STUDY GUIDE AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
CONTINUING EDUCATION EXAM
TO ACCOMPANY VIDEO TAPE
“PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS”
FEATURING INSOO KIM BERG

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SOLUTION FOCUSED THERAPY
with
Insoo Kim Berg

Introduction
This video is one in a series portraying the leading theories of psychotherapy 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 counseling or psychotherapy. The series is unique in that it features real clients with real problems. During the course of the series these clients bring up a number of issues with the therapists.

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 people live and how change occurs, each with its own guidelines for understanding and procedures for operation. The primary differences between these theories are related to the relative importance each theory places on cognitive (thinking), behavioral (doing), and affective (feeling) factors. 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 counselor or psychotherapist needs to develop his or her own approach to helping others with problems of an emotional, behavioral, or cognitive nature. Specific objectives in therapy include (1) removing, modifying, or retarding existing symptoms, (2) mediating disturbed patterns of behavior, and (3) promoting positive personality growth and development.

The video begins with a brief discussion with the practitioner concerning
the theory. We then move to the actual counseling session. Finally, the “expert”
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 counseling theory. Students will learn about the theory
and watch a leading practitioner work with a client in a "first session" interview.

The series is also appropriate for workshops or individual study for the
professional development of practicing 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.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify theoretical concepts.
2. Recognize specific interventions or techniques.
3. Describe the range of applications of a theory.

How to Use the Video

1. As a standalone activity for professional development or orientation to
   Solution Focused Therapy. If you are using the video this way, it might be helpful
to first read about Solution Focused Therapy. See page 25 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 counseling theory with the textbook, student study guide and instructor's guide. The text by Jon Carlson and Diane Kjos (1998), *Introduction to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon with accompanying *Study Guide to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, and *Instructor's Guide to Introduction to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, published by Allyn & Bacon of Needham Heights, Massachusetts, are coordinated with the video tapes 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 Solution Focused Therapy or to demonstrate specific interventions and techniques. Guidelines and suggested discussion topics will be included in Carlson and Kjos (1998), *Instructor's Guide to Introduction to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 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 (1998), *Instructor's Guide to Introduction to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

**Solution-Focused Brief Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg**

Insoo Kim Berg, MSW, is the director of the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She works with her husband, Steve de Shazer, with
whom she co-founded the center in 1978. A native of Korea, Insoo balances her Eastern heritage with her Western education in her clinical practice and teaching. She is a popular workshop presenter in countries throughout the world, using wisdom, humor, and boundless energy to engage and instruct her audience. She uses case examples and videotapes from her extensive clinical work in her teaching.

In addition to his work with the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Steve de Shazer serves as a faculty member and consultant for training centers in Germany and Denmark and has taught Brief Therapy to counselors throughout the world. Both Berg and de Shazer have published numerous books and articles on Brief and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Identify theoretical concepts which are descriptive of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.
2. Recognize specific interventions or techniques related to Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.
3. Describe the range of applications of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

**Abstract of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Video**

This video is approximately 115 minutes long and is divided into three parts:


Part II: An initial therapy session (42 minutes) with Insoo Kim Berg and Robin, a white female, where the presenting issue is Robin’s relationship with her husband. Approximately 30 minutes into the session, Berg takes a break to consult with Steve de Shazer.
Part III: Discussion of the therapy session with Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, Insoo Kim Berg, Steve de Shazer and a panel of human service professionals and graduate students (43 minutes).

Transcript

TH  1  Um, let me ask you, what do you suppose that needs to be different in your life that will let you know that it was a good thing that you came and talked to me today? Um, that it was a good thing that you had done this?

CL  1  Probably, um, helping me realize that, you know, a lot of things that, that go on are just normal everyday life. Um, you know, that, that I'm no different than anybody else. My my experiences are all the same.

TH  2  Okay.

CL  2  'Cause sometimes I, I sometimes blow things out of proportion and think only those things happen to me, but when in fact, you know, they're just normal everyday occurrences.

TH  3  Okay, okay. So suppose you find that out. [CL Mhm] That what's happening to you and how you react to things are pretty normal. [CL Mhm] How is that going to be helpful, how would that be helpful for you?

