STUDY GUIDE AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
TO ACCOMPANY VIDEOTAPE
“FAMILY THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS”
FEATURING JON CARLSON
AND
MARY ARNOLD

Jon Carlson
Diane Kjos
Governors State University
University Park, IL
CULTURE SENSITIVE FAMILY THERAPY

with

Jon Carlson and Mary Arnold

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, *name* 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 *theory* Family Therapy. If you are using the video this way, it might be helpful to first read about *theory* Family Therapy. See page 38 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 *theory* Family Therapy or to demonstrate specific interventions and techniques. Guidelines

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 Jon Carlson and Mary Arnold**

Jon Carlson, Psy.D., Ed.D., is a professor of Psychology and Counseling at Governors State University, and a psychologist in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, a Diplomate in Family Psychology of the American Board of Professional Psychology, and holds a certificate in psychotherapy from the Alfred Adler Institute in Chicago. He has authored 25 books, and over 100 professional articles and served as editor of *Individual Psychology: The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research, and Practice* for almost 20 years. His is currently editor of *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, and one of the producers of this video series as
well as a previous series titled *Psychotherapy with the Experts* also being published by Allyn & Bacon.

Mary Smith Arnold has a Ph.D. in Counseling and Human Development from the University of Iowa and is also a professor of psychology and counseling at Governors State University in University Park, Illinois. Arnold has served as a counselor, college professor, and administrator in higher education and community agencies. She is the author or co-author of several articles and serves as a national consultant and facilitator on race relations.

**Learning Objectives**

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

**Abstract of Culture Sensitive Family Therapy Video**

This video is approximately 109 minutes long and is divided into three parts:

Part I: Introduction of the theory with Mary Arnold, Jon Carlson and Diane Kjos
(19 minutes).

Part II: An initial therapy session with Jon Carlson and Mary Arnold and the couple in which Jon and Mary help the couple view their issues from a cultural perspective. (45 minutes).

Part III: Discussion of the therapy session with Mary Arnold, Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, and a panel of human service professionals and graduate students (45 minutes).

Transcript

TH1 1 Okay. John and Martha, thank you for coming and talking with us. Maybe a good place to begin is to have you tell us a little bit about your story. Maybe you can tell us what are some of the things that keep you together and what are some of the things that are trying to pull you apart. I’d like to hear each of you talk.

F 1 No, you go first.

M 1 Oh, well, I think the things that keep us together is obviously we love each other. I think part of the problem is well, ours is a unique situation because, I don’t know if you realize it but we took our children on our honeymoon.

TH1 2 No.

M 2 Ah, the plot thickens.

TH1 3 How long ago was that?
It will be five years we’ve been married this August. But as it turns out her daughter and my son are the same age.

Okay. And part of the problem is we have a hard time dealing with the kids interacting, you know, mom, step mom, new mom, step dad and all this other stuff. I think that’s part of the problem. Ah, anything to add to that?

A lot.

Go ahead. Let’s keep talking. So tell me these things that keep you together and those things that pull you apart. So one thing is there are the in-laws and the out-laws and the . . .

Well, it’s not really in-laws, I don’t think so much. Just basically the . .

The exes.

Well that’s a different story too because she’s a . . .

I’m widowed.

She’s a widow.

Okay.

So we actually have to deal with my ex-wife.

You’re in-laws.

I think this has something to do with the problems. Um, together, we have a great life together, I think.

So, you are really pretty happy.
M 10 For the most part, yeah.

TH2 3 But you are really struggling with being a step parent?

M 11 Being a parent in general. Not necessarily being a step parent. Just being, you know. Plus the kids are at that age, you know, early teens, that are, drive you nuts.

TH2 4 So Martha, what do you think keeps you together and what pulls you apart?

F 4 Ah, what keep us together is that we do love each other. Ah, what’s pulling us apart like you said is the kids. Ah, my daughter’s not real fond of John a lot of the time. Not all the time, but a lot of the time. Ah, I get monosyllable answers to anything I ask or say to his step son when he is there. Most of the time he won’t even say “hello” or “goodbye” unless he’s told to say “hello” or “goodbye.” I’ve gone rounds on this where I just try, and try, and try. I get so perturbed and upset with it that ah, I just like throw my hands up and say “I don’t care if he ever speaks to me again.” You know, don’t need the aggravation. Life’s too short to be aggravated by somebody that’s shorter than me. The kids when they’re both there, for the most part, seem to get along fine enough. We have a problem with double standard of rules for the kids. My daughter lives with us so she has to live by the rules every day. Michael comes over occasionally.

