



**Savannah  
Family  
Institute**

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**Presents**

# **Undercurrents: Treating the Secret Wounds of Kids and Adults**

**With Scott P. Sells, Ph.D.**

# 7 Key Steps

## Undercurrent Therapy

- **Step #1- Discovering the Undercurrents Origin**
  - **Step #2- Eyes and Ears to Locate Undercurrents**
  - **Step #3- Start Where the Client Is!**
  - **Step #4- Reveal and Fill in Missing Undercurrents**
  - **Step #5- Process Therapy Change Undercurrents**
  - **Step #6- Predicting the Fallout of Change**
  - **Step #7- Undercurrents and Spirituality**
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# Step 1: How Symptoms Are Created (Birthed) and Maintained

## #1 Power and Control

Who is Helping the Child Misbehave?

## #2 Wounds

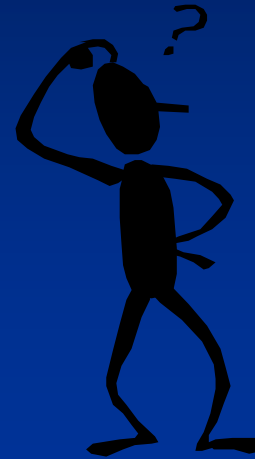
Wound (lie) + Vow = False Self

## #3 Biological

## #4 Creative Way to Solve a Problem

# Step 2: How to Spot Undercurrents

- A theme that underlies the dynamics of the family and like a linchpin, when addressed, everything falls into place. If not addressed, it is an under-tow that pulls a family apart.
  - **Loss/Betrayal/Abandonment**
  - **Violence**
  - **Fear**
  - **Intimacy vs. Closeness**
  - **Pursuer/ Distancer**
  - **Death and Suicide**
  - **Drugs or Alcohol**
  - **Family Secrets**
  - **Sexual Abuse**
  - **Depression**
  - **Role Confusion**
- Organizing tenant of family behavior. Concepts that the family is most often worried about addressing.
- Major themes that people wrap dysfunctional interactions around. Right below the surface. Everyone knows about but no one talks about. It drives family interactions.



# Step 3: Reveal and Fill In the Missing Healthy Undercurrents

## Unhealthy Undercurrents

- **Unresolved Grief**
- **Unforgiveness**
- **Violence**
- **Role Confusion**
- **Family Secrets**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Depression**
- **Patient- Mental**
- **No Nurturance**
- **Drugs/Alcohol**

## Healthy Undercurrents

- **Education/Resolution**
- **Forgiveness-Let Go**
- **Nurturance-Attachment**
- **Hierarchy-Role Clarity**
- **Reveal Secrets**
- **No Secrets –Boundaries**
- **Not Lonely –Support**
- **Normality**
- **Hugs- Special Outings**
- **Sober-New Lifestyle**