CL  3  It gives me peace of mind.

TH  4  Okay.

CL  4  Um, it lets me know that I'm not the only one out there pulling my hair out. (laughter)

TH  5  Okay, all right. And so you have peace of mind and you say, "Ahhh, I'm like everybody else, I'm no different."

CL  5  Well, in the things that happen to me, how I react to those things is what will make me unique.

TH  6  Right. So you react when you know this. You will react, oh well, it was
just one of those things that happens to people.

CL  6 Right, instead of getting frantic.

TH  7 Right. Okay.

CL  7 I'd be much more calm.

TH  8 Calm about [CL  Right] your reaction to whatever.

CL  8 Right, right.

TH  9 Okay. That makes sense. Okay, okay. So suppose you are, so suppose you are calm. [CL  Mhm] You say, oh well. You know one of those things in life [CL  Mhm] and be able to go on. [CL  Mhm] I guess that's what you're talking about.

CL  9 Right, right.

TH  10 Instead of being frantic, you just say, okay, well, you know, [CL  Right] take it with a grain of salt and just go on with your life.

CL  10 Right.

TH  11 What, what would that be like for you?

CL  11 It would be control. I'd have a lot of self control.

TH  12 Self control.

CL  12 Yeah, um, that's one thing I probably lack the most.

TH  13 Okay.

CL  13 Um, I'd, uh, um, I'd be easy going. I wouldn't constantly be thinking all the time, and, um, it would just be matter of fact, you know. I wouldn't be overanalyzing situations.

TH  14 Okay.

CL  14 I seem to be very analytical.

TH  15 Okay. So, what would you do instead of analyzing then, when you've got that point?

CL  15 I'd just, you know, throw it up to the wind and not worry about it.
TH 16 And say, oh well, that's life. That's what you would say?
CL 16 Right.
TH 17 Oh well, that's how it goes.
CL 17 Yeah.
TH 18 And just may be able to move on with your life.
CL 18 Right, and not think that, that it's going to be the end of the world, you know. Tomorrow's a new day.
TH 19 Okay.
CL 19 I sometimes look at a situation and study it too much and think that my whole world revolves around the decision that I make or how I react. When, in essence, it doesn't.
TH 20 Really, okay, all right. So suppose you are able to do that, [CL Mhm] suppose you are able to do that. [CL Mhm] What would people around you notice different about Robin that would let them know, "Ahhh, she is able to let things blow into the wind and then go on with her life."
CL 20 They would probably say that I'm finally growing up. (laughter)
TH 21 Okay, okay.
CL 21 Um, they'd say that I was more easy going, [TH Easy going], um, not stressed out. Um, uh, more fun to be around.
TH 22 More fun to be around, okay, okay. Um, are you married?
CL 22 Yes.
TH 23 Okay. So you live with this man you are married to?
CL 23 Mhm.
TH 24 Okay. What would he say?
CL 24 What would he say?
TH 25 What would he say he would notice different about you?
CL 25 He'd say that nothing gets to me. He'd be surprised that nothing gets to
me.

TH  26  He'd be surprised.  Okay, all right.  So that's what he would say.  "Ahhh, nothing gets to Robin anymore.  She is handling it."

CL  26  She's handling it, yeah. [TH  Okay] His question would be so, like, how long is it going to last?  (laughter)

TH  27  Or I was thinking, what have you been drinking.  (laughter)

CL  27  Yes, yeah, well.  Usually he's always, "Well, what book have you read lately?" you know.

TH  28  Ahh, okay .

CL  28  "What answers have you figured out now?"  You know. [TH  Okay]

'Cause he knows I have a tendency sometime to even try reading different books, trying different ideas of how to, um, just handle life, you know.  And he'll say "Oh, so, what are we trying this week."

TH  29  So he will see you, what, setting aside those books?

CL  29  Um, if I tell him that I didn't get it from a book, yeah, he'd be like, "She's putting the books," he'd be like, "Okay, what's really going on," you know.

TH  30  Oh really.  [CL  yeah, yeah] Okay.  So, he finds you easy going, fun to be around, [CL  Mhm] um, sort of, uh, say, you're in control.  Well, tomorrow is another day.  [CL  Mhm] I'll just start over.  When you are able to finally do that, [CL  Mhm] he sees you doing that, what would be different about him?  What would he do different?