TH1 8 What is occasionally mean?

F 5 Ah, like maybe once a month.
M 12    The weekend.

TH1 10   Oh, the whole weekend.

F 6      Sometimes. When was the last time he stayed a whole weekend? When we picked him up on Friday and took him home on Sunday? A long time. A long time.

TH1 11   Does that make you feel pretty good that he is not around too much?

F 7      No. No. Contrary to the point. I feel that he should be there every other weekend. Like it is stated in the agreement, the child custody agreement. I feel that if he spent more time with us that we could at least start to try to build some kind of relationship.

TH2 5    Okay.

F 8      This bothers me that he won’t put his foot down and say you can’t use that “I’m going to spend the night at my friend.” or “My friend is going to spend the night with me.” on a weekend when he’s supposed to be with us. He can do that on weekends when he’s going to be home with his mother.

TH2 6    Mhmm, let me ask you something else because it seems like you have a lot of feelings about your step son. What’s his name?

F9       Michael.

TH2 7    Michael. So you have a lot of feelings about Michael, and it seems like part of what happens is it kinda pours over into your relationship with one another
and so that is where a lot of that stuff goes. Where does, where does the stuff go with John and what’s your daughter’s name?

F 10 Tiffany.

TH 8 Tiffany. Where does that stuff go? How does that work? Do you have as much feeling about that? And, do you have as much feeling about your relationship with Tiffany and how that’s going and does that pour into somewhere else?

M 13 Well, let me think about that for a second. Ah, well, as she says, I don’t think she, sometimes she hates my guts, and sometimes she loves me. But isn’t that true of all kids and their parents? (Mhmm) You know. It’s not just me, it’s . . .

F 11 It’s not just you. She hates me probably as much or more than she hates you.

TH 12 Something you guys have in common.

TH 9 Tiffany hating you.

TH 13 Tiffany hating each of you.

TH 10 Good, glad we discovered it.

F 12 But I mean there are days when I don’t like her very much either. It doesn’t mean that I don’t love her.

TH 11 Right. It seems to me though that what you are saying is that you have a kind of balanced view of your relationship with Tiffany. It sounds like you are
saying it is not as intense and that it doesn’t kind of spill over into your
relationship. If that what you are telling me?
M 14 Um, I, well think I have a certain set of rules in my house. And if they
are not followed I get upset about it.
F 13 But those rules only apply to Tiffany.
M 15 Well, like Tiffany’s there all the time. Michael is not there all the time.
That’s the difference.
F 14 So . . .
M 16 I can’t have . . .
F 15 Michael doesn’t have to abide by the house rules.
M 17 What house rules do they have to abide by on the weekend? I mean, he
makes his bed, right?
F 16 Only when he’s told.
M 18 Right, I think he makes his bed all the time though.
F 17 Pleeeese. The last time he was here you had to go up there and tell him to
make up his bed. You did. I heard you tell him that, John. I heard you tell him that.
M 19 He’s getting better though.
F 18 The only thing that he has done recently without having to be told was
that he actually got up and took his dinner plate to the kitchen sink.
M 20 It’s a start.
F 19 It is. Absolutely.
TH2 12  So John, what do you do with all this intensity that she around Michael?
I mean, what happens to you when this goes on? I mean do you feel like
somehow or another do you feel pressure to do something, or do you feel in the
middle, or want to make it right? What goes on?
M21  As far as Tiffany goes?

TH2 13  No. As far as Michael and Martha. The two M’s in your life.
M22  Well, there again, he’s, I can’t, I can’t force him to like her. (Okay) I
can’t take him outside and beat him up and say you know . . .

F 20  No, but he should be taught a certain amount of just common courtesy
and respect. If Tiffany was like that towards anybody, I would take her outside and
beat her.

M 23  But on the other hand, he’s not, he’s not only like that to you. He is a
quiet kid.

F 21  I’m not talking about being quiet. I am talking about being blatantly
rude. Not just to me but to a lot of people. A lot of people.

TH1 14  Is this kind of a new pattern in your lives, this pattern of someone’s
disappointed in you and you’re disappointed in someone? Is that a new pattern, or
is that something that’s been around for a while?

