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Excerpt From:
***Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy, Volume III:
Demonstrations of Therapeutic Techniques***

Part One: Demonstration of Therapeutic Techniques in
Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy

Chapter 1: Demonstration of the Socratic Method

To purchase this book, go to www.Adlerian.us/cadp-v3.htm.

Part One:
Demonstration of Therapeutic Techniques in
Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy

Chapter 1: Demonstration of the Socratic Method

A Woman With a Difficult Father:

The following transcription is based on an audio recording of my presentation at the Critical Thinking Conference at Sonoma State University in Sonoma, California, on August 5th, 1991. As in all the transcriptions in this volume, I am the “Therapist.” In this instance, the “Client” is a volunteer from the workshop, a student of mine who had studied with me for several years, so I was familiar with her background.

T: Therapist
C: Client
P: Workshop Participant

Demonstration

T: (To audience) Would you like to see a demonstration of the Socratic method? (They all respond affirmatively.) I'll do a brief demonstration and then we'll have a Q&A period. At the beginning of the session, I consulted with one of my students who has volunteered to help. I didn't want anyone who might be uncomfortable doing a demonstration.

T: (To volunteer) I appreciate your doing this. Would you like to discuss something real or pretended?

C: Something real.

T: O.K. How can I help you?

C: Real quick background. I have difficulty communicating with my father. He's a retired military man. Very authoritative. Very autocratic. He has all these expectations of me and as I've grown into adulthood, I haven't been able to fully let that go. There's stress whenever we're together. He's always making demands and

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I try to put up boundaries, but he doesn't want to hear that. He only wants to hear what he wants to hear. When I graduated from college, he asked, "What are you going to do next?" When I got a Masters Degree, he asked, "Now what are you going to do?" "I'm going to raise my family." "Well, now what are you going to do?" No matter what I do, it's always more expectations, more expectations. And when I try to talk to him about it, I can't sit down, like we're doing here, and have that conversation. He doesn't allow that and I have great difficulty even getting to the point of sitting down and telling him how I'm feeling.

So it causes stress not only with me but with my children. They don't want to go to Grandpa's house, because they don't want to hear the arguments that we have or they don't even get to that stage. I either walk away or my kids say, "Gee Mom, you ought to tell Grandpa how you're feeling." It's very stressful not only for me but for my family. They don't want to be around Grandpa and we don't visit much, which hurts my mother's feelings.

I'd like to get some strategies on how I can approach him and feel somewhat comfortable, because it's very uncomfortable to be around my dad.

T: O.K. Can you tell me a little more about what it feels like to be with him? A little more detail?

C: I get angry. I get really, really angry. But I never yell at him or tell him; I just say, "O.K." Or I just turn around and walk away from him. He'll be right behind me, going on with his conversation and I'll say ... "but"... and he doesn't hear what I have to say. He wants me to hear what *he* has to say and what *he* thinks. Even though I'm over forty, he still treats me like I'm still in his domain and in his house and should be doing what he wants. I can't yell and scream at him, although sometimes I think that would make me feel better.

T: It would?

C: I think so.

T: Why?

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C: Because I get so tired of hearing him say the same old things over and over again, and he can't see the things that I think he should see. What I'm doing and how I'm dealing with my life are O.K. But according to him, things are not O.K.

T: What would you like him to see and know about you?

C: I'd like him to see that I'm a good parent. I've basically raised my three children by myself. They're all in college now and they're all doing well, and they're all healthy. They're not into drugs. They're good kids. And he doesn't see that. He doesn't think they're bad, but he says, "Your children have been in college for two years. Are they going to make a life career of college?" And he says that to them when they visit. I have a daughter who's in her 5th semester of junior college because she's a dancer. But he doesn't see that. He says: "Oh, you're going to be at the junior college for 20 years."

He's very well educated. Very intelligent, but he doesn't see that other people do things differently than he did. You know the old routine: "I walked a mile in the snow to get to school." Well, I should walk twenty miles in the snow to get to school.

So I'd like him to see that I've been through college. I've been through post-graduate school. I've raised my family and I'm doing the things I want to do now, even though he doesn't think they're right. I think they're right.

T: And how do you feel about what you've done?

C: How do *I* feel?

T: About your accomplishments. Yes.