CL  30  I think he'd eventually be calmer.  Yeah, he wouldn't be, have such a quick temper.  [TH  Okay] Um, um, the, well, actually, in some instances, he might try harder to get at me, to get me going, you know, get me upset.  But eventually he would give up and just . . .

TH  31  And say this is for real.

CL  31  This is the real thing.  She has really changed.
TH  32  This time this is for real.  Ahh, right.
CL  32  Right. Then he'd eventually, well, I, I, I'm a firm believer, and it works. I
know it works, but like if he comes home and he's, he's angry and is using, you
know, a harsh tone or a loud voice, if I just remain calm and, um, speak, softly,
eventually, he starts, you know, leveling out. So, it eventually rubs off. So,
hopefully, he would be the same.
TH  33  It sounds like you've tried that.
CL  33  I do.
TH  34  You do?  You do try that sometime on him?
CL  34  Mhm, mhm.  And it works.
TH  35  Okay. When was the most recent time you had been able to do that?
CL  35  Sunday.
TH  36  Sunday?  It was three days ago.
CL  36  Mhm, mhm.
TH  37  Okay, tell me what happened. What did you do?
CL  37  He was upset. Um, I forget what he was upset about. Um, oh, he, he was
saying that, you know, um, that I don't pick up the house. We had had company
and a mess had been made, and I didn't feel like cleaning it right then and there.
Well he wanted it cleaned right then and there, and he was like, you need to clean
this right now.  And I'm like, no I'm not going to clean it right now. He said, you
know, you never clean house, you're always gone, blah, blah, blah. You know, he
just went on and on, and I said, well, I'm sorry that you feel that way. I'm not
going to do it.  And I sat down. Then he, like, looked at me and he's like, she's not
going to get up and clean it, and I'm like, no I'm not going to get up and clean it.
And actually, I'm going to go out for a little while.  And he was like, "Oh."
Eventually I went upstairs and started getting ready. And he was like, "Where are
you going to go?"  And I said, well, I thought I'd go shopping, and do a little
shopping. "Do you care if I go? Can I go with?" You know, just, (laughter) it's horrible. I sometimes feel like I'm playing a trick on him, but it works.

TH  38  Uh huh, uh huh. Is that different for you what you had done on Sunday?
CL  38  It, yeah. It takes a lot of initiative on my part to do that. Um, most of the time I would have probably said, I'm not doing it, you know, and it would eventually would have gotten into a fight. [TH Oh] But instead I just, it's one of those, I sort of pick my battles so to speak, you know, what I'm going to stand up and say no I'm not going to do or what I am going to do, and not back down on it. And if I do that, then I pretty much have my own, um, um, plan worked out how I'm going to do it, you know. But if I, if I don't know really one way or the other, that's when it usually gets out of control.

TH  39  So, when you pick your battle, that's when you are in control of things? You are in self control?
CL  39  I think so.

TH  40  Yeah?

CL  40  Yeah, um. (sigh) It's like if I know I want to do something, [TH Right] I'm not going to let anything stand in my way. Um, I will be, I won't turn a deaf ear. I'll listen if he has objections or, or, other people have objections no matter, no matter what it is, not only in the marriage, but then I'll say, well I've already made my decision. These are the reasons I made my decision. I'm going to do it. End of discussion, you know. And, um, that's when I have real control.

TH  41  Is that what you mean by picking your battles?

CL  41  Mhm, mhm. If it, if it's something I really want to do and believe in.

TH  42  And you're definite about . . .

CL  42  And I'm definite about it.

TH  43  This is the right thing to do.

CL  43  Right. No one's going to change my mind. I'm not going to let anybody
get to me, and I'm not going to get upset by what anybody says. I'm going to do that [CL Yeah] that you're not going to let him bother you. No matter what he said.

TH 44 Oh. So, how did you know that on Sunday that's your battle?
CL 44 That, I, I really didn't know.
TH 45 What told you that's the battle.
CL 45 Well, I guess it was that I didn't want to fight. I didn't want to get into an argument about it. It was not worth it. Um, so, therefore, I just wasn't going to do it. No matter what he said, I wasn't going to let it bother me. Because I didn't want to, um . . .

