



## TREATMENT OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN AN ADULT FEMFALE POST THERAPY NOTES WITH THERAPIST AND CLIENT

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### **David (therapist)**

The first task I saw myself presented with was helping Betty separate from her third husband who appeared to be exploiting her in order to maintain his primary interest: "getting high" (alcohol and grass). I learned this from interviewing Bob. He showed no interest in making any meaningful changes. He lived for today-no future orientation. He indicated to me that he was only interested in reducing the risk of Betty leaving him.

The initial contacts with Betty were over the phone. We talked about the options she had in her role as wife. Bob was a sign painter and did contract work, which Betty was also capable of doing. Should Betty try to wake Bob up from his drug induced sleep so that he could meet his deadline, or should she finish the job herself? Should she call the customer and lie again for Bob, or should she make him deal with the customer? In other words, I attempted to orient Betty around the issues of her responsibility.

### **Betty(client)**

The first time I met with David I thought my

problems were the fault of my husband. I originally thought that David could help me help my husband with his problems or help me decide what to do with the marriage. It was very hard to cut off from Bob just because it was hopeless. It was also hard to realize that I didn't see things as other people saw them. I could identify with Van Gogh. You alienate people just by being yourself. I did not know at the time that I was an abused child.

### **David**

While initially the focus was on the marriage, soon other issues began to arise. Betty told me that she'd been suffering from daily migraines. I told her about a technique called the "hand warming technique" I had used successfully with hypnotized subjects. She was reluctant at first to try hypnosis but, once she had experienced a light trance, she proved to be an excellent hypnotic subject, for which she was strongly encouraged and, of which she became very proud. We established an ideomotor signaling system rather quickly and Betty developed a conscious/unconscious disassociation



almost immediately. I was completely unaware that Betty was sexually abused by her father. She'd described him as good man and she loved him.

### **Betty**

The first time David suggested that I go into a trance was real scary. We worked with finger signals from my unconscious mind. The little finger meant “no” and the middle finger was “undecided”, and the index finger meant “yes”. David would ask my unconscious mind questions and it would answer him with a finger motion. I did not participate with my conscious mind the first few times. My conscious mind was seeing all kinds of beautiful purple clouds and shapes and floating. There was no weight or pain. You can look at whatever problem you have and it doesn't hurt. Your unconscious mind doesn't let your conscious mind become aware of anything that you aren't able to handle. It was very relaxing. I did not remember what David had asked my sub-conscious mind.

### **David**

After a couple of hypnotic sessions focusing on the migraines, I began telling Betty stories of all kinds, drawn from my practice and personal life, as well as many of Erickson's. (Some I heard while attending one of his seminars in 1978 and others I had read in one the several books written since his death).

Betty was quite response to the stories I told her in the trance. Her breathing rate, heart rate, and

facial expressions would change in response to different themes. I began to learn her “style” of responding. I thought it was important to engage her unconsciously and I was looking for unconscious responses. I was “fishing” and yet I knew that if I was going to be of help that I needed to form a relationship with her unconsciously. Then maybe the unconscious would tell me her story.

I was gratified when she began reporting dreams that seemed to be precipitated by the stories I told her while she was in a trance and her depression began to lift slightly. She began using the stories for herself. It was as if her unconscious was building up a repertoire of ideas from the stories. I was still ~fishing~/looking for the problem.

I found that Betty often interchanged the characters and themes of the stories, almost like she would take bits and pieces from different stories to create what she needed. She still thought I somehow knew what stories to tell her. Unconsciously she began to “edit” what she needed from the stories.

Betty was fascinating to watch and listen to. I was getting a feeling now for how she as a personality, operated.

### **Betty**

David would tell me stories while I was in a trance. He would watch me for body language with each story. He told about different people in all kinds of situations. I did not hear or remember the first



stories. Then I started listening to the stories. Some of the stories would inspire a dream about different subjects, either that night or soon after...I was the hero in my dreams. Man breaks into home, usually oriental or black and I kill the man and I am the savior of the household. I would use the stories to find solutions. My unconscious mind would “kick up” a story when something bothered me. There are not words to explain how David seemed to know what stories would help me get into working on a problem or remembering some other pieces to the puzzle of my life....now I have these stories to look at so I can work thru mine[problems]... so the hurt doesn't have the same effect it did before. Someone else's problem didn't hurt you but their solutions could help you. There was the story about the man who had had a heart attack and would not help himself and his wife brought him to Arizona to see Erickson. Erickson treated the man very badly verbally. The man got very angry and wanted to fight Erickson. Slowly with each visit the man worked on getting better, I guess so he could get Erickson. That's all I remember. Then there was the girl who lived with different men and was...