# Content Therapy vs. Process Therapy

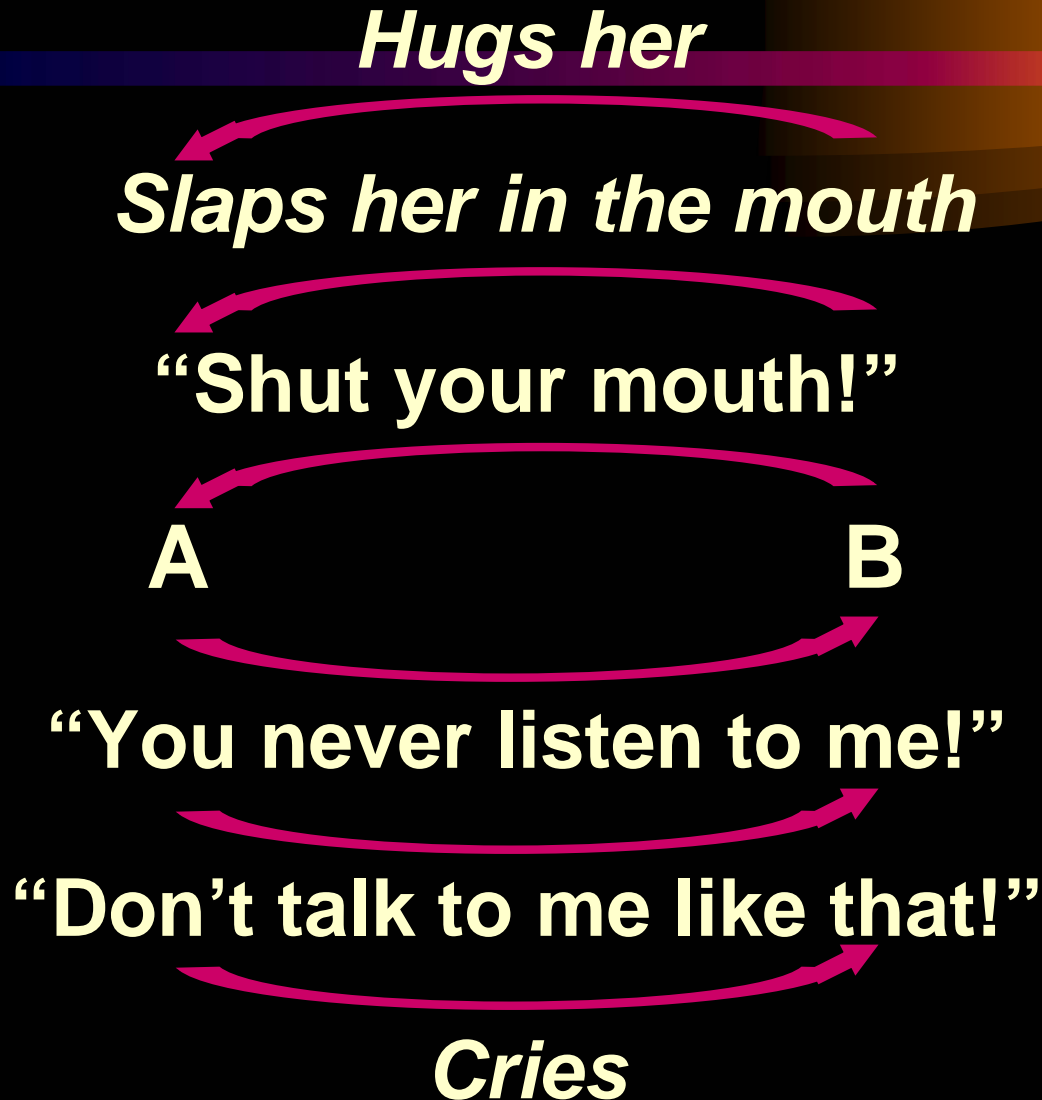
## Content Therapy

- Freudian
- Change=Insight
- Focus = Past
- Style= Non-directive
- Symptom Change  
Individual Insight  
Biological
- Models->  
Biomedical,  
Cognitive, Object  
Relations

## Process Therapy

- System Theory
- Change = New Dance
- Focus = Here and Now
- Style = Directive
- Symptom Change-  
Interaction Change  
Environment  
Structural Change
- Models→ Solution-  
Focused, Strategic,  
Structural

# *Process: Interactional Problems*



# Pathways of Constructing Clear/Concrete Goals

## Goal Frame

*What is your goal in coming here?*

Exceptions  
Frame

Yes

No

Do More  
of It

Spontaneous

Hypothetical  
Frame

Do a small  
piece of it

Wishes or  
Complaints

*What would you  
like to change  
about this?*



# Step 3: Start Where the Client Is!

## Precontemplation

- Do not see that they are part of problem/solution
- Feel situation is hopeless
- No intention of changing
- Want others to change
- Others see problem they cannot
- Minimize or rationalize

1

## Contemplation

- Acknowledge problem and their part in it
- Not ready for change yet
- Stalling – “analysis paralysis”
- Wait for magic sign
- Focus is only on problem

2

## Preparation

- **Contracting and troubleshooting**
- **Ambivalent – need final reassurances**
- **Dry Run Role Plays**
- **Make final adjustments**

3

## Action

- Person or family tries to change or stop problem
- Person or family tries to change environment
- Overlooks possible relapses
- If relapse or change fails recycles back to one of three earlier stages

4

## Maintenance

- Consolidate gains
- Relapse prevention-troubleshooting
- Potential to recycle is initially high
- Communicate that relapse is normal
- Goal: Spread moments of relapse further apart

5

## Termination

- Anticipatory guidance
- Letting go of “old self”
- Back-up plan
- When to use tune-ups
- Line up support systems and secure co-therapist

6

For more information...

Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C., & DiClemente, C.C. (1994). Changing for Good. New York: Avon Books.

# LAYING A SOLID UNDERCURRENT FOUNDATION:

Meet The Client At Their Particular Stage And Move Them From One Stage To The Next

**Precontemplation    Contemplation    Preparation    Action    Maintenance    Termination**

Consciousness-Raising

Social Liberation

Barriers to Change

Emotional Intensity

Consolidating Changes

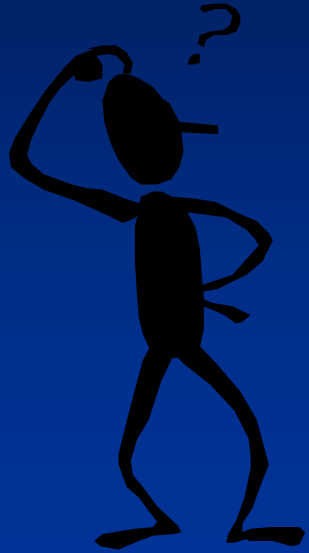
Getting Battle-Ready

Countering

Relapse Prevention

On the average, only 10% to 25% of clients are ready for action when they walk through the door.