TH 46 And you knew that.
CL 46 Yeah.
TH 47 You knew.
CL 47 Right.

TH 48 Wow. [CL Right] How did you know that?
CL 48 (laughter) I don't know. That's a good question.
TH 49 How did you decide that?
CL 49 I don't know, um. I was tired for one. [TH Okay] Um, well, and, plus it's a repeat pattern.

TH 50 Oh! Okay, um. So, you've been through this before.
CL 50 I've been through that before.
TH 51 Okay. So you knew it was coming.

CL 51 I knew it was coming. By the comments he made, and I just thought, I'm not going to do it again. I'm not going to argue with him. I'm not going to get upset. I'll just, I'll just, no. I'm just going to get out of here for a while.

TH 52 Wow, wow.
CL 52 So . . . It takes, um, uh, almost guts on my part to do that.
TH  53  Was it hard Sunday?
CL  53  Yeah.

TH  54  It was hard.
CL  54  Mhm.

TH  55  For you to decide this is it. I'm going to stick to my ground. This is my
ground. I'm not going to move, and I'm not going to argue about it.
CL  55  It wasn't hard to decide. It was hard to carry it through.

TH  56  But you did.
CL  56  Yeah.

TH  57  How?
CL  57  Um, I guess it's the will inside of me.

TH  58  Really. Are you that kind of person, that has this strong will?
CL  58  Yes and no. Um, or it's one of those things. Sometimes I, I'm really
strong willed, and other times I'm not. It, it sort of depends, um . . .

TH  59  Okay.
CL  59  How I'm feeling at that particular moment.

TH  60  Right, right.

CL  60  One thing that I, I really dislike about myself is I let my emotions take too,
too much control.

TH  61  Really. But you didn't Sunday.
CL  61  No, I didn't.

TH  62  How were you able to do that Sunday?
CL  62  It must have been self control. (laughter)

TH  63  Yes you were, you definitely were.

CL  63  I don't know. [TH Huh] Um, I just, it wasn't worth it. It wasn't worth
the argument. It wasn't worth the effort to even, um . . .