Betty(cont'd) ...treated awfully, and the whole time she kept going to college. She graduated with several different degrees. She seemed to think she had to do things to bring herself pain. She eventually got her Ph.D. as a physiologist and stopped her dependency on men. Then there was the woman who was so inhibited, very shy about her body. I don't remember the whole

story, but part of the solution was for her to eat a large quantity of beans, all kinds and then come to Erickson's office and fart all over the place.

After her fifth session, Betty left her third husband Bob. She moved to another state and lived with an older woman who had money she offered Betty. Betty would drive back for weekly sessions. This lasted about six months until the older woman wanted sex in return. Betty then returned back to the area and became the mistress of a married man twenty years older than her called J.J. He put her up in a nice apartment and paid all her bills and gave her limited spending money. For this she would always have to be available to him for sex or comfort and was completely accountable to him for her whereabouts. When J.J. found out that Betty was attending therapy sessions, he forbid her to attend and made sure that she had no funds. He even threatened to cut off her rent money.

### **David**

I told Betty I carried up to two charity cases on my case load whenever possible. If she would agree to accept my offer, she could not offer sex in return, only paintings that she painted in response to dreams, trances or experiences she had in therapy. I valued her artistic ability and often told her. She was actually quite talented but didn't yet know it. I could see it and so could my wife.

In addition to her art, I told her that I expected her to help others whenever a suitable occasion arose



and she could reasonable help.

This proved to be a turning point in the therapy.

Betty accepted my offer and, soon after, while in a deep trance, I asked her to look at one of my wife's flower paintings that were hanging on the wall across from the chair she was sitting in. Betty used the painting as a "projective" and began seeing herself in different situations as a small child, including being sexually abused by her father and others. I was amazed when the abuse came out.

Thereafter Betty began taking initiative in the trances. Unconsciously she seemed to know how to "run the trance". With each passing session, she would see a little bit more of her experiences being abused, but never more than she could handle.

During and after each one of these "projection trances, I would encourage amnesia for the material. She seemed to use just as much as she needed.

### **Betty**

I could see images in Nancy's painting (David's wife) . They would scare me. The purple/black image was daddy, the red and yellow was me..angry blood... then a little green came into the pictures...a newness and the blue...calmer seas, and then I would remember some experience from when I was little.

My emotions were frozen from the time I was three years old. Part of me didn't grow up until I started to see and work with David. I was in part 35 and in part 3.

I remember being locked in the basement with rats,

and my own mother letting me out of there after several hours and not even wondering how I had gotten locked in there. My father tried to throw me out of his truck while it was moving, catching onto the side mirror, running along side of the truck and being thrown, and the family believing that I was just klutzy.

I remembered my father selling me to three college students who boarded in our house. I don't remember the price on all three of them having sex of some sort with me and I was four or five and my father watched and told me that I should make them happy. He had the weirdest look on his face, a part smile , part hate look. Remembering conversations that my mother had with different people when she didn't think that I was listening or understanding. She didn't want kids, felt burdened. Then when she had my sister and I she felt trapped and that it must be God's will. I never could figure out where my twin sister was during all these things that happened to me. I remembered the time my sister fell over board while we were on a rowboat ride with my dad. He had to jump in to save her... and him telling me that if it had been me he would have let me drown.

He was in love with my uncle's wife. She tricked my uncle into marriage. Daddy always loved her more than mom. She wouldn't have sex with my uncle. My uncle was an alcoholic. Daddy was always having to bail him out of trouble. My uncle was younger than my dad and daddy had to take care of him. He died of a brain aneurysm...but he wished himself dead the day before.



one...Crazy goes from one generation to another.

**David**

Betty began to demonstrate a lot of insight into her situation. During some sessions she would ask not to go into a trance so she could tell me what she had learned. Her feelings about her father were now in flux. On the one hand she would talk about wanting to shoot him in the “balls” and, on the other, she’d be somewhat sympathetic. He was becoming less threatening as she began to see him as a rather “sick” man.

**Betty**

While in different trances I was able to figure out what all three of my husbands had in common and why I was attracted to them. My relationship with J.J... he was in some ways my replacement for daddy..and he took care of me, yet I had to pay for it with sex. They were all no good for me. I was the caretaker, mother image to them. Plus my marriages were a form of self suicide. I would never reach any potential. I would always sabotage any relationship or job, because I didn’t deserve to be happy or successful. All this self hurting because of my father. I was punishing myself for what I had thought I deserved for not making him happy. And it would have been impossible to make him happy.