F 22  Oh, it’s been around for a while.

TH1 15  For you. How about for you?

M 24  Yeah.
So you really haven’t had, you’ve not had this feeling of disappointing someone somewhere else in your life? Because usually that is a learned kind of a behavior. It’s usually something that people get from their . . . Sometimes they see it at home from their moms and dads, at least in other relationships. How does this happen? You make a simple request, what sounded like a simple request. Please have your son come every other weekend, and . . .

No. I have taken it further than that.

Well, tell us about that.

Yeah, okay. Well, what started out a simple request.

It’s gone . . .

Escalated to something really big here.

When John and I first dated on weekends that he would have Michael I would hear from him Thursday evening, and I wouldn’t hear from him again until Sunday night. Every other weekend. After our relationship had gotten to the point where he felt, I suppose, I’m assuming, comfortable enough to introduce Michael and I and we got married, these started to decline. He started coming up with reasons not to come over, and John was just like, “Okay. That’s fine.” And I told him then, “No, you can’t do this. You have to be his father. You are his father, and you can’t let somebody else take that place. He needs to spend time with you. When he comes over on weekends, he needs to do something other than sit in from of the TV and watch videos.”
TH1 18 Does that approach work pretty well with John, when you lay things out like that?
F 25 No.
TH1 19 No?
TH2 16 Would you like to try a new one someday?
F 26 Oh, please. I will listen to any suggestion anybody might have.
TH2 17 Okay. We will work on that. We will have one for you.
TH1 20 So what goes on inside of you when Martha makes this request to have your son around more often on a regular basis?
M 25 I’d like to see him come over every weekend. But you know . . .
TH1 21 The divorce decree says every other weekend.
M 26 Well, we have joint custody which means, you know, I’m supposed to get him every other weekend, basically any time I want him, I can go get him.
TH1 22 So, okay, you have real liberal visitation.
M 27 Pretty much so.
F 27 And it’s not like he lives in another state where it is a difficult thing.
TH1 23 He lives nearby? He lives nearby?
M 28 Right. Five miles away.
TH1 24 Okay. So what happens? She makes this simple request or somewhat simple request. Have your son over more often like you used to (Mhmm) and then what’s your response back? I haven’t heard that.
M 29 My response? Well, all I can do is ask him if he wants to come over. If he doesn’t want to come over, I can’t physically go over there and yank him out of his house.

F 29 Yes you can.

TH2 18 Now let me ask you something. It sounds like your styles are really, really different. Right?

TH1 21 Yeah, very much so.

TH2 19 Really, really different styles here, and it sounds like you’ve already noticed that.

F 30 He’ll just like go with whatever. Whatever.

TH2 20 Let me ask you something, alright? When you get really disappointed in John around this issue of Michael, I mean, when that happens and you know your intensity rises about it, does it remind you of some other relationship that you had some other time in your life. You said that this is like a life pattern for you. I mean, were you disappointed in people?

F 31 No. I think what, what I feel is that my dad being in the Navy he was gone a lot. A lot. And I am my father’s first born. I’m his only daughter. Ah, we have a very close relationship, and it was always hard to see him go and know that he was going to be gone for nine month. (Mmm) When I was a child cruises were nine months long. (Mmm) Now they’re only six months. Better for those kids now. And I saw the things that my mom went through trying to raise us kids, you
know. My brothers going for long periods of time of not having that male figure in
the house and, you know, just like how wonderful it was when he came home. And
it’s, if you can have both parents there, both parents influencing a child, I think
that’s important. I think that Michael needs to spend time with his father. They
need to build a relationship. They don’t really have a relationship.

TH2 21 So it’s hard for you to see the difference between your experience with
your father and what’s going on with John and Michael. It’s kind of hard for you
to notice that difference.

F 31 Yeah, but I understand where a lot of it comes from then, too.

TH2 22 But, I mean, you do know that the situation is different, that John isn’t
going away for nine months and Michael and John have a different relationship
from the one that you and your dad had.

F 32 Right. But where I am sitting from, what I see is that they really don’t
have like hardly any kind of relationship at all.

TH1 22 And you wanted a relationship and couldn’t have it, and he can have a
relationship.

F 33 Well, we did have it, but I went for long periods of time without having
that.

TH1 23 So, it’s pretty hard to imagine though that he wouldn’t want to be . . .