TH  64  That's all it took, just for you to decide this is not worth it?
CL 64 Mhm.
TH 65 That's all it took?
CL 65 Yeah.
TH 66 And it sounds like he got the message very quickly.
CL 66 Mhm, mhm.
TH 67 Right?
CL 67 Mhm.
TH 67 "Uh oh!"
CL 67 Yeah, it's like, "Ooh, she's really not listening to me."
TH 69 Yeah, and she made up her mind.
CL 69 Yeah.
TH 70 Ah hah. Now you are able to do that with him. I imagine you are able to
do that with your baby sometimes?
CL 70 Mhm. Oh yeah, yeah. But I don't have to do that as much as far as, he
minds.
TH 71 Of course not, of course not. I mean 19 month old baby is not going to be
the same as the husband.
CL 71 Right, right.
TH 72 Uh huh. So who do you, I mean, who do you do that with?
CL 72 Um, I'm learning to do it with my sister.
TH 73 Your sister?
CL 73 Mhm. Um, my sister can get to me just about as much as my husband can.
In other words, it's like they know the right buttons to press.
TH 74 Of course, of course they do. People close to us, they all know that.
CL 74 But, um, she is younger than I am, but she's always thought of herself as
more intelligent, more knowing, more, not better, but everybody, if we are
together, everybody thinks she's the oldest. She looks older, acts older, dresses
older. [TH Okay] You know, that sort of thing. [TH Okay] And, um, she has a
tendency to just hit the right buttons, and for the most part, I'll lash back at her,
like, basically like a child when we were children and we would fight it out
verbally. Well, there's no point in that. It serves no purpose and all we end up
doing is hurting one another, so, I just say, well I'm not going to talk about that.
There's no need to talk about that. Then she eventually drops it and we just go on.
TH 75 So she's learning to come your way.
CL 75 Mhm, mhm.
TH 76 So you can do this with your sister. Sounds like you figured it out, how
to do that with your sister. [CL Mhm] You figured it out with your husband.
CL 76 Mhm.
TH 77 Okay, and who else do you do this with?
CL 77 Basically anybody that gets on my nerves. (laughter)
TH 78 Really?
CL 78 I try, you know. Because, I, like, I don't have to do it with my parents.
TH 79 You don't?
CL 79 No.
TH 80 Oh, okay.
CL 80 My parents don't, they don't bug me, I guess you could say. I don't get
annoyed with them. [TH Okay] I don't get upset with them. [TH Okay] Um, but
those people that know how to get to me, I have to learn myself how to not let
them get to me, [TH Right] and that's, that's, I guess that's the technique I just
sort of am trying to learn, and it's, it's so hard to follow through with.
TH 81 It is.
CL 81 Mhm. Because that's where my emotions come in.
TH 82 Right. But how is it that with your sister and with your husband, like
Sunday, [CL Mhm] how is it that you do not allow your emotions to come
through?
CL  82 (Sigh) I guess it's because I had control of my emotions to begin with.
[TH  Huh] Umm. Because, like, here's an example. I can be frustrated or upset
over something that happened during the day, and my sister will call, and instead
of telling her, you know, I'm not going to talk about that right now, I'll get real
defensive because I've already been upset because of everything else that's
happened during, during the day. In other words, things build, but like on Sunday,
it was like I was mellow, and, um, I wasn't going to let anything else get to me, so
...
TH  83 So when you are mellow . . .
CL  83 I can use it a lot easier.
TH  84 You can use it, ahh, okay, that's what you mean. Okay.
CL  84 Mhm, mhm.
TH  85 So when you are tired out when you've been through a lot, that's when
you are likely to become more emotional.
CL  85 Right, yeah.
TH  86 Okay, got it, got it. Now, are there times when you have been under
emotional stress and still be able to say no, and be in control of your emotions?
CL  86 Not yet. (laughter) Um, a couple of times I've come close, um, but not
really. Not yet.
TH  87 Okay.
CL  87 I usually, usually then go to the tears or, you know, I'm real good at
slamming things, um, [TH  Okay] to let my frustration out.
TH  88 Okay. Is that what you mean by being emotional?
CL  88 Yeah, yeah.
TH  89 So, when you get frustrated?
CL  89 Mhm.
TH 90 Right, right. So, let me come back to this. If I talked to your husband, I know he's not here, but if I were to talk to your husband about Sunday or some days like Sunday, where would he say he thinks you're at on a scale of 1 to 10. Let's say 10 means he feels that you're there, in terms of handling your emotions, and you don't slam doors, and you don't break into tears, and you are able to handle things. And say, oh well, that's just the way it is and just go on. That's 10. He's very confident that he believes you can do that. 1 is that he saw you at the worst period in your life. [CL Mhm] Where would he say you're at between 1 and 10.

CL 90 4 or a 5.

TH 91 4 or a 5?

CL 91 Mhm.

TH 92 He would say that?

CL 92 Mhm.

TH 93 Where would you say you're at?

CL 93 I would say a 6.

TH 94 6?

CL 94 Yeah.

TH 95 6? Wow. Uh huh. Now how did you come all the way up to 6?

CL 95 It's really funny. My husband says I'm in a cycle. [TH Okay] Um, he thinks that I have severe PMS [TH Ah hah] and that's what he relates everything to because he, he basically can see the cycle, that I go through. And, um, but taking that out of consideration, I am pretty even, um, and that's why I think it's a 6 where he thinks I shouldn't have, um, any PMS. I shouldn't have any, uh, ah, um, I shouldn't have any of those symptoms. Um, in other words, and during that time, he, I think he does it deliberately, I mean we've argued this point several times. I think he agitates me more, um, and it bothers me more, um, and then, uh,
and it wouldn't be so bad if he didn't agitate me, um. But it's like I blame it on him, and that's why I say I'm at a 6, um, where he thinks he does absolutely nothing different all month long, but yet, um, at times I think he gets worse.

TH  96  Okay. So you have different ideas about that [CL Mhm] between the two of you.

CL  96  Mhm, mhm.