C: I'm proud of myself.

T: *You're* proud of yourself.

C: Yeah. But I'd like him to be proud of me, too.

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T: Who is he proud of?

C: Well, there are six children in the family and I'm the second oldest, and I don't think he's really proud of any of us.

T: Why do you suppose that's so?

C: I haven't any idea. We're all professional people. All six of us have been through college. Four of us have post-graduate degrees.

T: Would you say he's proud of himself?

C: Yes.

T: He is?

C: I think he is.

T: But he doesn't extend that feeling to anybody else?

C: No.

T: Do you think that's fair?

C: No.

T: Do you think that's encouraging?

C: No.

T: Do you think he can do differently?

C: Do I think he can do differently?

T: Yes.

C: Probably not. He's 74. Do you think he can do differently?

T: I've never met him. How would I know? He seems stuck in a certain blindness.

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C: That's the impression I get.

T: Have you ever known a physically blind person?

C: Yes.

T: Did you feel any empathy for that person? Because he or she was not capable of seeing?

C: Yes. (softly spoken ... pause) So I should feel empathy? (slight giggle) But a person ...

T: Wait, wait, wait ...

C: O.K.

T: I don't think you "should" do anything. Do you think you *could* feel empathy for him?

C: (long pause) Maybe.

T: Well, that's a beginning. Maybe that's enough right now. But what interests me is how that would help *you*.

C: By looking at me through his eyes, so to speak?

T: No. By your feeling empathy for him instead of feeling angry at him.

C: Oh. O.K.

T: How would that help you?

C: Obviously, it would help me not to feel so stressed. Because if I don't get angry and instead approach him from an empathetic angle, my stress level won't go up and I won't be angry, or at least, not as angry.

T: I see. You said, "Obviously." Is this obvious to you?

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C: Well ...

T: Obvious that it would be so beneficial to you?

C: Oh, yes.

T: Then what prevents you from doing it?

C: He makes it very difficult to do that.

T: That's true. He makes it difficult. But does he make it impossible?

C: No.

T: How can you get past that felt impossibility? Or that felt difficulty, I should say? Because it's unpleasant, isn't it?

C: Yes.

T: It's discouraging, isn't it?

C: Very.

T: It's almost maddening.

C: It is maddening.

T: O.K. Has it ever occurred to you that he may want you to feel this way?

C: For me to feel angry? No. But now that you say it, maybe that's how he motivates, by getting people angry. You know the old saying, "Don't get sad, get mad and that will make you move."

(Pause)

T: How does he handle affection from other people?

C: From other people?

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T: Yes.

C: Outside of his family?

T: From his family.

C: From his family. Fine.

T: He handles affection fine?

C: Uh-huh. You can give him a big hug and he'll give you a big hug back.

T: How does he handle verbal affection and appreciation?

C: Not very well. It's really difficult for him to say, "You've done a good job." From the little ones all the way up to the full grown ones, it's a pat on the back, then, "What are you going to do next?"

T: So it's hard for him to express it and to hear it? To exchange this kind of verbal affection?

C: Yes. Easy for the big hug, for the physical, but difficult for the verbal.

S: So he's found an effective way to prevent himself from becoming uncomfortable emotionally, hasn't he?

C: Yes ... hmmm.

T: Would you like to make your father just a little uneasy in a creative way?

(laughter)

C: Sure. I can try that.

T: Do to him what is hard for him to handle, but what you know is positive to do for another person.

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C: Say, "I love you"?

T: If that's what you feel. Say something honest. Is there anything you appreciate about him?

C: Yes, there are some things.

T: O.K. If you expressed that in a way I know you can express it to another human being, because I've seen it in you, he might have a hard time dealing with that. Right?

C: Yes.

T: But you would feel good about doing that, wouldn't you?

C: Yes.

T: I wonder what would happen if you did that.

C: (Little laugh) Well, I would have to do it in order to see the results.

T: Think it's worth trying?

C: Yes.

T: Shall we stop here?

C: That's fine. I'll let you all know what happens.

(End of demonstration)

Debriefing With Group

T: (To audience) Do you have any questions for either of us about what happened?

P: I'm not quite sure what the Socratic model is that you're using here. Could you say something about the Socratic method or the Socratic model?