F 34 That being that close that if my husband, first husband were still alive
and he had custody of Tiffany and he only lived that far away, I would be on that
phone every day. I would talk to her every day. I would have her every other weekend.

TH1 24 So what would happen, what would happen if you used that strategy with your son and your ex-wife?
M 30 It’s not a problem with my ex-wife at all. It’s my son.
F 35 You’re the adult. You’re the parent. You make the rules. Tell him, “This is how it is.”
M 31 This is true, but you can’t knock on the door and snatch him out of the house.
F 36 Yes you can.

TH2 23 I’m curious about something, Martha and John. I’m really curious about your families. Like your family background. Maybe even some ancestral stuff like what your ethnicity might be and what yours might be. Do you know what I’m talking about? Like if you go back in your family tree, where do people come from?
M 32 Ah, I’m 100% Polish if that means anything.
TH2 24 Polish. Okay. An how about you?
F 37 Irish.
TH2 25 Irish.
F 38 English, Swedish, German.
TH2 26 Let me ask you something. Do you think the Irish is dominant? When
you say Irish?

F 39    Oh definitely. Definitely.

TH2 27    So the Irish is really . . .

F 40    Stubborn, hard headed, stand my ground. No you are not going to walk over me anymore.

TH1 25    You know the Polish are that way too. The Polish are known for being very stubborn, too.

TH2 28    Very stubborn but in a different way. It’s very quiet.

TH1 26    You mean like passive, say?

TH2 29    Very much like John.

TH1 27    You can’t make them do anything.

TH2 30    Can’t make them. They’re rocks. They are like rocks. You know.

F 41    Like that ____ down on his backside.

TH1 28    And the more you push . . .

TH2 31    The more they get close to the earth like rocks. It’s an embeddedness.

TH1 29    Do you think that makes any sense with you guys?

M 33    Oh definitely.

TH2 32    But you, you feel like you have to keep doing, because I think one of the things that happens to Irish women is that Irish women are really strong.

TH1 30    Oh, yes.

TH2 33    Really, really strong. And often I think, you check me if I’m wrong on
Often Irish women feel they have to be the voice for their men. That they have to do with pushing of the men.

F 42 Behind every great man there is a woman.

M 34 An Irish woman?

F 43 Pushing, pushing.

TH2 34 Pushing, yeah. Pushing very hard. Very strong, vocal.

TH1 31 Did you have a mother who was strong?

M 35 Oh, very strong.

TH1 32 Oh really?***

M 36 Very strong. My father died when I was two months old, (Oh boy) and my mother never remarried, and she raised four kids by herself basically. I was the youngest obviously, and she’s a strong woman.

TH1 33 So you have had another strong woman in your life.

M 37 Yeah.

TH2 35 Is your mom still alive?

M 38 Yeah.

TH2 36 How about your relationship with your mother-in-law? How does that work?

M 39 Two strong women.

TH1 34 I see.

F 44 I attend all family functions that I am required to attend. Ah, I try to
make those visits short. Ah, not necessarily because she’s strong willed. I, I absolutely admire her for what she has gone through raising four kids. Ah, you have to admire somebody that would do that, especially at the time that she did it when it was that much harder for a woman to work and support four kids.

TH1 35 So that may be some of the attraction that you would have for Martha. Did you ever think of that? That you feel very comfortable in this kind of a relationship.

M 40 Are you trying to say I search out women that want to like beat me up?

F 45 I have never beat you up.

TH2 37 Does she beat you up? Does she hit you?

TH1 36 I would think you might search out relationships that are familiar to you. I think you might be more comfortable in familiar relationships.

M 41 That could be.

TH1 37 And this would be somewhat familiar for you. And then his son. Is he a lot like his grandmother? It sounds like . . .

M 42 Michael

TH1 38 . . . there is sort of the same.

F 46 Just to be like really blunt and like this is only my opinion, okay?

TH1 39 It doesn’t sound like you to be really blunt, but go ahead.

F 47 Okay, but Michael is a spoiled master manipulator of both parents.

TH1 40 So one of the things you’re saying about Michael is that he is kind of up
front with his stuff. He isn’t a quiet stubborn person.

F 48 He is blatant about when he walks in and I say, “Hello,” and he says “Hi.” “How’s school going?” “Fine.” “How was your basketball game?” “Fine.” I mean it’s very blatant that “Don’t ask me anymore questions because I really don’t want to be having this conversation with you.”