TH  97  Of course you know you are right. (laughter)

CL  97  That's right, of course. We know that don't we.

TH  98  So, what would you say you would be like when he thinks you have moved up from a 4 to maybe, about up to 6. He sort of tends to agree with you.

CL  98  Um, he would say that I wouldn't throw any fits. There would be no more slamming, [TH  Okay] no more yelling. [TH  Okay] Um, and then he would say I'd moved to a 6.

TH  99  So, even when you have disagreements [CL Mhm] you would not slam the door, that kind of stuff. Is that what, what he's talking about.

CL  99  Well, sometimes when I get mad at him over something he did, I just, I don't know, I slam cabinet doors. He doesn't like the way I slam the cabinet doors, you know, you know. That, if I would just calmly close the doors, then he would think, you know, she's got control again. Um, but actually I do it more just to get at him than . . .

TH  100  Do you?

CL  100  Yeah.

TH  101  Oh.

CL  101  Because I know it bothers him.

TH  102  Oh. So, sometimes you are in control when you decide to do that, [CL Yes, yes  to get him upset.

CL  102  Sometimes, yeah. I am in control when I . . .
TH 103 When you decide to do that.
CL 103 Mhm.
TH 104 Ah hah.
CL 104 It's more getting at him.
TH 105 And he doesn't know that, he doesn't know that?
CL 105 Well, I don't think he does. I think he, he, he thinks it's me.
TH 106 Okay, okay. So, he and you have a very different ideas about your temper.
CL 106 Mhm, mhm.
TH 107 Ahhh, okay. You know, it sounds like you are in a lot more control than he thinks you are. (laughter) Is it?
CL 107 I would say yeah.
TH 108 You would say yes. Ah hah.
CL 108 'Cause he's, um, it's one of those, it's so hard, I think, in any relationship, but basically between a man and a woman, because they think so differently. [TH Right] That I don't know what he's thinking, but I'm trying to think what he thinks and react, you know.
TH 109 Ahh. Okay. All right.
CL 109 So, I usually know what buttons to push.
TH 110 So, are you able to then, if you decide, [CL Mhm] when you decide this is what I am going to do, are you able to even during your cycle, be calm about, without slamming the door?
CL 110 Yes.
TH 111 You are able to do that?
CL 111 Yes, yes.
TH 112 Even during your cycle?
CL 112 Mhm, mhm, mhm.
TH 113 Huh. And he doesn't know about that.
CL 113 No, no. He, he, he doesn't believe it.
TH 114 Ahhh, he doesn't believe that. Okay.
CL 114 A lot of times he doesn't even know.
TH 115 Right, so. Okay. So let me come back to this then. When you have more, when you believe you are normal and you are calmer and have peace of mind, what will you do about that between you and him? What will you do different?
CL 115 Well, the one, I mean, I, when I am calm, and let's say, um, we have an argument and I'm not calm, and I don't try to get him calm, and we end up having a fight or a disagreement, and I use those words so loosely. It's not like, you know, it's just like anybody else, um, we will have a discussion, I'll say, you know, "Well, Ed, look at it from my point of view, you know. Um, you're just not getting it. You're just not hearing me. You're just not understanding what I am trying to say." [TH Mhm] And he's like, "Well you know, if you wouldn't do this, this and this, then I wouldn't do this, this and this." And we try to compromise [TH Mmm] for the next time, you know [TH Mhm] that things might or might not get out of hand. [TH Mhm] We do try to have that time where we're both on common ground so to speak and analyze what had happened.
TH 116 So how much percent of the time would you say you are in common grounds, the two of you?
CL 116 Mmm.
TH 117 Overall, if you look at your life overall.
CL 117 80% I would say. Yeah.
TH 118 80%? I would say that's pretty damn good. (laughter) Don't you?
CL 118 Yeah, I think it is.
TH 119 Okay. So, when we are only talking about that 20% of the time when
you disagree, when you see things differently, [CL Mhm] he thinks it's your emotions. [CL Mhm] Is that what we are talking about?

CL 119 Yeah, yeah.

TH 120 But you don't think it is all your emotions, that he thinks very differently. He sees things very differently than you do.

