s...so I feel sad. I feel sad.
D194 It sounds like you’re in the process of making your decision.
CL194 Um hm. Um hm.
D195 Yeah. And you may feel less sad if you don’t think you’re just going back to the blahs, but that you’re really going to try to leverage this experience.
CL195 But there can be happiness in this other place.
D196 You can sure try. But it will take honesty, work, all that on your part.
CL196 It will take all kinds of new things, right.
D197 Yeah. So, good luck to you.
CL197 Thank you.
D198 Thank you.

To Learn More About Family Therapy

BOOKS


WEBSITES

http://www.che.umn.edu/fsos/doherty/default.html

http://www.nco.northfield.mn.us/doherty/index.html