TH2 38 Well, I can tell you. That, that monosyllable stuff with adolescents, it’s real. They kind of do that across the board. They practice it. They start practicing around age 12 to talk in grunts. “Ugh, ugh.”

F 49 This started like when John and I started doing things that included both of the children like at age 10.

TH2 39 Yeah, so he got into the learning model first.

F 50 One of the first things I ever heard him say was as John was going to the store or something, both of the kids were there, he said, “If you and my father get married, I’ll never come over here again.”

TH2 40 Okay. I’m really interested in that because it sounds to me, you know, like one of the things that happened when he said that is that Martha might have internalized it and made it a personal thing.

TH1 41 Like an insult. A challenge or something.

TH2 41 Which would make it really harder for him not to be there every other weekend.

TH1 42 Oh sure.
Yeah.

But yet both of these kids stood up for us in the church when we got married. We took both of these kids on our honeymoon. Hindsight is 20/20. My advice for anybody out there is to never, ever, ever do that. Leave the kids with somebody and take a cruise. He physically, on our honeymoon, stood between John and I when we were walking. We did the Florida thing, Disney World, all that stuff down there. Now my daughter whichever side I was walking on with John would be on the other side. Like right now if we were walking down the street she would be here. Well, Michael would be right here.

So, you all kind of look like the ideal family. I mean that’s the kind of picture it would look like. I mean I know what you are telling me is that it felt like an intrusion, but from the world you know that’s kinda like how families pattern themselves.

I threatened to send him home.

Dad, boy, mom, girl. Isn’t that kind of like it.

It sure is.

You could make a Disney movie out of it.

It sounds like it might be an adventure movie though.

Horror story.

I’m hearing the situation that you are in, not having had a dad and then growing up with this very powerful mom. And I don’t know what went on in your
first marriage, but now you are in a relationship with a powerful wife, and you have a powerful son, and did anyone every teach you how to deal with this kind of pressure? I mean it sounds like what I hear you doing in all of these situations is just feeling really pretty powerless like, “I can’t talk to my son.” “I can’t make him.” “I can’t please Martha.” Probably couldn’t please your mom.

M 45 That’s probably true. Like I need somebody to dominate me, is that what you are trying to say?

TH1 46 I don’t know that you need that. It seems like that’s what happens to you and you don’t know what to do about it.

M 46 True.

TH2 45 So a lot of times you feel dominated?

M 47 Yeah.

TH1 47 Did you know that? That he doesn’t know how to fix this and that the language that you speak to him he doesn’t hear.

F 52 Oh, I know he doesn’t hear me.

TH1 48 Something that is so easy for you . . .

F 53 I mean literally and any other way.

TH1 49 It seems like it would be so easy and natural for you to call up Michael and say get your fanny over here. You don’t have a choice. Those words . . .

F 54 If I thought that I could actually do it and get away with it . . .

TH1 50 No, no, no. I’m suggesting that he doesn’t . . .
F 55 Take no for an answer?

TH1 51 That’s an approach that he can’t use. So we have to help him get an approach that fits who he is.

F 56 I think he should call him up and say I’m picking you up Friday. Be ready.

TH1 52 Okay but that’s a Martha approach.

TH2 46 See it works for a strong Irish woman who is used to pushing, okay? So it works for you. You’ve seen that pattern. You’ve probably seen your mother do that and all the other women in your life do it. But it doesn’t work for a Polish man who feels like he has been dominated alot. So, in other words, we would have to work on you using different language and him embracing a different language. We have to kind of work with that. And we’ll have to work with him getting you some language that will work for you.

F 57 Any suggestion . . .

TH1 53 But it’s sort of like you are talking in . . .

TH2 47 To that rock. You are talking to that rock because that’s a good defense. There is no stronger defense than being a rock.

TH1 54 How do you get away from all this pressure?

TH2 48 How do you get away from all this pressure?

TH1 55 Yeah, how does he get away from it?

M 48 I work a lot.
TH2 49  You work a lot. That’s what you do. You stay away. So one of the ways you . . .

M 49  Oh, I don’t stay away. I’m home. Sometimes. (Mhm) I’m home sometimes.

TH2 50  You’re home sometimes, but you work a lot. Have you noticed that he works a lot.

F 58  He goes to work. Goes to the bar.

TH1 56  That’s a Polish thing too.