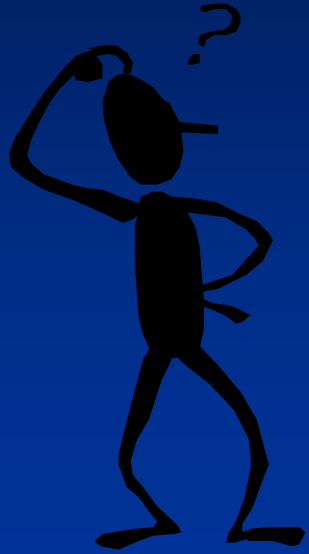
# Man's Search for Meaning



**Man and Woman's Search for Meaning is the Primary Motivation is his or her life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives.**

**Viktor Frankl**

# Directive Not Non-Directive Therapy



**Remember . . . this is not a therapy where relationships are changed by talking about them. Rather, relationships are changed by requiring action-oriented new behaviors to solve a problem. Once problems are lessened trust = deep healing**

# **Step Four**

## **Revealing Your Clients**

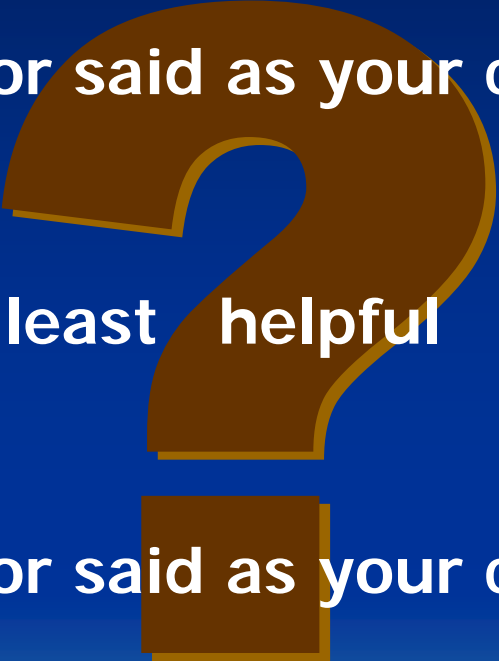
### **Undercurrents**

- ✓ **Surrendering the One Up Position Dismantle Barriers to Change**
- ✓ **Directly Bring Them Up When Trust Develops- Betrayal and Abandonment**

# **Barriers to Change: Surrender the One Up or Ask Direct to Bring Undercurrents to Surface**

- **Columbo Style Interviews**
  - **Ask Your Client to Grade the Process**
  - **Track Your Client: What Has Been Most and Least Helpful**
  - **Guess at Your Clients Undercurrents Using Velvet Around Your Therapeutic Hammer**
- 

# Questions to Ask Every Two Sessions

- What has been most helpful in our meetings together so far?
  - What have I done or said as your counselor that has been most helpful?
  - What has been least helpful in our meetings together so far?
  - What have I done or said as your counselor that has been least helpful?
  - What do we need to do in the future to make these meetings more helpful or productive?
- 

# Step Five: Process Therapy to Fever Make and Change Undercurrents

- ✓ Can You Go Directive?
- ✓ Can You Be Strategic?
- ✓ Can You Be a Risk Taker?






# **Step Five: Moving to the Role of Process Coach**

- ✓ **Asking the Family to Dance  
in Your Presence**
- ✓ **Being a Therapeutic Rule  
Breaker**
- ✓ **Becoming a Director**



# **Step Six: Predicting the Fallout From Change/Relapse Prevention**

- ✓ Normalize Fallout and Relapse**
  - ✓ Consolidate Changes**
  - ✓ Initiate Relapse Prevention Plans– Get Battle Ready**
- 

# **Step Six: Healthy Undercurrents and Second Order Change**

- ✓ **Make the Covert Overt**
- ✓ **Consolidate Changes**
- ✓ **Maintenance and Tune-Ups**



# **Step Seven: Spirituality and Undercurrents Will You Invite God Into Your Sessions?**

- **Separation of Church and State**
  - **Natural vs. Spiritual Law**
  - **Being Culturally Sensitive**
  - **The Power of Prayer/Forgiveness**
  - **Training Your Heart to See Spiritual Undercurrents**
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