My father was possibly molested by a man that took him on a six month trip when he was sixteen...Daddy had a nervous breakdown...the man was a teacher. If Daddy had had a good doctor than I might not have needed

**David**

The relationship between Betty and myself began to enlarge to include my family. She would sometimes offer to babysit for my two daughters in partial payment for my services. Since I have my office in my home she would bring little things for the house.

She invited my family over for brunch on one occasion and Betty and my wife spent a lot of time looking at Betty’s watercolor paintings. On occasion thereafter, Betty and Nancy would consult with each other if either got stuck with a painting. Betty began to paint the images she saw during her trances and dreams. One special painting was a self portrait of herself at age five which she saw in a trance. She had it framed and gave to me as a gift on my birthday. I call it “abused girl”. To this day it hangs in my office in full view. Clients seem to always have strong reactions to the girl in the painting. Many women are frightened by what they see in the “abused girl’s” eyes. With those clients I often wonder about whether they were abused

**Betty**

The way colors in a trance would fit the emotions. Purple and yellow...Purple is a very personal color meaning royalty, individuality, being different.. Yellow anger. These were the first colors I saw. I drew a picture for David of a dream of me being on a rock. Dreams about painting. I do an entire picture. I can see



the picture so well and mix the colors one by one. It is usually a misty or moody picture. I am so pleased with the results. Proud and relieved too, like I got something off my chest, then I wake up and the picture isn't there and I don't have it there to look at and enjoy.

**David**

My wife and I encouraged Betty to go to the local community college and get a degree. Betty chose interior design and completed her two year associates degree while still in therapy. With her new skills, Betty helped us redesign our kitchen. She was always very helpful.

Since Betty had become such a competent hypnotic subject, I would ask her from time to time to help me with clients who were resistant and frightened of hypnosis. I thought it was important for her to help others as a way for her to learn that she had something valuable to offer others besides sex. It was also a way for her to partially pay back her sense of indebtedness to me when I genuinely needed it.

She would go into a trance alone with the scared client and then would come and get me when she thought they were safely in a trance. She was very empathic with these clients and would often times feel their pain deeply. She would sometimes offer them insights in a very appropriate manner. If the client went into the trance only in rapport with her, she was always very careful to ask them if it was o.k. for David to take

over.

**Betty**

The session with the writer with the broken or injured arm...my best trance ever. I was actually able to help him I think...it was a rewarding feeling when I was all done...very tired.

...the woman who came with her husband and I could feel her pain...there was so much there. I worried about her a lot.

**David**

My relationship with Betty continued to develop as she began to put her life together. She was always careful not to take advantage of my "open door" to her and consistently demonstrated a high regard for my family and myself.

At times we talked like friends. Other times I was the teacher/mentor who was taking a special interest in her. On one occasion I even pretended to be her husband and went with her to see a physician friend of mine for medical attention Betty required. Betty had had two rather unfortunate experiences with two different physicians who made sexual advances towards her during physical examinations which resulted in a general mistrust of doctors and a neglect of her physical problems. I felt it was very easy to be encouraging with Betty because she was so genuinely appreciative of everything that was happening regarding therapy. I





was aware of how important I was becoming to Betty and was respectful and appreciative of that fact. It was easy for me to support and encourage Betty because she seemed to me to be an exceptionally gifted artist and overall, a courageous individual. Two attributes we naturally gravitate towards in people we meet.

### **Betty**

When I was with David I felt safe and secure. He was a nurturing male. I could imagine him keeping me safe from the world while I worked on my problems...yet he would give me good, firm advice, that once I worked on the problem and honestly looked at the situation I knew that he was right...getting better at not playing old tapes is hard work. I would be able to tell David anything and he did not judge me. We could laugh together and cry and everything would seem clearer...not always painless but clearer. David accepted me. I think the first person to ever do that. David and I have a special relationship. It's very hard to put into words. David gave of his time and energy and training, when I couldn't afford it. Now when I get depressed and think it's not worth it, I remember he didn't want sex in return. David showed me I was a good person.. he gave of his time because he thought I was worth his time so therefore it must be true. I sincerely feel that if David hadn't helped me, I would not be here today. Death does not look that bad to me. It would be a lot less work. David and I talked about my wanting to die.

We dissected it from every angle. Then I could see that living would probably be better.