TH2 51  And Irish women know about going to the bar.

TH1 57  Irish women know about going to the bar.

TH2 52  They got that down pat. They know that there men will go to the bar and what to do with that. So you know about that right?

TH1 58  That’s pretty natural. So you drink?

M 50  Oh yeah.

TH1 59  Is that an issue between you guys?

F 59  Not that he drinks. The amount that he drinks. Probably more days than not and the fact that he has to go there six days a week and that he has to be the last one out of their little group of friends to leave. All the other ones have no problem going gotta go, bye, and get up and leave. But John has to be the last one to leave.

TH1 60  So that’s something he does very well.
F60 Very well. He’s got that one mastered.

TH2 53 Well it’s all part of the kind of running away from being dominated and kind of also acting like a rock. Cause if you’re, you know, drinking, then you really don’t have to hear what’s coming at you.

TH1 61 And with some other guys it’s safe.

TH2 54 Really safe. You are going to have fun. You know, you can say anything you want to say.

TH1 62 It’s just safe. They probably don’t put a lot of pressure on you.

TH2 55 Right, no pressure.

TH1 63 Other than who buys the next round of something.

M 51 The Jeopardy questions are pretty tough.

TH1 64 Okay. And you’ve got . . .

TH2 56 Now we know he’s there by 3:30.

M 52 They tape it for me.

TH1 65 And this is, these are guys who have been friends for a while?

M 53 Oh yeah.

TH1 66 A long time?

M 54 What do you consider a long time?

TH1 67 I don’t know.

TH2 57 You tell us.

M 55 Ten years.
Ten years. That’s a pretty long while.

So longer than you guys have known each other. Is that a problem, his friends?

No. Well, maybe one or two of them, but no. Only from time to time.

I want to ask one more question. Just to get some information. Is religion important to you guys?

It is to me.

What is your faith?

Catholic.

Catholic. And are you also Catholic?

I am a converted Catholic.

So religion wasn’t part of your upbringing?

It was, but I was raised Southern Baptist, and it was . . .

How does that happen to a good Irish girl like you?

Well, see, my mother is not the one that’s Irish. My father was Irish. My mother’s the English, German, American Indian in there. She was born and raised in New Mexico and Arizona. She’s the one, and seeing as how she was the one that was at home all the time, all of us kids got raised Baptist.

So how did you happen to convert to Catholicism rather than John converting, converting to be a Baptist.

Because when I was probably mid to late teens I decided that being a
Southern Baptist was definitely not the ticket for me.

TH1 71 So it wasn’t that you were going towards Catholicism. You were just getting away from being . . .

F 64 Getting away from being a Baptist. But we were in church with John one Sunday, me and my daughter, and being raised Southern Baptist you have to understand that I was in church like six days a week, twice on Sundays.

TH2 63 Kind of like he goes to the bars.

TH1 72 Kind of like the bar, yeah.

F 65 So I was like inundated with just tons of, you know, years ago could have quoted you scripture and verse for anything. But I was, we were in church, and they were getting to what Catholics call the Our Father. We always just called it the Lords Prayer, and I’m like just going along, and it was like those cartoons or things where you see the light, sun, coming through the stained glass window, and I noticed that my ten year old daughter didn’t know this. Now all of my religious decisions, not that I ever didn’t believe, there was just too many rules and stuff that the Baptists have that I can’t go along with. My decisions were based on alot of knowledge, and I realized that she couldn’t make any religious decisions without any information. John and I decided to get married, and I decided that a united religious front was the best approach to take. It would give her something to base whatever decisions that she makes down the line. You have to have some kind of information to make any kind of decision.
TH1 73  So you followed . . . Have you followed through?

F 66  She, well actually, we haven’t been to church in a while. But her and I did go through all the classes, both of us. She was baptized and confirmed.

TH2 64  Is she in Catholic school?

F 67  Yes.

TH2 65  She is?

TH1 74  And you go to church though. Or you haven’t been going either?

F 68  Not lately, no.

TH2 66  Kinda hard to go to the bar six days a week and still go to church on Sunday.

TH1 74  I don’t know.

TH2 67  Used to do that as an adolescent, but it’s kind of hard now.

TH1 75  They do that in Poland though. I think that’s pretty cultural. Pretty cultural to do it that way.

TH2 68  And so it seems like you two really can make decisions for each other. You really can move towards your husband and make a decision, share a decision together, and you have a real image of yourselves as a united family.