CL 120 Right, right. Well, a lot of times, one flaw that I do have that causes there to be a confrontation is I will let things build up.

TH 121 Ahh, okay. Right.

CL 121 And then when they've built up to the point that I can't handle them anymore, [TH Okay] then I let him have it with both barrels. [TH Okay] Um, and sometimes, if, if I would take like the incident on Sunday and just handle it there and let it go, [TH Yeah] most of the time I don't. I'll, you know, I'll get upset and say well, you know, I'm not going to do it, end of discussion, leave me alone, and I would harbor that, you know. In other words, he talks to me harshly, I talk to him back harshly, but then I remember that and then ...

TH 122 Ahh, the next time . . .

CL 122 And I bring everything up. [TH Okay] But, yeah, if I would just, it's sort of like if I would handle the situation right there and ...

TH 123 Just drop it.

CL 123 Drop it, then it would be okay.

TH 124 Okay, okay. That's what you mean by saying tomorrow is another day, just drop it and just go on.

CL 124 Right, right.

TH 125 Got it, got it. Okay, great. Well, I think I have enough information. This is the time that I would like to take some time, [CL Okay] think about our conversation here. [CL Okay] I want to think about all of this.

CL 125 (laughter) Okay.
TH  126  Okay?
CL  126  All right.
TH  127  And we'll get together, oh, maybe about five minutes?
CL  127  Okay.
TH  128  All right? So, don't go away.
CL  128  Okay.
CONSULTATION - TH1" is Insoo Kim Berg, TH2" is Steve de Shazer
TH1"-1 I had, of course, lots of things were going through my mind as I was
talking to her, [TH2" Mhm] but that's beside the point. Um, I think that she does
know how to pick her battle, [Mhm, mhm] but she doesn't think she does, uh, and
she would like to be able to pick her battle a little bit more.
TH2"-1 That was pretty wise to pick you battle, only pick battles you're going to
win.
TH1"-2 Absolutely, absolutely.
TH2"-2 Mhm, so, yeah she should, you know, as a homework task, just observe
what kind of signals she's reading, or what kind of data she takes in, or what tells
her this is a battle that I should choose. And then once as an experiment, um, she
should behave as if she chose, when she, yeah, should behave as if she chose this
battle, even though she hasn't. Just once, as an experiment.
TH1"-3 Just once.
TH2"-3 And see what she can learn from that. Yeah, I think that makes sense.
And she said not yet, right? She hadn't . . .
TH1"-4 Not yet, she hasn't been able to do that, right.
TH2"-4 So you have her pretend or something. Behave as if, um, I think that
might be useful for her.
TH1"-5 Pretend you decided, uh . . .
TH2"-5 No, pretend you chose this battle.
TH1"-6 All right, okay. You chose this as, as your battle. Okay.
TH2"-6 Mhm. I think that's pretty amazing that she's saying 80%.
TH1"-7 80%, yeah.
TH2"-7 That's almost unheard of.
TH1"-8 Really, and you know, seems to me . . .
TH2"-8 The baby, too.
TH1"-9 The baby, too. I mean with a, with a baby, she almost has no, sounds, has
no problems with that, with the baby. It's just that her sister and her husband.
Those two
TH2"-9 Push the buttons
TH1"-10 Yeah. Push the buttons, she says.
TH2"-10 Right. So another experiment she might try is when she sees them
pushing their buttons, she should pretend they've been disconnected. [TH1" All
right] That might be useful too. So you can give her a choice or give her both,
you know. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, used to a lot of homework.
TH1"-11 Yeah, okay. I don't know. It sounds like, she says she needs to be told
she's normal. [TH2" Mhm, yeah] So I guess I'll have to tell her she's normal.
TH2"-11 Yeah, maybe even slightly above, even slightly above at 80%. [TH
80%] That, yeah, not only you and me, but yeah, everybody, back there, the
production crew, etc., etc., all agree that that is, at least above average.
TH1"-12 That's pretty good considering she has a 19 month old baby.
TH2"-12 Well, yeah, right. That's just a good age to make it feel like there is
minus 80%.
TH1"-13 Mhm. Okay. All right.
TH2"-13 Okay.
TH1"-14 I'm ready.
TH2"-14 Me, too.
SESSION WITH ROBIN RESUMES