I know that the combination of David's background and being married to an artist worked on our relationship too. David could understand how I felt about painting and pictures in my head and the frustrations at not getting them out and onto paper...mostly because I was afraid to try. Every time I sit in "the chair"(office chair) it doesn't seem to matter how much time has passed since my last session..we are right back into the flow of the trances and working on a problem.

After approximately forty therapy sessions, spanning over a year and a half, Betty met her fourth husband Bill. He was a bright man in his early forties, over four years into his sobriety and separated from his first wife just over three years. Bill lived in another state near Betty's mother. Within six months of their meeting, Bill proposed marriage and Betty accepted. When Bill's estranged wife heard of the couple's plans she came to the house while Bill was at work with plans to kill Betty and then herself. Betty was alone at Bill's home and let the woman in. Betty later told me that she felt sorry for the woman and was sympathetic towards her. She let the woman take a few things and then the woman left. A short time later the woman came back asking to come in. Betty felt the hairs on her arms stand up and she refused to let the woman in. The woman walked around the house banging on the windows and then stopped. A



short time later Betty heard several shots then silence. After a short time Betty looked out to see the woman's car running in the driveway with her slumped over the steering wheel. The woman had shot herself in the chest in her own car in Bill's driveway after she had shot two holes in Betty's car. It was later discovered that Bill's estranged wife had made rather elaborate suicide plans. Before going to Bill's house she'd laid out all her funeral clothes, wrote out her will, made a cassette with a self eulogy, and had left candles burning.

The manner in which Betty handled the rather dramatic suicide of Bill's ex-wife was a testimony to her developing courage and self-worth. She was very supportive and helpful to Bill and was able to maintain a healthy perspective on the situation throughout the rather difficult weeks and months that followed by focusing on how angry she was at the woman for shooting holes in her friend "Silver", her car..

Betty would return for therapy sessions with David from time to time as she sorted through her adjustments to her new marriage and life in a small town Betty took a job in her field and had another art exhibition. She and Bill started a small framing business out of their garage. Bill would do the carpentry and Betty the color coordinating and matting.

Betty's experience with sex changed. She reports that there are times now she actually enjoys it. The way she deals with her mother's denial has changed: she doesn't have as many migraines. Betty has also stopped trying

to prove to her mother and sister that she isn't the incompetent, "identified patient" she'd been encouraged to believe: a role she apparently played in the family most of her life.

Betty continues to work earnestly on making a better adjustment to her current life situation. Recently she got together with a cousin, whom she hadn't seen in over twenty years. To her amazement she found out his father was also incestuous and that he, like Betty, had undergone hypnotherapy with a therapist who had been trained by a man who'd studied with Erickson. Betty reported that finding this out reconfirmed her own therapy helping her to realize that the problem was generational in its scope.

In a period of about three years, in which Betty attended 52 therapy sessions ranging from one to four hours, she is now living a productive and responsible life in which her natural talents as an artist have begun to flourish. She has come to the realization that her art is the gift she has to give others

### **SUMMARY**

The role of the therapeutic climate in the hypnotherapeutic treatment of sexually abused individuals has been the focus of this paper. The reader has been provided with certain ideas from the perspective of both the therapist and the client which the writers believe contribute to the development of good therapeutic conditions.

"Therapeutic climatology" for the sexually abused





involves facilitating a rapport between the client and the therapy environment. Within this environment the client should feel protected as well as psychologically prepared to go into a trance in order to take a good mental look at the often repressed and painful memories of their abuse.

In order to prepare the abused client psychologically for the ordeal of reorganizing their understandings of themselves, the therapist can “seed” numerous ideas and solutions through the telling of stories to the hypnotized client. At the same time, the comfort created by the medium of storytelling adds to the overall feeling of protection by a nurturing parent figure. While engaged in this process, the therapist is also afforded the opportunity of developing a working understanding of the unique manner in which the client operates before the actual repressed material is dealt with. It is during this initial phase that the therapist can also learn the client’s pace of learning and their general style of operating in trances.

As in the case reported above, identification of the client’s talents and abilities, both in and out of the trance state, before undertaking the abuse issues was a deciding factor in the outcome. In the opinion of the writers, it is particularly important for the hypnotic operator to recognize and show appreciation for all of the client’s hypnotic accomplishments. For the abused client, in particular, it is important to experience success with an endeavor that involves pleasing an

authority, in which the results benefit them, and not just the authority. This can lead to good results because it reverses the abused client’s earlier experiences of failing to please the abusing parent (in the sexual arena, a child is no substitute for an adult). Most importantly, these hypnotic accomplishments are then quickly translated into the tools by which Betty corrected her problem.