F 69  Another . . . I don’t think we really have any problems in making decisions or setting a foundation and guidelines and rules. It’s just following through on them.

TH2 69  Mmmhm, and it seems like that is true for both of you. It’s hard for you to
follow through on the church thing, (Right) and it seems to be that some of the things that it’s hard for you to follow through on.

TH1 76 Like the visitation?

TH2 70 Mmhm.

TH1 77 So you both do those things. You make commitments and don’t keep them? You both make commitments and don’t keep em?

M 58 I don’t know about that. What’s the look for?

TH1 78 What were you thinking, John?

M 59 Well, I think that all the commitments I make I follow through on. Obviously she doesn’t think that way, but what . . .

F 70 Commitments are promises. Things that you say to another person. I mean I was taught that your word is as good as your bond.

TH2 71 Let me ask you something else.

F71 You know, things that you say, that you tell me that you are going to do or we are going to do or whatever, and then you change your mind and . . .

TH2 72 Let me ask you something else. You know, because I like this exchange, but I want to know something here. Like you were saying that you were taught your word is your bond. What were you also taught about men? What were some of the things that you were taught about men?

F 72 All men are dogs.

TH2 73 Right. That’s one thing. That was a clear message that you got, right?
Actually, no. I mean, when I met John, I saw somebody . . .

What do you mean when you met John? I could see that you could see.

Somebody like my father, you know. I saw somebody that I thought was very much like my father. You know, he had been divorced and living by himself for nine years, eight years. I mean his house wasn’t trashed like my brother’s when he was a bachelor, you know. I have come to the conclusion at this point though that no matter what he says his mother was there every weekend cleaning his house and doing his laundry.

No

No, so you did it on your own?

Of course.

I think the other thing is to kind of notice that John did do it on his own. He’s not a dog and that for all of those years he had a really good relationship with his son. Is that true? I mean you had a good relationship with your son, you saw him a lot?

Well, at that time he was younger and he didn’t come over, you know . . .

How were you different at that time is what I hear Mary saying? She’s saying that you participated, kept the house clean, that you did keep these agreements with your son. How were things different then? It sounds like that’s the kind of life that Martha is saying I wish was going on now.
M 63 Well, I had more time to myself during the week. The house just never got dirty. You know, now we have . . .

F 75 That still doesn’t explain why you don’t do anything with Michael when he comes over on the weekends.

TH2 77 Well, I want to stay away from the Michael piece for just a little while. We kind of know what you’re saying. We kind of know that Martha wants things to be a little different. What would you want different from Martha? I mean things have changed now. You are married. You are not cleaning that house, so what do you want from Martha?

M 64 What do I want from Martha? Hm. Well, could be, maybe take care of the house a little bit better.

TH2 78 I’m shocked. Is that all you want from Martha? Just take care of the house a little bit better?

M 65 Well, no, no, no, no, that’s . . .

F 76 If the basement was done everything could be put in its place. Then . . .

TH2 79 No, you’ve got to want more than that house stuff. Come on now. What do you want from Martha?

M 66 Well, we could be a little more closer intimately, but you know . . .

TH2 80 Closer? What do you mean?

M 67 Well, she is a night person, and I am a morning person. I go to bed at 9:30, 10:00, and she stays up to 2:00 in the morning watching movies.
So you want more togetherness. You want her to come to the bedroom . . .

It sounds like birth control to me.

Birth control.

Let’s not go there. It will just get more ugly.

So you want Martha to be closer to you? And despite the fact that you go to the bars every night?

Not at night.

You don’t go to the bars at night?

No.

From 3:30 in the afternoon until 6:00 or 6:30 at night.

Okay, so when you come home you want closeness from Martha. That’s one of the things that you want?

Yeah.

Could we kind of work on that business? Maybe at some point? Cause I would suggest to them that they keep working on that. That what John is asking for is closeness. Not too clearly. I don’t think he asks for it clearly, but I think that is what you are asking for. Closeness. And Martha is asking for . . .

New car?

No, I don’t want a new car. I don’t need a new car.

What are you asking for, Martha?
F 79 Him to keep his word. What he tells me he is going to do, decisions that we make.

TH1 82 So that would tell you . . . It sounds like it would tell you that you are important to him and it doesn’t sound like his actions tell you that you are important to him.