TH 129 Well, um, as you know, ah, my colleague and I talked just a little bit about what we talked about, and seems to me that not only you are normal, but I would say you are slightly above normal [CL laughter] considering, [CL Considering] considering you have 19 month old baby and they can really get on your nerves, [CL laughter] and you have a husband and a sister who know how to push the right button for you. [CL Yeah] And you have, surrounded by these people, and you considering that, and you are saying, you know the trouble starts only about 20% of the time. I would say that's way above normal. [CL laughter] I don't know how many people can say that. Um, so, you know, I would say, um, you are really doing very well by picking your battles. [CL Mhm] Sounds like you know how to do that. You know how to do that with your sister. You know how to do that with your husband. Sunday is a very good example of that. And, um, I think that it is really wise thing to do. That we all have to pick our battles as we go through life. [CL Right] It's not just with husbands. [CL laughter] You know, it happens everywhere, [CL Mhm] and so I think you need to continue to do that, decide to pick your battles, [CL Mhm] and that's when you decide to have control.

CL 129 Right.

TH 130 That's where the control is. Now, however, you have these two people who are not terribly cooperative with you, [CL laughter] and they know which button to push, and, uh, sounds like they both are very close to you.

CL 130 Yes.

TH 131 So it's one of those situations, just like a baby, you know, there's good things and bad things, right? (laughter) Anyway, so just, I have some suggestions for you to experiment with. [CL Okay] Just an experiment. Try this. I, um, that is, that, watch, pay attention to what signals that you pick up, like the Sunday
incident. What signal that tells you that this is the battle that you can win or you are going to win. [CL Mhm] Like I'm not sure how you knew that Sunday.

CL 131 Mhm. By the comments that he made, that he started with.

TH 132 Right, right. And so there is something with him and with your sister that sounds like you sort of get an idea about what tells you even before you get to the point what tells you "Ah hah, this is the battle I am going to pick." Something that tells you that. And so pay attention to what those clues are that tells you that.

CL 132 Mhm.

TH 133 Okay. That's one idea I have. The other idea I have is that perhaps you can, um, just, just one time, just one time, pretend that you decided that this is the battle that I'm going to, I can win. [CL Mhm] Okay? And see what you do with that.

CL 133 Okay, okay.

TH 134 Okay, just once, and that should give you some ideas about how you go about deciding this is how I do it and that will give you more ideas about what to do more. [CL laughter] Okay? The other idea is perhaps since your husband and your sister know which button to push with you, I wonder, have you ever thought about maybe you could pretend like you just disconnected the wire, when they push the button?

CL 134 (laughter) Yeah, I could I guess. I never thought of it that way.

TH 135 No?

CL 135 Well, yeah.

TH 136 Something to think about.

CL 136 Yeah.

TH 137 And again, try experimenting a little bit with what seems to work, what seems to work best, [CL Uh huh] and both picking the battle as well as what you do to pretend like I just switched off the wire. Just disconnected.
CL 137  (laughter) Yeah, I think, I think I could try that.
TH 138  You think you could try that. Okay. Great. Well, I hope that's helpful.
CL 138  Yes, thank you very much.
TH 139  You are welcome, you are welcome. Well, thank you for coming.
CL 139  Thank you.
TH 140  And I wish you luck.
CL 140  Thank you very much.

**Treatment Plan for Robin**

Berg indicates that her approach to Robin in future sessions would depend largely on Robin. She would begin the next session with “What’s better, even a little bit?” She feels it is likely that Robin will report that her life is better and she would then suggest that Robin do more of the same. If, however, Robin reported that “nothing is changed,” Berg would go for details of each day, looking for what was better, even a little bit. Her goal would be to uncover small pieces of success which would serve as a basis to build on the next piece of success. Even if Robin reported that her life was worse, Berg would search for indications of successes and, patiently, work with these. Thus, instead of problem solving, she would focus on increasing successes in the Robin’s life.

**To Learn More About Solution-Focused Brief Therapy**

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WORKSHOPS AND OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

For information about workshops and other training opportunities contact the
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