F 80 Exactly.

TH1 83 So it might be helpful if we looked at what some of those exchanges might look like. Have you ever, I mean do you understand, it sounds like you are working very hard at trying to connect with each other and that there’s a lot of effort put into this, but I think you are probably doing the kinds of things that maybe you would like to get from the other person rather than giving the other person the kinds of things that they would like to receive. Do you have a clear idea of what loving and caring behaviors are for the other person?

M 81 I think so, yeah.

TH1 84 Mmm, I mean because it sounds like I am getting an idea of what some of them are, I mean what some of them would be for you would be to be more sexually initiating activities with John. It sounds like she would like you to follow through on agreements like to call your son and to say every other weekend is not negotiable. But there are some other caring kinds of behaviors. It sounds like others are stay awake later at night. Another is get up earlier in the morning would be ways that might show your partner that you care for them. Would you be
willing to make a list of seven to ten very specific things that your partner could do that would show you that they care for you? Very specific things. I mean, not like buy me a new car like you said, but something . . .

F 81 but, I want a new car. Well, I want a new car . . .

TH1 85 And then to exchange the lists with each other. Would you be willing to have that kind of exchange? You see there are lots of studies that go on in marriage that say that there’re 250 times a day you can show your partner that you care for them. And my guess is that you are missing out on a lot of them.

TH2 88 How many do you think you are missing out on?

F 81 249.

TH2 89 Okay.

TH1 86 And the more you can improve . . . And the more you can improve on that the better a marriage. They say the more positive exchanges that go on, the better a marriage is.

TH2 90 And you two are really working against some really heavy, I think, cultural messages. I think the cultural message that women aren’t responsive is a very clear Polish cultural message for men. I really do. And I think that the message that men are irresponsible and have to be pushed is a very strong Irish message for women. And finding how to work with those messages, how to turn off some of those culture tapes that allow you to be together I think will be really helpful, and I think this idea of the lists and really being real clear with one another
about that, and, but still kind of recognizing the difference in your styles. Like if you keep pushing, he’s going to become a stronger rock, more deeply embedded, alright? If you become more of a rock, more deeply embedded, more withdrawn, more time at the bars, she’s going to push harder. Okay? So you have to figure out how not to do this and how not to do that. Do you know what I mean?

TH1 87 Kind of a dance. Kind of a marriage dance that goes on.

TH2 91 But no one has any fun. And then it’s not like one of those dances where you are having fun.

TH1 88 No, but it’s familiar, but it’s not fun.

TH2 92 It’s familiar, but it’s not fun.

TH1 89 So somehow we have to break this very fundamental pattern that comes to you quite naturally. Because it doesn’t sound like it is what either of you want. Right. And I just think Michael is just the lightning rod for it. don’t think Michael is really the issue, really the problem. He might have personalized it because you believe that his unwillingness to tackle Michael means he doesn’t love you enough, and so you kind of deal with it that way.

F 82 I think it’s that he doesn’t care enough about his son.

TH2 93 No. He absolutely loves his son. That’s my guess. Do you love your son?

M 82 Well certainly.

TH1 90 But again he grew up in a home where there wasn’t a father, and so he
doesn’t know how to do that. You know we are going to have to stop.

I know. I hate to stop because I really believe that John knows how to be a good
dad. I mean I figure you did that for a long time really well, right?

M 83 Yes.

TH2 94 Yeah. I really think, I know this is an awkward place to stop, but I
didn’t want to leave with that impression because my impression is he is a great
dad. He recognizes that adolescents are different from eight year olds. That’s just
how, just how life is.

TH1 91 Well . . .

TH2 95 You know. It’s a hard thing to recognize when you are a parent, but it is
the truth.

TH1 92 Well, thank you both.

F 83 Thank you.

TH1 93 Good luck with your list making and exchanging.

M 84 Okay.

TH2 95 Let us know.

M 85 Thank you for having us.

TH2 96 Alright, thank you. That was great.

**Treatment Plan for this Couple**

If Jon and Mary were to continue to work with this couple, they would
continue to serve as a model of two people who were very different but could work together. Jon would pursue psychological issues such as birth order, the family of origin dynamics and how they are played out in the marriage. Mary, on the other hand, would continue to look at the cultural issues, including the wife’s change in religion and the husband’s style of interacting in the family.

To Learn More About Culture Sensitive Family Therapy

BOOKS